The Salisbury Review

The quarterly magazine of conservative thought

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It is business as usual in Britain with more central government control and the further undermining of the traditions that have defined and sustained us, by those whose duty it is to uphold them. First and foremost is the upcoming vote on alternative voting. On an estimated turnout of 30 per cent, a foregone conclusion, alternative voting will ensure a minority Liberal domination of Parliament until the party's long term aim, the complete fusion of the House of Commonswith Brussels, is achieved.

The replacement of the autonomy and judgment of highly skilled professional people by the arbitrary authority of amateurish and over-paid central government file-shuffling, box-ticking bureaucrats continues apace. This is apparent from Jan Davies' tale of the undermining by that most remote of offices, the Legal Services Commission, of the legal aid lawyers who defend those tried before a court. There will be a Stalinist micromanagement of what lawyers do from day to day. What will matter is not the quality of service to the client (which he or she is in a better position to judge) but whether the files look good, suitable for a bureaucrat and with the right buzz-words like ethnic monitoring. We may look forward to a twenty-first century of the insolence of office and the law's delay. From Myles Harris' account of the coming struggle of the GPs against more central control, it is clear that unless the doctors are utterly obdurate, fight very hard with sheer cussedness and make splendidly unfair use of the mass media, including ad hominem attacks on politicians and administrators, they will be smashed in the way other professional people have been. It will all be done in the name of providing a 'better service'; yet the indefatigable incompetence of both central and local administrations to achieve this is well brought out in Vivian Linacre's discussion of their attempts to provide housing. The big council-built tower blocks of the 1960s and 1970s have been demolished even before the loans on them have been repaid. Now the planners are also seeking big units in the provision of legal aid and for GPs. More crumbling of provision is on the way. Don Briggs' description of the proposals to replace the House of Lords, that great repository of independent minded experts, by a pseudo-elected chamber of party hacks will remove one of the last barriers to that social democratic dream, the hegemony of the 'progressive' bureaucrats. Their latest wheeze, as Christie Davies shows, is, with David Cameron's blessing, to measure and plan happiness. Centralized happiness is not just the enemy of freedom but the enemy of happiness itself. No wonder Paul Gottfried calls us to pay more attention to the work of Ludwig von Mises. Nor is happiness the lot of those young people who commit suicide on the internet, cheered on by their fellows, as Julia Magnet's chilling description of this bizarre 21st-century phenomenon reveals. Nor is it to be found at the therapist's, as Theodore Dalrymple relates in his story of the homosexual activist who reported a Christian therapist to the authorities for trying to cure him of his sexual inclinations.

Meanwhile knocking on Ireland's door today and ours tomorrow are, as Christopher Arkell shows, the central planners of the EU dishonestly determined to use the economic crisis to destroy the autonomy of nations. They fuelled the boom in Ireland with grants but when it inevitably got out of control the Irish were unable to raise interest rates and make their currency appreciate because they were trapped in the economic cage of the euro. The EU giveth and the EU taketh away. Cursed be the acronym of the EU.

The threat to the nations from without is augmented by a threat from within as Muslims multiply and with an almost racist arrogance refuse to integrate into the culture of their host country. Nigel Jones' timely account of the radical denunciation by the insightful Thilo Sarrazin of the German politics of diversity in the face of the Muslim threat indicates this well. The politics of diversity also leads inevitably to a neglect of and even contempt for our own history and traditions. The 400th anniversary of the King James Bible of 1611 serves only to remind us, as Peter Mullen points out, how that great work that underpins our very language has been sidelined by the authorities of the Church of England. Banality has triumphed. The familiar and poetically resonant 'pearl of great price' has been twitched into 'the pearl of very special value' and 'through a glass darkly' by 'puzzling reflections in a mirror'. No meaning has been added but beauty has been lost and continuity discarded for last year's tired trendiness.

This then is to be our fate in the big society – gorged bureaucracies and a diminished nation.

Unsealing the Confessional

Theodore Dalrymple

Since malice is a passion that is never too distant from the human heart, denunciation is a habit that it is not difficult to instil in a population. During the Occupation in France, for example, the French police and Gestapo received between 3 and 5 million written denunciations. Nor was this all: *Paris-Radio*, for example, ran a programme devoted to denunciations called *Répétez-le*, Repeat it, that was a great popular success. No duty is ever more joyfully entered into than that of doing harm to others in the name of good.

Therefore the denunciation of Mrs Lesley Pilkington by a client might be taken as, potentially, a harbinger of very nasty times to come.

Mrs Pilkington was a psychotherapist who, because of her Christian beliefs, thought that homosexuality was morally wrong; she also thought she could help homosexuals change their sexual desires. A journalist and what is now called an activist, disagreed strongly with her. He strapped a recording device to himself and consulted her; she openly told him that his homosexuality was wrong, but that she believed she had a method that could change him. With his recording in hand, he denounced her to her professional organisation, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

The case raised many interesting questions, of course. For example, was Mrs Pilkington's view that sexual desire could be changed intrinsically absurd? If so, was her claim fraudulent or merely misguided? Have people the right to offer ineffectual treatment, even unconsciously, for what is now not considered a disease in the first place? How is it that a society that makes ever louder claims to pluralism in effect tolerates only one moral standpoint, which it attempts to enforce in the name of that pluralism? These are not questions that I try to answer here.

For the denouncer, the end justified the means. Never mind that it was he who sought Mrs Pilkington out, and not she him; that she did not stoop to disguise her opinions or beliefs; that she forced nothing on him; that all he had to do, if he disagreed with her, was to leave her office. He wanted to help purify the world by his actions, and to ensure that it conformed precisely to his view of what it ought to, how everyone ought to behave and what they ought to believe. Mrs Pilkington was a model of restraint and tolerance by comparison with him.

'Entering into therapy with somebody who thinks I am sick... is the single most chilling experience of my life,' the journalist told a Sunday newspaper. It may well be that he was shocked and affronted, but does that mean that he was harmed? Is he bringing his complaint in consequence of the belief that hurt feelings are indistinguishable from tangible harm (a tort lawyer's dream)? Does he hope that as a result of his bravery in strapping a tape recorder to himself the government will enact legislation making it illegal for all but the warmest feelings to be generated during therapeutic encounters?

What is terrifying in this story is the ease with which people's words can now be taken down and used in evidence against them. It is technologically possible, and indeed easy, for everyone to conduct the whole of his social life as if it were a series of interviews under caution. All that is necessary is to slip one of the latest mobile phones into one's top pocket and entrapment can commence.

Of course, there are occasions when entrapment might be justified. If, for example, I thought and had good reason to believe that a group of people were plotting to commit a terrorist atrocity, I should have no hesitation in entrapping them in the way in which Pilkington was entrapped. But it is a poor principle to allow one's general conduct to be guided or ruled by the most extreme circumstances possible. One is still unlikely in everyday life to come across a terrorist group, for example; there is therefore no reason or excuse to record what, say, the woman behind the post office counter says to one in selling a stamp.

What this man did was dangerous, at least if it is taken as model to be followed or is in any way rewarded, because it so powerfully undermines the trust that is essential to civilised (and sincere and truthful) social and professional intercourse.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that what he did becomes a normal thing: what consequences would flow from this for the practice of medicine? What would it be like if every doctor had to fear that any or every patient might be recording what he said, that every patient had a concealed camera and sound recorder about him, and that at the first sign of unorthodoxy someone will try to deprive him of his profession and livelihood?

There are, it is true, certain members of the profession who claim to think this would be a good idea, and even

want to institute it themselves. They would like every consultation of every patient with every doctor to be captured for all eternity on some kind of electronic medium, supposedly for educational purposes; for it would help doctors to see themselves as others saw them, and therefore to become better doctors. And why not, they ask? The only ones who have anything to fear from such a procedure are those who are doing something wrong. The guilty fleeth, after all, when no man pursueth.

It does not follow from this, however, that the innocent stayeth put when no man pursueth. It hardly takes much knowledge of human life to know that what is said in front of witnesses is not the same as what is said in confidence, and that what a patient wants, or at any rate needs, is the doctor's real thoughts, in so far as he deems it meet in any case to express them (here he must always exercise judgment). A camera or sound recorder is a permanent witness, but not necessarily a truthful one. For it is not true that a camera and a sound recorder never lie: not only can what they record be edited, but what is ironical can easily be made to appear literal, what is humorous can be made flippant, and what is straightforwardly minatory can be made menacing or threatening.

A lot is written about the trust patients must have in their doctors, much less about the trust that doctors must have in their patients, at least if the medical enterprise is not to be merely the first act of a legal drama.

A lot is written about the trust patients must have in their doctors, much less about the trust that doctors must have in their patients, at least if the medical enterprise is not to be merely the first act of a legal drama. If doctors think that their patients are ever on the lookout for reasons to complain against them, to denounce them to the authorities, they will become mere ciphers, saying and doing only what can never be made the subject of complaint, which is to say the current orthodoxy (and God help those who do not keep up with whatever it may happen to be). But a man who says nothing to which anyone could conceivably object in effect says nothing; frankness, even of the limited kind practised by doctors, will be impossible. Veneer shall speak platitude unto veneer!

Medical consultation would not be the only human interaction to suffer if, thanks to modern technology, what might be called the denunciatory stance were to become general, or at any rate sufficiently widespread, in the population. People might start recording everything on the precautionary principle: that is to say, you never know when you might fall out with your neighbour. Better to keep a record of all that he has said to you just in case you need to prove his long-standing malice towards you when the legal case begins.

Can anything be done to halt a slide into a denunciatory society? The temptation is to look first to the government, and to enquire what legislation might do. For example, it might make the private use of recording devices for purposes of complaint or denunciation illegal, except in cases of conspiracy to commit serious crimes; no professional body or any other organization would be allowed to take into account such evidence. But what counts as serious could easily be manipulated.

A society in which people are willing and eager to denounce one another is a society that gives a great deal of arbitrary power to the authorities who act upon the denunciations. It is a society without trust, without dignity. Already we are asked to denounce those who cheat on Social Security, who don't pay their road tax, whom we suspect of evading income tax. Needless to say, such denunciations will almost always be motivated by personal rancour rather than by moral considerations; behind the demand is the assumption that the authorities are more to be trusted than the people about us, and should therefore be the primary focus of such loyalty as we can muster.

It is alarming that an educated member of our intelligentsia should think it perfectly right to practice such methods on someone who was not forcing her attentions on anybody, in order to denounce her and do her harm. But with everyone in possession of a recording device such as an i-Phone, and in a society in which ideological monomanias are common and indeed encouraged or mandated by official policy, we may confidently expect more of this behaviour.

Theodore Dalrymple's latest book is The Examined Life *(Monday Books).*

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Suicide on the NET

Julia Magnet

The kid put a shotgun to his head, fired – and missed. He lay there twitching, his mouth and chin shredded. A piece of his forehead hung off. He rolled his head about, dislodging gore, opening what was left of his mouth. He still had a tongue. I slammed my computer shut.

He failed; but I've spent the last few weeks sitting at my computer watching kids succeed. A boy leaps through a window while his brother juggles bowling pins; a girl with braids edges off an overpass; three different kids slump over as their brains hit the walls. They film themselves with webcams and post their deaths online, in real time. Lifecasting, it's called – or in this case, deathcasting.

Marcus Jannes's crooked camera shows a clean, well kept room – aloe plant, flat-screen TV, playing cards on an IKEA table, two sheepskin rugs, a tapestry of stars and squiggles, and, hanging from the door frame, a wire noose. After eight seconds, Marcus flashes into view, robotic, businesslike – it's an illusion the web feed creates, filming every two seconds. We see him from behind: a tall, thin kid lost in baggy sports clothes. He opens a bottle of olive oil, lubricates the noose, massages his face and neck. He turns to face the computer, and we see his shirt: 'just DO it,' it screams in white letters. He puts the noose over his head, and, still holding it, squats down to face the camera. He lets go and slides his legs toward the camera. His shoulders hunch. He grabs for the noose. His body shimmies round until he's face down, diagonal to the floor. One vertebra sticks out oddly. His body writhes, twitches, convulses – and then his pelvis starts thrusting. His face bloats: blue, purple, black. Both arms jerk at the noose, doubtless a reflex by now. His shoulders, oddly high, suddenly drop. The black drains from his face. His body relaxes, yanking his neck out like a turkey. His right arm shudders twice. And he hangs there for forty minutes, until the cops burst in, notice the camera, and turn it off.

He died on October 10th. He was, he writes, 'a guy, 21. I have a good life...studying...my own apartment...I have Aspergers ...I am vulnerable (emotionally)...I have poor social skills and that has made me...somewhat lonely...I had a fairly good upbringing... Makes no sense that I want to kill myself? Nah, I know. haha :P ' The emoticon represents a face with its tongue hanging out, as if he were already dead.

Common to his generation, Marcus Jannes laid himself bare to the internet 'community'. He detailed his suicide plans, almost blow by blow, on Flashback, Sweden's largest chatroom. 'I've made up my mind to kill myself by hanging...tried to strangle myself to get the feel of it....some blood vessels cracked...didn't seem so bad...Took some pain killers a few minutes ago...waiting for them to set in.' He was posting – and fielding abuse – up until the minute of his death, when he wrote, 'I've started to change my mind so I better hurry up....All right, let's do it,' and instructed his audience how to 'copy and paste the link' to watch the show.

For this 'community' was, in fact, a hungry, bloodthirsty audience. They egged him on, and pelted him with abuse. 'Attention whore,' sneered one. 'You will never dare you are too cowardly,' needled another. 'Haha,' Marcus replied. 'It remains to be seen, both for me and for you.' 'Good luck then,' they replied, or 'I recommend the original [method of]... hanging.' Marcus posts back that he has no rope, so will use network cable – a true product of the technological age. Some were less helpful. 'You know you will shit yourself;' 'wow another pathetic soul who chooses the fagot's resort...you could easily have built a bomb... and died an honorable death.' Or rather redundantly: 'go and hang yourself.' Which he did.

Almost more ghoulishly, Abraham Bigg's audience, an estimated 1,500, sat through twelve hours of his slow death from Xanax. They did nothing but hound him alive and mock him dead. He bared his nineteen-year-old soul in a *cri de coeur* that I've reluctantly edited. 'I hate myself and I hate living. I am an asshole. I have let everyone down and I feel as though I will never change or never improve. I am in love with a girl and I know that I am not good enough for her. I have come to believe that my life has all been meaningless. I keep trying and I keep failing. ... I do not want my mother or father to think that it was anything they did.... My father...tried to give me every opportunity .... I let him down. ...I am in college but barely...I have a job but I am always broke... I hope that my parents know that I ****** up not them. It is my fault I screwed up my own life. ....Please forgive me.... I tried so hard.'

'Do it,' his audience jeered. 'Do the world a favour,' they taunted. 'Stop wasting our time.' But they had

time to watch for twelve hours until Abraham lay motionless: a skinny kid in tighty whites, curled up foetal on his narrow bed, facing his wall of childhood posters. His back was to the audience. His hipbones stuck through his little boy's underpants. He had kicked the duvet round his knees and tucked his long, elegant feet in on each other. He had posted his suicide note at three AM. His audience watched, joking online, until the next afternoon, when two fat cops broke in and started jabbing the corpse with their guns. Then the audience – some of whom had assumed it was a hoax – began bleating OMG, OMFG (Oh my ******God), and LOL (laughing out loud). And the video went, as they say, viral. By then Abraham's death was entertainment, and one audience member deemed it 'massively boring'.

Abraham's MySpace page is still up almost two years later. His pictures show a handsome boy with a strong jaw and sad eyes, striking tough-guy poses in sunglasses, leaning over a velour sofa to hug his mother, embraced by a rotating cast of girls. His last post reads, 'I've finally got closure.' Friends still message him, as though the grave had a social network. 'RIP!!!'; 'rest in peace baby <3 [a heart] I miss you and love you.' But the page also hosts a running screed of anonymous vitriol: 'Look at the butthurt over some dead nigger;' 'I like how he got a fail at life' – with a link to the video of his death.

Similarly, Marcus Jannes's facebook page was still up in November. He's young for his age, under blond eyelashes and a high forehead. His four hundred 'friends' are still friending off into the void: one wonders forlornly why someone so popular would kill himself. But, as was the case with Abraham, another facebook group existed by this time – a fan page of those who'd watched his death. As one posted, with an ex-post-facto flicker of humanity, 'idiots don't realize that internet not just...videogame.'

But to many it *is* just a videogame. And I have inadvertently joined a vast audience that feeds off human misery and degradation. A swath of the internet consists of gladiatorial pornography – sites with names like orgrish, realgore, viraldeath, and LiveLeak. Here the kids' deaths play for years, vying with snuff flicks, Jihadi beheadings, car crashes, road bombs, suicide bombers. Even YouTube caters to the blood lust – though, for the most part, the site polices itself, removing the more ghastly videos after a few days. That leaves the more mundane street fights, girl fights, school fights, and happy-slapping.

Marcus's hanging received 82 pages of comments in two days. Some read like reviews: 'I thought it was going to be graphic'; 'It would have been a better video if he set it to some upbeat music;' 'This brightened up the work day;' 'It gets your adrenaline going;' 'I would have paid to see that.' Others show a quickly stifled twinge of fellow-feeling, 'now I'll have to go and smoke a massive spliff to purge my memory of this.' Many respond with a shaky grasp of reality but a keen grasp of modern celebrity, as if Marcus killed himself for the 'hits' – 'I've never seen someone literally die for attention;' 'At least he got his face in the news – in various skin tones;' 'Got his 15 mins of fame but pitifully sad;' 'well if he wasn't popular, surely he is now;' 'hope they revived him so he can go back... and review what his friends thought.' And over and over they scream: 'drama queen;' 'Attention Monkey;' 'attention whore.' Some assume the video is a hoax. Others – savvy consumers – suspect advertising or product-placement, 'fake! nike commercial?' The tee shirt sparks endless amusement: 'Change his shirt to 'Just did it.' 'Just DON'T do it!' 'The shirt made him "do it".' Others try more inventive jokes: 'I guess he couldn't find anyone to hang out with;' 'maybe he felt tethered to his problems;' 'I love the color changes;' 'that reminds me, must buy beetroots.' Many wonder why someone with such nice clothes, such 'a fly pad,' such a big television, would kill himself – and ask: 'Can I have his TV.' A few offer the facile sympathy of the internet: 'Tragic ☹'

This is no 'wise crowd,' as James Surowiecki's *The Wisdom of the Crowd*, would have it, democratizing knowledge through Wikipedia or Google. This is a gladiatorial mob, baying for blood. Nor are these sites some outer limit of human perversion: just look at Reality TV. This is merely a lurid display of how Web 2.0 has changed our culture – coarsening both the actors who display themselves and the audiences who watch them. This technology has degraded a generation's perception of reality, allowing it to view others as so much spectacle, so much entertainment. In so doing it has unleashed appetites civilization strives to restrain.

It has turned the construction of self into a public project. Brought up with MySpace and Facebook to externalize their identity – to 'share' their most intimate photographs, to rank their friends and lovers as they do their movies and music, to 'post' their banal doings and emotings, to announce their sexual status and daily plans, to vie for the most 'friends' like celebrities, and all for public consumption and comment – this generation, more than any before it, lives in public. They die in public too.

There is no death on the internet – only entertainment. No reality; just movies. No self, no identity; just image.

Julia Magnet is a journalist in New York.

Happiness by Index and Decree

Christie Davies

So we are to be happy. Mr Cameron has said so. The ancient philosophical problem 'what is happiness?' has finally been solved. We are to have an official happiness index, incapable of error and accurate to the third decimal place, that will guide the thoughts and policies of our great helmsman. Cameron has denied that his plan is 'airy-fairy and impractical'; his choice of words indicates that it will be just that.

This new index is to replace national income and economic growth as an indicator of how well we are doing. Reading between the lines, it means that he does not believe there is going to be any growth and that as the power stations, including the nuclear ones, shut down as a result of EU greenist policies, we will have to get used to being happy in the dark and the cold. Britain can take it. Happiness is the spirit of the Blitz in peacetime. No doubt our Muslim friends will provide a few bombs as well.

Everyone knows that national income and economic growth are flawed measures of how well the people of a country are thriving. It was long ago pointed out by Peter Bauer that the low national incomes of some countries quoted with 'shock-horror' by leftists were not a good measure of their peoples' misery relative to the happiness enjoyed by those from whom aid was being demanded. It was equally obvious that Blair's boast that Britain was the world's sixth largest economy was a mere statistical trick and that other countries had a better life. Only the supporters of the old Soviet Union believed that growth for growth's sake led to happiness. So what is new?

The real agenda of Cameron's red and green civil servants and advisers comes in the small print. We are told that as a move towards constructing the happiness index 'from April the Office for National Statistics will start measuring [at a cost of £2 million] factors such as income inequality, health and education levels and the environment'. Cunningly to link increased spending on these with the enhanced happiness of the people is the perfect legitimacy for the soft socialist and soft-headed ideology of Cameron's progressive friends on the better side of Notting Hill. Ironically all such expenditure is already built into the national income figures and into calculations of growth. National income includes the salaries of all those employed in the health service, in schools, in running the system of welfare benefits and wrecking the skyline with 'green' windmills. Furthermore these people are all paid from the increased tax revenues that economic growth in the private sector makes possible. When that growth stops, cuts happen.

We already measure longevity and levels of illness and disability and also make a farcical and dishonest attempt to try to measure how much worthwhile education people receive. Farcical because it is based not on outputs such as demonstrable skills, literacy, numeracy, knowledge and culture but on inputs such as how many years people spend in school or how much the government spends on education. The compilers of the happiness index will use the same kind of Stalinist economics. Then will follow the fatuous project of trying to calculate exactly how much each of these inputs contributes to happiness and aggregating them together to form a single index number. The composition of the happiness index that emerges will be arbitrary and political, depending on which spending department or pressure group is able to lean hardest on the statisticians to give greater weight to what they want or provide.

The claim is now being made that the new happiness bureaucrats can and will extract from the public their views on what 'matters to them most'. How? Imagine the questionnaires asking 'Do you think that more health is a good/very good/very very good thing?' (tick one box only) 'How much happier would you be if the government banned shirts made from genetically modified cotton?' 'Would you have been happier if your education had enabled you to read this questionnaire?' The answers would have no meaning and they cannot be added together to construct an index. So will it be back to myopic focus groups; little sets of self-important 'committed' progressives with nothing better to do, solving the problem of how to allocate 'taxpayers'-money-paid-for happiness spending' by chattering over their caffeine-free instant. They have measured out our lives with coffee spoons.

When it comes to making purchases our citizens show in their everyday behaviour a striking aptitude for measuring their own pursuit of happiness, for they know exactly the subjective worth of each expenditure and how it compares with rival pleasures on offer because of the price mechanism. Unlike our rulers, I sufficiently respect the judgement of those we put on juries to be willing to give them, as in Switzerland, a

far greater degree of direct power over political matters through referenda. Of what value are their (or yours or my) musings on happiness down the phone to a government interviewer cold calling them during their favourite television programme? There will be less choice not more. Centralised happiness is the enemy of freedom, indeed the enemy of happiness itself.

What lies behind Mr Cameron's latest silly fad is a new piece of charlatanry by the professors called 'happiness economics'. These economists claim that as countries get richer their individual citizens at first report becoming a lot happier but then the increments of happiness become smaller as they get richer still. This they call economics? Is it surprising that those who have too little to eat, a lack of clean drinking water, ragged and dirty clothing and little access to the products of our western pharmaceutical companies should not quickly perceive that their miseries have massively abated when these deficiencies are remedied? Once these obvious needs have been met, they are taken for granted and positive happiness, as distinct from an absence of hunger and pain, is very difficult to define. Answers to the question 'how happy are you?' become meaningless and the way they are answered is culturally determined. People say what they think they are expected to say, which excuses them from thinking.

With wealth also comes modernity and with modernity the risk of the breakdown of tradition and continuity and of family and local communities. This is what Tony Blair and perhaps George Osborne mean when they seek forcibly to 'modernise' us by eliminating our national customs and identity, our time-honoured ways and comfortable habits in the name of diversity and rationalisation. Some of these unhappiness-inducing changes are a consequence of economic development but deliberately to magnify and accelerate them as a matter of policy is seriously to undermine the palpable benefits that economic growth brings. Social change may also bring either secularisation and a sense of meaninglessness or else a retreat into a religious fanaticism and hatred quite different from settled faith. You can be sure that the constructers of the happiness index will not be asking about these matters, nor about the destruction of pride and security brought about by the miseries of 'diversity'. Blairist modernity brings with it isolation, loneliness, a loss of personal autonomy and the replacement of a sense of duty and loyalty by alienated obedience to distant bureaucratic decrees.

The pursuit of a happiness index will destroy happiness for the expansion of the institutions and the regulations favoured by the happiness economists will lead to the extension and intensification of bureaucratic controls. As we know from recent experience, this will destroy the exercise of individual judgement in or satisfaction from professional employment. Ask an NHS doctor, a teacher, a legal aid lawyer, or a police officer how they feel about it. The oppressive controls, the meaningless targets, the fatuous 'proper procedures', the idiotic forms are all a result of the measuring of inputs in the absence of any proper measures of output. The educational establishment love forms and procedures because they cannot measure educational attainment properly. Indeed they dare not, which is why they have tried to deceive us by grade inflation and fiddling exam results.

How are our index compilers going to measure how much happier people are for being given, or more accurately forced to endure, yet more education? For many young people secondary education beyond the age of fourteen is a form of conscription, even of incarceration in a place where there is no escape from bullying by their nastier contemporaries. It is a source not of happiness but of boredom, resentment and sometimes fear, and this is never going to change. For many truancy is a rational choice, a costless way of avoiding unhappiness. Why should we expect everyone to enjoy learning and to want more of it? For decades, by my own free choice, I have spent nothing whatsoever on music, except as presents for others. I have entirely normal hearing and can sing both hymns and ribald comic songs in tune but I utterly loathe concerts and choirs, folk-clubs and pop festivals, indeed music-making of all kinds, and never ever go to them. Hence I can easily understand those who gain no happiness from learning, even though it is the very centre of my own life. Of those who freely choose education, many only endure it to gain a bogus bureaucratic 'credential', a piece of paper that will in time bring them more money to spend on the wonderfully varied products of capitalism.

There is one further unhappy product of 'modernity', one exacerbated by leftist social policy, that the indexers will choose not to examine. Happy adults are in general the product of a happy childhood and this is most likely to be experienced in a stable family of three or fewer children continuously brought up by their biological parents until they are ready and old enough to leave home. Welfare policies shaped by socialist and feminist ideology have diminished the probability that children will experience this. One of the unhappiest experiences for children, but one often favoured by feminists, is living in serial illegitimacy with a rapidly changing succession of 'Mum's boyfriends'. An absent father and a fickle mother do not make for happiness. The products of these 'alternative' families are not only unhappy but a source of unhappiness in others, for

they are more likely to become bullies and criminals and to set up another generation of dysfunctional pseudo-families. It is the broken family that causes the broken society. You may be sure that the happiness-indexers will not properly include family life in their calculations, for this would mean being judgemental in ways unacceptable to the progressive mind.

The very idea of a happiness index is mendacious and its construction irrational. It is also philistine. A learned and cultured country is a better country; whether it has as a result a higher happiness index is not relevant. Likewise the preservation of pristine unspoiled stretches of coast and country is good in itself, even if it frustrates those who would be happier with an endless Costa del Chips. We do not need a happiness index to justify those things that do not get into GDP.

Christie Davies is the author of The Strange Death of Moral Britain, *Transaction 2006.*

Where do we come from?

Brian Ridley

Charles Darwin, if he were told what we now know about cell chemistry, would have been appalled to discover that many of today's scientists believe his theory explains the origin of life. Darwin's theory might explain the diversity of life, but not its fundamental complexity. That secret is contained in the cell whose origin we are no closer to explaining than we were in 1859. The problem of how the first cell evolved can be compared to observing an Olympic racing bike assembling itself from a few piles of randomly scattered chemicals, then setting itself upright and riding off without a rider – to a specific destination. (Ed)

It all started a long time ago. In the beginning, according to the Book of Physics, there was immensely hot matter, an expanding space, gravity and electromagnetism. Eventually, all the matter turned out to be protons, neutrons and electrons, all rushing about madly, that eventually resolved itself into hydrogen and helium and a few of the lightest elements. And that, as far as the genesis of the elements was concerned, was more or less it. Certainly not enough to explain life. The manufacture of the rest of the elements had to await the formation of stars through the action of gravity. In the raging nuclear furnaces that were the interiors of stars, all the elements heavier than helium were produced and scattered throughout space when the star exploded, going on to form other stars and their companion planets and, incidentally, you and me, and all the life on Earth.

It's a great story, and the evidence concerning the proportion of helium to hydrogen seen throughout the universe, says that it could well be true. That's the easy bit. But what about the origin of life? Life, says science, is animated matter. It is an unusual property of matter, admittedly, but surely explicable by the known laws of physics and chemistry? Given the known complexity of even the simplest living cell, an explanation along these lines is bound to be a task of heroic proportions. I happen to believe that it is doomed from the start, and I shall say why later.

Life is indeed, mysteriously, a manifestation of matter, with nothing supernatural about it. Its matter is, in fact, limited to a few elements – carbon above all, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur and a few others – a selection of the lightest elements of the Periodic Table, which makes life essentially a manifestation of the chemistry of carbon. It seems that life positively needs complexity, and carbon, with its unparalleled ability to form long chains to which are attached molecules of all sorts, allows the formation of those gigantic molecules – proteins, lipids and nucleic acids – found in all cells, bacterial or human. But what is really awesome is the purposeful organization of the behaviour of these molecular juggernauts that constitutes the metabolism of the cell. There are proteins and lipids to be sent to repair and maintain the membrane that protects the cell from its environment; there are responses to be made to external signals. Above all, energy has to be extracted from its environment to fuel all the cell's chemical activities, and waste products have to be binned – in short, the cell has to feed and excrete. Moreover all these activities have to be precisely timed. One note out of sequence in the cell orchestra of tens of thousands of instruments means its ultimate extinction.

In many-celled organism, like ourselves – and we have a lot; there are more cells in the tip of your thumb than people on the earth – cells come in organised divisions. Some may have to divide to replace dead

cells, and there is the special group that creates sperm and eggs for passing on the genetic inheritance. Some know that they are kidney cells, some liver cells, muscle cells, and brain cells. How do they know? All of this bewildering complexity arising out of inanimate matter requires an explanation, an explanation that has to obey Francis Bacon's injunction to keep God out of it. Can it be done?

The fact of the matter is that nobody knows. The origin of life is a deep, unsolved scientific mystery. Darwin himself speculated that some sort of primitive life may have arisen on the young Earth in a warm pond containing an unusual concentration of appropriate nutrients. This idea that life began in some sort of primeval soup became more or less text-book wisdom. But where did those nutrients come from? Today, we know that there is an abundance of nutrients in every drop of water, but they are either alive and good to eat or once alive and still good to eat. They are of biological origin. But we are considering a scenario where life has yet to happen. Darwin's soup must not be of biological origin. Happily, it is found that some suitable organic nutrients that do not have a biological origin certainly do exist and can occur quite naturally given the right conditions. Which could provide a start. But there is no way that those gigantic molecules like proteins and nucleotides could occur naturally, no matter what length of time is available. They need cell chemistry. And here emerges a frightening problem: To make a cell you have to start with its outer envelope called a membrane, which itself is made of complicated chains of proteins and fats. So where does the cell, which makes the proteins, get the proteins from in the first place to make the cell? You can forget about the accidental blundering together of the constituents of the first protein somewhere in the vastness of the universe. Material scientists tell us that synthesising complex polymers in the laboratory needs a degree of controlled purity and conditions far beyond what is possible in the wild. It seems that the idea of a gradual evolution towards a working cell faces a stiff problem.

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A suggestion that problems associated with the complexity of organic molecules can be solved if life-like forms began with inorganic matter has been made by Graham Cairns-Smith, a physical chemist at the University of Glasgow. He points to the well-known phenomenon of molecular self-assembly such as occurs in the formation of crystals. When crystals break any defects or faults are duplicated. This replication can happen in the tiny crystals that occur in various forms of clay and these properties of self-assembly and replication, representing a low-tech form of life, may ultimately be exploited by organic defects in the crystal to eventually produce the high-tech life we are familiar with.

Other scientists like the idea of replication and they consider the possibility of one of those complex organic molecules discovering how to self-replicate. Given a very special soup it has been demonstrated that RNA can self-replicate, which leads some to consider the origin of life is in a RNA world. But it has to be a very special soup. How special? To find a tureen of it somewhere in the cosmos is as likely as coming across a copy of this magazine floating in orbit around a star a million light years away. Possible by a sheer fluke of self-assembly, one admits; after all if the universe is old enough and enough chemicals bump into one another in the right order a fluke *Salisbury Review* might be produced, but who really believes that? Nevertheless, the idea of a replicating molecule of some sort in Darwin's primeval soup to trigger off life is basic text-book wisdom.

An interesting model was advanced by the Russian scientist Alexander Oparin, interesting in that he puts metabolism first, replication second. He notes that a mixture of organic material and water could separate into cell-size droplets. Each droplet would consist of a concentration of organic material that could conceivably develop a self-sustaining metabolism in its interaction with its liquid environment, competing with other globules. A successful one would grow and ultimately divide, its daughter droplet retaining the chemistry of the successful metabolism. All it needed for this metabolic life to be converted into real life is the capture of a replicating molecule like RNA.

All of this is very well provided that the lifeless organic chemicals that are needed are of the right sort. Many organic molecules are dissymmetric, that is, they come in left-handed or right-handed versions, depending on how their constituent atoms and groups are situated in space, and they have different chemical properties in spite of their having identical atoms. Just as a left-hander cannot write perfect copperplate with his right hand, a right-handed carbon-based molecule cannot write the copperplate designs needed for the chemistry of life. Naturally occurring molecules and those synthesized in the laboratory appear in equal amounts of left- and right-handed versions. Not so those in living cells! It turns out that the amino acids

that make up all the proteins are left-handed. Odd, not to say sinister. Presumably the right-handed ones didn't work as well.

So, is the paradigmatic soupy pond where life began? Few people subscribe to that today, and not only because of the unlikelihood of finding a tureen of it somewhere out there. There is another very good reason – the young surface of the Earth, bombarded repeatedly by meteors of the kind whose explosive prints are etched on the surface of the Moon, was no place to be. Even if life started in a soupy pool, it wouldn't last long. A decent sized meteor of the size that is thought to have brought about the extinction of the dinosaurs would wreak global havoc. The Earth is some 4.5 billion years old and the earliest signs of fossil microbial life date back possibly 3.8 billion years. For those earliest life forms to originate on the Earth's surface is too improbable. The first delicate life forms – single-cell affairs like bacteria – needed shelter, and where better than the ocean floor or even beneath it in the rocky crust? Bacteria, it turns out, don't necessarily need sunlight or oxygen, and some are known to be able to stand the high pressures and temperatures that exist near volcanic vents on the ocean floor. Even stranger, deep drilling reveals rocks containing populations of bacteria. There are bacteria of one sort and another everywhere – eating the concrete of old-fashioned drains, thriving in the radiation of atomic piles and buried nuclear waste, travelling across empty cold space in meteors and comets, sheltered from the lethal ultra-violet radiation of the sun by the rock or ice in which they hide.

This ability of living spores to travel across space supports the old theory of Panspermia that argues that the seeds of life are everywhere in the universe. So life need not have begun on Earth at all. Indeed, life, given time, would appear wherever there was a suitable source of energy and nutrients no matter how bizarre the location. It would only be in the form of a primitive cell, but Darwinian evolution would do the rest. Life, on this reading, is as old as the universe. But it had to begin somehow.

In the attempts to model the origin of life on the basis of quantum chemistry and physics it is natural to focus on the simplest case such as the single-cell bacterium. And now I would claim that this approach is doomed from the start. There is something crucial that is missing. Jumping from the simplest organism to the most complex we encounter not only the intricate chemistry of our cells, even more complex than that of the bacterium, but we come across the phenomenon of mind. Consciousness is as naturally occurring as anything else, yet its nature lies obstinately outside the realms of science. Think of the experience of redness, of bitterness, of hardness, and all those secondary qualities that Locke dismisses. All are real, yet exist in a world complementary to science – redness is different from wavelength, bitterness from chemical reactions, hardness from electrochemical forces. If the laws of quantum chemistry and physics cannot explain the mind, then in an explanation of the origin of life on the basis of those laws there will be something missing.

Science is healthily sceptical of any concept of a life force that exists outside the known laws of matter, yet it hasn't completely demolished the nineteenth century idea of vitalism. For good reason. There is an awareness that something is, indeed, missing in all attempts to understand this curious property of matter that is life. A popular tack is to draw a parallel with the computer, the molecules of the cell being the hardware, the genetic code in DNA the software. The new ingredient is 'information'. DNA stores the information needed to operate the cell. Where does 'information' come from? It cannot arise spontaneously so it must come from the environment, an increase of information in the cell compensated by a deficiency of the same in the environment. It seems to me this does not get us very far. Moreover, it is surely heretical, for information is meaningful only to minds. Are molecules mindful of the information stored in the DNA? Do they act accordingly with purpose? Or is the introduction of 'information' a bowdlerism for cell consciousness? Consciousness is as much a property of matter as gravity, infinitely more mysterious. It surely cannot be ignored in any serious account of life. But card-carrying materialists of the old school will see it as opening a can of worms, with its implications of intention and purpose. But mind exists. What is needed in addition to quantum chemistry and physics is an account of the phenomenon of matter that is mind. Without it I can't see how life and its origins can be explained.

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Dr Hobson's Choice

Myles Harris

'Whitehall has always hated us,' said a GP, 'we are highly efficient, independent contractors. It is why they are going to make us responsible for the NHS budget but give us 56 per cent less than they pay NHS administrators. If we fail the danger is they will hand the whole lot over to the private sector.'

Why had GPs accepted?

'Apathy,' was the reply, 'most don't care about politics, they just want to be left alone to treat their patients. But there are always a few enthusiasts anxious to take up a challenge.'

The other GPs in the room looked glum. Like battered wives, family doctors suffer from learned helplessness. They have learned whatever they do is wrong. The *Daily Mail* accuses them of earning £250,000 a year but neglected to say that most full time GPs do not earn more than £100,000 a year for a 12 hour day seeing on average about 35 patients, each for 10 minutes, plus half a day a week on paperwork. Among the 200 or so patients the modern GP sees each week, there will be at least one new, undiagnosed and possibly fatal illness. Mistakes are not tolerated; the concentration, despite abuse, hostility, the enormous pressure on one's time, and in inner cities the inability of many patients to speak English, is immense. Nevertheless while New Labour was cutting practice incomes from 2008, it was as keen as the *Daily Mail* to promote the image of the greedy GP. Despite this people when asked whom they trust most, reply 'doctors', the least, politicians. Gordon Brown, the Great Universal Provider, could not bear this.

In 2013 GPs will be handed £80 billion of NHS cash and told to shop around for treatments. Choosing a suitable treatment, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley announced, is something a GP does every day, so he should be equally skilled at bulk buying anything from incontinence pads to heart transplant operations. He wants GPs to form purchasing consortia representing around 100,000 patients. For example if they estimate that of these some 200 will break their hips, they will go to the market for that number of hip operations. Cost, quality, turnover and complication rates will decide contracts. Most GPs received this diktat, the political equivalent of leaving them in a locked room with a bottle of whisky and a pistol, with horror.

'Virtual' GP commissioning has been tried in the NHS. It was never taken seriously because it demanded an answer to the question 'who pays?' which politicians have been avoiding since 1948 when Aneurin Bevan announced a 'free' NHS in the House of Commons. Every time a GP ordered a test, or sent you to hospital, the NHS attached a virtual price to the 'purchase'. If the doctor saved money he got some of it back to spend on new equipment for his practice, not on himself. There was no link between doctors' incomes and their clinical decisions.

In 2013, it is rumoured, such a link, between doctors' salaries and their clinical decisions, should be established. However instead of doctors making purchases on behalf of individual patients they will rely on deals struck by their consortia. If a GP decides not to buy the bargain hip operation his consortium has purchased from St Bogwena's, then it is rumoured, the money will come from his pocket. It is only a rumour because the nettle of what happens to a GP who has overspent his share of the consortium's budget, or a consortium that has overspent its entire budget, has yet to be grasped. Once again the Delphic question 'who pays?' rears its ugly head.

There is, of course, a simple solution, but it would involve giving patients a choice of doctor and a choice of hospital, the last thing Whitehall wants. Consortia are a terrible idea and the notion that they reflect the economies of scale is rubbish. They enshrine Whitehall's conviction that nobody outside the civil service is competent to run the NHS, least of all patients themselves. Corralling GPs into consortia means the doctors can be easily controlled and in time power drained from them to the centre.

The solution would be to allow individual doctors to buy clinical services from anywhere they liked and patients to consult any doctor they liked. This would create an efficient and flexible market with supply rapidly matching demand, and restore that cornerstone of good medicine, the right to a personal doctor. Good doctors would flourish, bad doctors who denied patients treatments in order to line their pockets would find themselves without business. As a result a whole tier of managerial dead wood could be stripped from the NHS and, by doing so amputate, if not the dead hand of Whitehall in its entirety, at least some of its gangrenous fingers.

Such freedom will never be allowed. Instead commissioning boards with draconian powers will oversee consortia in their search for what is 'best' for patients, rewarding thrifty GP groups and punishing spendthrifts. What would happen if it came to a head to head between a consortium of overspending GPs and Whitehall is unknown. Some fear the commissioner might

parachute private health care companies into districts where doctors did not do what they were told.

Is all this really necessary? The NHS has vastly improved over the last decade. The *New England Journal of Medicine* reports: 'Waits for elective surgery have largely disappeared, people with suspected cancers are now seen by specialists within 2 weeks, and survival rates among patients hospitalized in critical care units have increased by more than 2 per cent per year.' It is not the whole picture. There have been horrible scandals such as Staffordshire and Essex, but the majority of anecdotal accounts support the prestigious journal's claims. Over the last decade my local teaching hospitals have been transformed, and even the most carping of my patients offer little complaint.

The Tories insist however that something has to be done about costs. The NHS must be turned into a market and the question answered, 'Are we as good as our continental neighbours in getting value for money?' According to the Tories at present the answer is 'no'. It is true that Europe has better results for certain illnesses such as cancer, but the differences are marginal, subject to collection errors, and costs vary wildly. France spent so much on health care it invited British GPs to advise on how it could curb limitless demands for treatment. Other health statistics for advanced countries are confusing. The OECD considers the NHS to be a highly economical way of supplying treatment, but thinks it fails to deliver the Rolls Royce standards of some European countries. In addition the figures are muddied by immigrants from very poor countries. Holland, which spends a great deal on health, has a very large number of migrants. We do too, but still manage, despite spending much less, to come in just behind Germany in life expectancy.

No European country is as bad as America in delivering a decent quality of universal health care. Nevertheless some of the biggest names in US Health are offering their services to 'support' GP consortia in their search for market value. The danger is that GP consortia will, like that unfortunate species of male spider, find themselves in bed with commercial partners who intend to devour them after intercourse. Once British GPs have been sucked dry of their market intelligence, and the brightest offered lip-buttoning salaries to join the boards of health providers such as Tribal or America's United Health Care – the latter already has a contract with a large number of North London GPs – the big providers will start lobbying to take over. If they can dominate a handful of consortia they will be able to dip into the pool of administrators who ran the old NHS, 70 per cent of whom are expected to be retained by consortia under the new arrangements. As the mess deepens, and high-risk uninsurable patients become sidelined by the private sector, various government quangos will rise like Dracula from temporary entombment to scatter restrictive regulations on doctors who protest.

But neither Big Pharma or Whitehall want an efficient and flexible market or patients to have the luxury of a personal doctor. They want the cheapest doctors. They are supported by deluded open marketeers – they gave you the 2008 crash – who see nothing wrong with a Big Pharma /Whitehall takeover. Believing that what is good enough for Sainsbury's is good enough for the NHS, they ignore how badly the semi-rigged market model of health care has failed the US. It spends far more per head on health care than any other country in the world yet is 49th out of 229 in the CIA factbook of life expectancy at birth.

This could happen here. Blessed with enormous purchasing power private health care companies will attempt to wipe out GP practices as their supermarket equivalents wiped out the small high street traders. Market fanatics ask, 'what's wrong with that?' Supermarkets offer choice, low prices and quality. What is so different about health? Nothing as long as you don't mind your health depending on an inherently unstable supply chain. Thanks to the way we presently arrange our food supplies through supermarkets Britain is only nine meals away from starvation, so tight are the delivery and supply arrangements of this hyper competitive system. A sudden 25 per cent hike in the price of oil or three simultaneous continental crop failures could see food riots in our cities. Drugs depend on oil, both for their transport and for their manufacture, as do the plastics involved in surgery and many other medical supplies. As commodity prices rise, large private suppliers will rig the market against the NHS, citing a need to supply more favourable harder currency outlets overseas. There will be no room for the little man to fill the gaps.

GPs are aware of this. They know big business will gut the health service and, like the banks, leave the government to pick up their remains. Our health will be bought and sold by bond shavers, bent mortgage brokers, all the rotten regiments of the crooked City of London. Choice will diminish, some of our greatest hospitals will vanish, lawyers will prosper and patients suffer.

All that stands in the way of such disasters is Britain's GPs. Despised by Whitehall, laughed at by politicians, they are seen as the ideal fall guys for a take over by big business. Surely a group of scruffy, disorganised medical shopkeepers cannot withstand the well oiled lying machines of Whitehall and Big Business? I would like to think that is not true, that in the tradition of this country, small groups of people have risen to the defence of the many and won. What is at stake in this battle is privacy, individual care, honesty, ethics, and a doctor's duty to his patient as an individual rather than to corporations or governments. Whitehall has been defeated by GPs before. We shall see.

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Euthanasia

Jonathan Price

It would seem to be no accident that the word chosen to combat one of the oldest human prejudices, against killing oneself, is so gentle on the ear. In an informal survey of loquacious friends I have discovered few words in English less onomatopoeic, where the sense is further from the sound, than 'euthanasia'. Notable competitors are 'rapprochement' (which is French), 'pulchritude' (which is mostly Latin). Then there is 'woebegone' which evokes the exact opposite of its meaning. But 'euthanasia' is as pleasant and easy to say as it is misleading. I was thus surprised when, as a teenager, I first saw America's Dr Death (Jack Kevorkian) on TV explaining what he did under his infelicitous neologism, 'medicide'. Kevorkian's aside, I would wager that the poetics of euthanasia, like those of abortion (cf 'pro-choice'), have had more to do with its acceptance – have moved the politics further toward its position – than addressing the question of death, and particularly what makes a 'good death' (*eu-thanatos*), ever would have.

We live in an age of access. Basic healthcare is available to all British and Western Europeans. Death retains its status as the only incurable disease. But dying, as it was understood a hundred years ago, is nearly extinct. Modern painkillers, sedatives, surgery and mood stabilizers ensure that almost no one now dies 'in unbearable pain'. Or, if he does, it is only because both 'unbearable' and 'pain' have been redefined downward. Yet the cries for euthanasia grow louder, especially in places where modern medicine is ubiquitous. The language employed is usually utilitarian ('pain-talk') or rights-based ('my body, my right'). In Europe the former predominates; whereas in America it's the latter. The UK seems to be a mixed bag.

Yet the language defending euthanasia rarely touches upon the act itself, its morality, the nature of (human) life, or (our membership of) communities consisting of mothers, fathers, friends and siblings, and children, any of whom you may just as easily have a duty to live for as you have the right to die for. Distracted by the potential diseases or the inalienable rights, the conversation moves swiftly and comfortably into the picturesque world of the subjunctive: *What should a 93 year old, blind quadriplegic do?*

The rhetoric of euthanasia is then a hodgepodge of very different arguments: ending pain, the feeling of being abandoned and unnecessary, being tired of life, or the ability to decide for oneself. These rarely coincide with a particular case, but together they are taken to make a 'plausible' case in its favour. Much is based on dubious dogmas and is full of fatuous reasoning. In Holland a group of prominent Dutchmen is proposing that anyone over seventy should be allowed to 'do the Dutch' for any reason they wish, since they have lived long enough to make such a decision. This being 'old enough to decide to die' is very wishy-washy. You only die once, you have no idea what it is and what it is like before it happens. So, how can you know that you want it? What gives you the certainty that it is time for you to go? Why would being older prepare you for it in any way, except that it is closer today than it was yesterday? There may be good answers to these questions, but they are not given.

None of this would be possible without the full cooperation of large numbers of doctors – most of the 'medical community', as it were. These doctors are supposed to have taken some sacred oath, which the public speaks of with particular awe. This adds an air of noble purpose to medicine. Perhaps the oath was designed in antiquity because doctors – being human, all too human – were tempted toward abuses of power; they needed to swear to a few deities, 'I will do no harm or injustice to [my patients]', because there was a real risk of them otherwise trying to play God. Of the very few sins mentioned by name in the original, long defunct Hippocratic oath, two have become part and parcel to the trade of late modern medicine: 'I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan; and similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion.' (*How terribly quaint. It must have been written by fundamentalist Christians. Oh, the Greeks wrote it, you say?*) Violation of this oath was supposed to cost the doctor 'the respect of all men for all time'.

Eventually the oath was modernized as doctors adjusted themselves to the more prominent place of medicine in society in a world without God. A common version of the modern oath from 1964 contains the following:

> Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given to me to save a life, all thanks. But it may also be within my power to take a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God. [...so that I may] long experience the joy of healing those who seek my help.

This oath tells the swearer that he should not play God

but, if he has to, then to remember his own 'frailty'. Of course, God must be removed from all things these days as a matter of course. This is a pity, since 'The Oath of Maimonides' gets to the heart of the contemporary profession but mentions you-know-who: 'Thou has appointed me to watch over the life and death of Thy creatures'. With God gone, it is more apropos to say, 'I am appointed to watch over life and death.'

You only need to do a brief survey of literature to come across the fear of doctors. Oaths such as those currently in use will do little to allay such fear. In spite of the better angels of the profession, doctors have always been dangerous; quacks abound, and their methods change as quickly as their prices. This is why the fear of doctors persists and is rational. In America, medical treatment is the third leading cause of death, just behind heart disease and cancer (and similar statistics exist for other Western nations). But the doctors are catching up. To be fair, one of the reasons that deaths from heart attacks and cancer have declined relative to doctors is better treatment. The number of official assisted suicides now exceeds the annual murder rate in Holland by an order of magnitude. In every case, a doctor must be part of the administration of the lethal dose. If not already, soon doctors stand a chance of being the number one cause of death in the Netherlands – and we have not even spoken about abortion.

The reader may laugh, hoping I am being facetious. It will certainly be an anxious chuckle such as only absurdity can produce. When the profession which began by dedicating itself to life is found to be the willing transmitter of the very disease it set out to treat, there is no other register that human emotions have. We release the absurdity with a laugh. Yet we still must face the absurdity of death. Doing away with the problems of dying procedurally does not remove the problem of death or the problem of life, or life's problems. And since death is increasingly faced only with reluctance and very little courage, we certainly will not be able to understand what Spenser could have meant when he said: 'Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,/ Ease after war, death after life does greatly please.'

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The King's Speech

Myles Harris

King George VI sometimes spoke on the radio. He stuttered in a way that put you on the edge of your chair. His voice was thin and he could not pronounce the letter 'r'. He always spoke just after Christmas dinner. My father would turn on the big battery radio next to the dining table which hummed for a few minutes as it warmed up, gave a painful howl and then settled down to a steady hiss.

Then an upper class voice would say:

The King

The national anthem would play and we would all stand although that was difficult because there was very little room between the table and the walls of our tiny dining room. Then the King's voice would come. Fading and rising over the hum of the air waves, the quavering, stuttering voice talked of those who had given their lives during the war. My mother would cry. I know now, sixty odd years later, she was thinking of Mrs Hawkins down the street who had lost her husband at sea and had come in and cried in my mother's arms in our kitchen; and of her Irish Cousin Blanche who had come one day to tea wearing a British officer's uniform with a shiny Sam Browne belt. My brother told me he had sat on his knee and played with the buttons on his shoulder tags. He had gone away to be replaced by a mass card in my mother's missal which said:

> Of your charity pray for the soul of 2nd Lieutenant Blanche Kehoe. Aged 22. Killed at Syracuse Sicily July 24th 1943.

He had a small moustache and the same smile around the corners of his mouth as my mother had when she talked about heaven.

My father would always clear his throat a lot after the King had spoken. I asked my mother one day if the Pope was more important than the King. She said not to the Protestants as they did not have The Faith. The Faith was more important than anything in this life and I had better set about getting it. I asked my mother if the Protestants would ever get The Faith.

'One day, praise be to God,' my mother said, 'the English will be converted. But that is for the Pope and the Saints in heaven, not for little boys. Your job is to get to heaven.' She lit a Senior Service and told me to be off.

Ireland Changes its Landlords

Christopher Arkell

In Bernard Shaw's play of 1904, *John Bull's Other Island*, a plausible Irishman on the make brings back an Englishman from London who lends the Irish locals sums of money they think are gifts. In the end they find out that the gifts are actually loans secured on their property, which the Englishman intends to demolish to make way for an amusement park.

Just over a century later, the English have given way to European bankers who have been lending Ireland and its property dwellers and developers uncontrolled sums of money. The Irish thought these loans were gifts to help them become prosperous Germans without the hard work of building Mercedes cars and working in chemical factories. The men from Brussels (cloaked behind a few conveniently public figures from the IMF) have now come to Dublin to show how very wrong the locals have been: loans, not gifts, and secured on the taxes and state assets of the once and former independent Irish Free State.

VIEW OF THE LAW COURTS, LOOKING UP THE LIFFEY, DUBLIN, 1799

The Irish newspapers have been full of the shame that the commentators feel as a result of what they have just discovered: Ireland's loss of sovereignty. They are taking this matter much more to heart than the Greeks. They are lamenting that the last 90 odd years have been in vain – they are back where they started, a colony of an overseas power. All that has happened is that the Sovereign who rules them is no longer the UK monarch but the college of bankers and eurocrats in Brussels. Revenge has already begun to be taken. A recent by-election saw the defeat of a Fianna Fail candidate by a Sinn Fein one. As we go to press a larger vote is forecast in the General Election on 25th February for anti-EU parties (essentially Sinn Fein, the Socialists and some Labour independents) which might install a Sinn Fein-influenced coalition. At the very least, the present governing party, Fianna Fail, will be in opposition with Sinn Fein and it is not certain which will form the official opposition to a Fine Gael/ Labour coalition. Whatever the party composition of the next Irish government, it must follow the terms of the recent agreement to the letter. It cannot default.

This agreement is notable for the wide variation in interest rates charged by the IMF and the European Central Bank. The IMF are content to lend Ireland money at the rate of 2.9 per cent. The Eurocrats require 6.2 per cent. The IMF's deputy director for European affairs, Ajai Chopra, disclosed why when interviewed on Radio 4 on Thursday 25 November. The IMF can itself borrow in a basket of currencies (including the US$ and UK Sterling) at rates below those which the average of all European Union euro-member states can. In addition, the Eurocrats are minded to punish Ireland in order to set an example to other potentially recalcitrant euro-zone members. And most important of all, the Eurocrats see the Irish loan as an opportunity to enforce economic co-ordination from Brussels (for which read Berlin and Paris) on the whole euro-zone, and the UK if at all possible.

Dominic Strauss-Kahn, head of the IMF, an old and still dangerous French leftie, is promoting this fiscal and economic unification of Euro-land as a preparation to full and final political union: he refers to the Euro-zone but he intends control to extend over the entire European Union. To prevent any further member-state interference in its own economy, he proposes that economic control should rest with the European Commission or a new body, rather than the European Council, where heads of state meet. His approach is echoed by Jean-Claude Trichet, the head

of the European Central Bank.

So Eurocrats are rather confident that the Irish and Portuguese crises (and maybe the Italian and Spanish ones to come) will force all EU member state governments to abandon what little independence they still have from the European Commission. However, whilst Euroland can just about afford the cost of the Greek and Irish rescues, it cannot possibly afford to rescue both Spain and Italy. And the financial markets will be driven to test the ECB and Euroland. This is because there are so few 'one-way' bets available in the global economy at present. The national bond issues of weak Euro-land countries can be sold short (forget about the impotent rules that the EC introduced earlier this year) and money made that way. Those who buy the debt thus sold short will either be national institutions (which will take a book loss on the debt they hold but cover the loss by the issuance of new debt) or commercial institutions which may eventually hold the debt instruments which will be producing higher than average returns expressed in euros. And a Greek cash euro is as good as a German cash euro; though the encashment of so much debt would cause the printing presses to overheat! Nevertheless, there are still many opportunities to exchange weak government debt instruments or to put such things into pension funds where the interest yield offers a good nominal return. Many of the hedge funds which recently decamped from London to Switzerland are now actively investing on the basis of the collapse of the current euro-zone and its retraction into a core of countries based round Germany and France.

The Irish thought these loans were gifts to help them become prosperous Germans without the hard work of building Mercedes cars and working in chemical factories.

In my view and that of many professional money market traders and analysts, either the euro will disintegrate or all economic and fiscal policy will be grabbed by the European Commission and European Central Bank for the entire euro area and – in effect – the whole of Euroland: and either of these two options within the next two years.

In *John Bull's Other Island*, it is the un-frocked priest who warns his fellow countrymen against the depredations of the Englishman. Unfortunately, no priest, un-frocked or still obediently cassocked, has come forward to condemn the present extinction of Irish economic independence. Perhaps the reason lies in an extraordinary fact unearthed by the ever-diligent Labour Euro-safeguards Campaign, whose latest bulletin (November 2010) discloses that the European Commission has spent €1.6m on a programme to define God. If I were an Irishman, I'd be down on my knees asking how to sort out my country – and I'd be cursing my luck that I'd have to start from *here*. As an Englishman, I shall not gloat. Our turn comes when the remaining successful parts of our financial services are hamstrung by the Eurocrats who blame us for Ireland's woes (it's the British banks that lent them too much money).

Ireland lost its financial independence when it took in the euro. These last few weeks have baldly demonstrated this truth. Britain began to lose its independence when we signed the 1972 European Communities Act. Ireland must be a warning to us to reverse that act as soon as possible.

Christopher Arkell is an accountant.

"What's wrong with prisoners being allowed to vote?
Plenty of criminals are allowed to stand for election."

The Bricks and Mortar Fraud

Vivian Linacre

A housing market based on availability of loans threatened the West's banking system, yet the root causes of our endemic housing problems are still not recognized. Meanwhile the shortage grows still more desperate. One consolation of the 'sub-prime' crisis and ensuing credit crunch is that it may explode several perennial housing myths. In the USA the effects on housing finance were so sudden because their system was not disrupted until Wall Street's long 'bull-run' was faltering, whereas, in the UK, manipulation of housing finance as a speculative trading commodity has been integral to our housing regime for generations. We are inured to housing myths, universal use of fraudulent terms, and to their disastrous manifestations.

Defaulting on building society mortgage repayments can result in repossession of your home. There are three things wrong with this statement. It's not a building society, it's not a mortgage, and it's not repossession

The name Building Society is a relic from the age of penny-a-week Funeral Funds, Friendly Societies and Provident Clothing Clubs. The distinction between so-called building societies and banks in this context has vanished and they are equally far removed from the residential development industry.

A mortgage is a personal loan, secured by the title deeds to your home. The loan might equally well be secured by hocking your yacht or your jewellery. Building societies really perform the function of pawnbrokers, except that pawnbrokers are not inquisitive about their customers' private affairs, being solely concerned with the value of the pledges; building societies are more interested in applicants' financial and domestic status than in the value of the property. Current 'valuations' fluctuate continually, depending on changes in levels of interest rates, reflecting supplies of money to this sector of the market. Determining the amount of mortgage loan offered as a multiple of annual earnings has nothing to do with property valuation. Today, the amount of cash a purchaser has to find as a deposit continues to rise and is already far beyond the reach of most would-be buyers, while house prices continue to fall. The system is clearly bankrupt.

A true mortgage would be attached to the title deeds and transferable. As in some other countries, if I wanted to buy your house for £800,000, subject to an outstanding mortgage of £500,000 (or maybe first and second mortgages to that total), I would just pay you the £300,000 equity while assuming liability for the whole debt, thereby saving time and expenses. Instead, I have to apply for a fresh loan on the same property while you liquidate yours and start all over again elsewhere. Such confusion surrounds mortgages, even among politicians and the media, that mortgagors (borrowers) are often referred to as mortgagees; as if the lender, (the 'doer'), must be the mortgagor as opposed to the 'done to' party who must be the mortgagee.

Borrowers solemnly enter into mortgage contracts to repay over (say) 20 years, yet the national average duration between buying and reselling is less than seven years. Politicians profess sympathy with 'first-time buyers', as if they constituted a separate category deserving special treatment; but that is another misnomer, for until a mortgage is finally paid off (after buying and selling a succession of homes over half a life-time) the serial borrower still remains a 'first-time buyer' – never having actually bought anything.

The word 'repossession' implies some entirely imaginary previous ownership in order to justify seizure of a defaulting borrower's home. Nothing can be repossessed if it was never possessed in the first place. 'Dispossession' would be too dangerous politically, so the money-lending industry has woven a fantasy of benevolent lenders and fickle borrowers to conceal the reality of hard-nosed lenders and their victims which has been swallowed by government, public and media alike. Housing is so emotional and people generally are so ignorant of the law and economics that they are vulnerable to this cruel deception.

Our obsession with property must end, proclaimed an article by the Personal Finance Editor of *The Times* on 8th January this year, which concluded that simply advocating an increased rate of conventional house-building will achieve nothing, yet that seems all that our Housing Minister, Grant Shapps, and every institution with a vested interest in the system can think of. The media report every quarter on the latest oscillations with regional analyses, as if they were pronouncing on the state of the nation's health. News of inflation in prices is broadcast as good news, contrary to the interests of the nation's finances and to everybody but home-owners. The government and opposition are forever arguing whether or not housing

finance should be added to the shopping basket from which the cost of living index is calculated. Housing shortage causes misery and hardship to millions, while disrupting the business of running the economy.

The catastrophic fault-line that runs through our economy, which ever since the post-war period has diverted trillions of pounds into speculative housing finance rather than into manufacturing industry and social advancement, must be repaired permanently.

Housing is largely governed by political prejudices and short-term, ideological and fiscal considerations, resulting in disjointed legislation driven either by those who consider it a community service, divorced from market forces, or those who treat it as a major investment medium, divorced from social and planning consequences. The curse arose from the social transformation wrought by the Great War of 1914-18. Until 1914, 90 per cent of Britain's entire housing stock was privately rented. Then a rent-freeze was introduced, to protect the homes of those fighting for their country, inevitably causing a collapse in the private-rented sector. Like so many restrictions imposed as an emergency measure, rent control became a permanent instrument of government policy, reinforced by the depression of the 20s and 30s and then by World War II. So by 1950 the percentage of the nation's housing which was privately rented had halved to 45, by 1960 to 26 and by 1971 to 14 per cent. Meanwhile, two new movements had grown to replace it: council housing and private house-building for sale.

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Council housing, heavily subsidised by taxation, consumed a large slice of annual GDP, capturing millions of votes for Labour local authorities, which indulged in ever more ambitious schemes that became notorious for bad planning and inhuman design, excessive development costs and incompetent management. Most tower blocks of the 60s and 70s have already been demolished, even before central government loans are repaid. The legacy is sink estates, welfare ghettos, vandalism and delinquency. In a Socialist Utopia, the Council enjoyed absolute power, as land-owner and planning authority, developer (often employing its own Direct Labour Department as main contractor), landlord, selecting the tenants from its waiting-list, rent collector and estate manager. The inevitable result was generations of squalor and dereliction as well as safe Labour Council wards and Parliamentary constituencies.

According to Labour dogma, it was equally immoral for councils to sell as for private landlords to rent. All lettings were rent-controlled, unless they exceeded a certain rateable value and were therefore exempt, so the rich were free to make whatever rental arrangements they wished but not the *hoi polloi.* Many councils have abolished the Thatcherite right of tenants to buy while their own uninhabitable and boarded-up flats continue to increase.

Private estate development for sale grew concurrently with local authority housing throughout the inter-war and post-war periods, then boomed after council housing declined in the 80s and has increasingly dominated the market ever since. What was for some sixty years a virtual duopoly has become a private sector near-monopoly. The state does promote housing associations and imposes elements of 'social (a euphemism for 'subsidised') housing' on private developers as a form of 'planning gain', while restrictions on private renting have been relaxed. These are peripheral activities. Housing largely means either dealing in existing stock or speculative house building. Meanwhile, we are stuck with the old political and economic prejudices.

As banks and building societies merged, providing a full range of 'financial services', ever more remote from the realities of housing, so this near-monopoly become controlled by the short-term policies of a financial services industry largely dominated by a handful of huge, impersonal private institutions. That is a dangerously volatile situation. Meanwhile the housing problem has become more acute, mainly because of mass immigration, obsolescence in surviving pre-1914 stock and dilapidation of council housing, at a far faster rate than new housing construction. Households have multiplied because of increased longevity, fragmentation of the traditional family unit and greatly increased mobility. Today some two-thirds of all households consist of only one or two persons, each demanding a roof over their heads. Millions of young adults are sharing or still living with their parents, especially students and single mothers, because they cannot afford to move out. The ever-growing cost to the economy of long-distance commuting by people who cannot afford to live closer to work is incalculable.

This British malaise can be cured only by a peculiarly British prescription. And the solution is readily to hand. While we have made a hash of housing we are world-leaders in commercial real estate: in the development of shopping centres, retail parks, industrial estates and office blocks. We have devised a range of investment media and styles of occupational lease, with provision for every contingency, for durations from 5 to 50

years or more, to reconcile the interests of tenants, developers and financiers, without a penny of subsidy. Opportunities for the exercise of that commercial expertise and investment of those institutional funds are currently very limited, while the need for them in the residential sphere will never be greater.

If we are to overcome the housing crisis in the midst of an economic recession, we must reject the assumption that housing is an unprofitable form of portfolio investment. With drastic cuts in public expenditure required over the next three years, large-scale public investment in housing is neither feasible nor politically desirable, but housing could provide a viable new medium for investment of institutional funds on the massive scale that is so urgently needed. The solution must be based on creation of assets for long-term growth, adding to the nation's wealth. The need for housing is matched by the need for investment out of savings rather than out of taxation. Housing naturally lends itself to permanent investment because land has a perpetual life and residential property always has a future redevelopment capability under expert management.

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The role of either municipal or voluntary housing would not be undermined, wherever it fulfills a desperate need, nor would house-building for sale, which will always appeal in certain areas, especially at the top end of the market. However those two sectors have conspicuously failed to solve or even get to grips with this enormous problem. The explosion of the mortgage myths is dispelling the illusions of the traditional benefits of 'owner-occupation'. Meanwhile, the average age of the first-time buyer has risen to 37 and will soon exceed 40. Consequently, in this recession renting is fast and finally losing its long-standing stigma.

My proposal is a new movement based on the commercial developer's style of lease designed to give lessees ample security combined with maximum flexibility, while providing investors with a 'big-ticket' medium (every half-dozen units, including land cost, accounting for at least a million pounds) producing a safe income that rewards efficient management. It will appeal to property bonds and unit trusts, development companies – either specializing in this new sector or diversifying out of commercial property development – as well as major construction groups and institutional investors.

This new 'development leasehold' system confers all the merits of home ownership – security, variety, participation in long-term appreciation, without the risks and agonies of 'owner-occupation'. The lessee will possess an equitable interest and hence the right to assign for a premium or sublet at a profit-rent. Once endemic shortage is overcome, so that supply and demand are brought into equilibrium, then realistic economic rental levels can be established. The lease-rent will be subject to formal review at intervals of 3 or 5 years, and indexed to ensure that it merely keeps pace with inflation. Development leasehold will also provide an ideal medium for stimulus by tax incentives; accelerated depreciation allowances would prove especially effective.

Development leasehold may be inconceivable to the conventionally minded. So was suburban house-building in the 1930s; so were high-rise flats in the 1950s. Rereading about rent control only thirty years ago conjures up another alien age. The pace of change today reveals our housing system as a parochial broken-down relic. The rickety property ladder, which everybody is still encouraged to risk clambering up, must now be replaced by a safe, gentle escalator.

Several politicians have dimly perceived the nature of the solution, half-heartedly urging the introduction of long-term fixed-rate mortgages as a means of eliminating extreme market conditions and conferring some sense of security. That would result in the worst of both worlds, retaining the existing mortgage regime while permanently inflating interest rates to a level that would be sufficiently profitable for lenders to hedge against the huge risk of unforeseeable medium-term rises in the cost of money. Development leasehold confers all the benefits of long-term fixed rate mortgages but without their crippling penalties and expenses.

Development leasehold reconciles the twin principles of private ownership and public investment. It can finally liberate the nation from the disastrous cycle of housing boom and bust that we have suffered all our lives, promising an end to the insanities of repossessions, negative equity, affordable rents and *Big Issue* vendors on every street corner.

Vivian Linacre was a founding member of the Society of Property Researchers and the British Council of Shopping Centres.

An Assault on Justice

Jan Davies

The Ministry of Justice announced its plans for cutting the legal aid budget with a deadline at the end of February for responses. Many solicitors will probably not have bothered to respond since previous experience has shown that little notice was taken of their objections in the past. This government, like its predecessors, is obsessed with introducing competition for contracts, while practitioners feel the government should be thankful that there is anyone left to do this work. Many lawyers are making plans to drop legal aid work altogether. We are all going to grow old and eventually we will all need the NHS, but unless you are a regular offender, you are unlikely to be able to imagine needing legal help when you are in a police station or at court. So if the Government wants to make savage cuts to the legal aid budget it will almost certainly get away with it.

During most of 2009 solicitors were threatened by the introduction of competitive tendering. The Legal Services Commission (LSC), which administers legal aid and spends vast sums trying to micro-manage what happens in solicitors' offices, tried to label it Best Value Tendering (BVT), but there was nothing of value about it: tendering was intended to introduce cut-throat competition between legal aid firms to try to drive prices down. The government would then be able to claim that it was 'the market' which had driven down the prices and not the LSC itself. Talk of 'competition' was obviously fraudulent, because there is no 'market' when there is only one purchaser. A builder tendering for the contract of building a hospital can go elsewhere if his bid is unsuccessful. If a legal aid firm is unsuccessful in its bid for a contract to do legal aid work, it will be put out of business. With the increasing demands for more specialization, firms cannot stop and start doing legal aid work. Criminal work does not mix well with private work, and most firms that do crime do nothing else. Talk of a 'market' when there is such an inequality of bargaining power is just foolish.

At the end of last year the LSC announced that they had abandoned their plans for tendering. They cannot admit that they are wrong, as illustrated by their press releases. When they lost in the High Court because the tendering for family legal aid work was so flawed, they tried almost to give the impression that bringing a case was their idea. When the BVT abandoned tendering for criminal work, they said they would be considering 'more ambitious' plans. Many solicitors then voted Conservative or Liberal hoping that there would be a more common-sense approach. After a meeting with Dominic Grieve I was able to email a group from the Criminal Law Solicitors' Association that an incoming Conservative government would scrap Labour's plans for competitive tendering. Those of us who have been soldiering on with low pay for years thought that although there would be no increase in rates of pay, we would at least be able to continue. Before the election Jack Straw said that only large firms would be allowed to have legal aid contracts, but we counted on an incoming Conservative government realizing that the small firms who form a patchwork of cover throughout the country were worth preserving.

In June last year Jonathan Djanogly, the Minister responsible for legal aid, was reported in the *Solicitors Journal* saying that the cuts planned by the previous government of £350 million would go ahead and that the cuts would mean that a large number of small and medium-sized firms would lose their contracts. It was obviously far easier to adopt the plans of the previous government and ignore anything that had been said before the election. Solicitors felt betrayed, but not surprised. Apparently the Ministry is still hoping that 'competition' will result in a change and that they can move 'away from a model under which the LSC contracts with some 1,700 criminal providers working from over 2,000 offices'.

This government wants to cut the already parsimonious rates of legal aid pay. The criminal justice system is like an army which has an over-manned baggage train and many quarter-masters, but which wants to cut the pay and the numbers of its infantry. Presumably it is the LSC who are advising the Minister, and its staff are hardly likely to do themselves out of jobs

For a guilty plea in the magistrates' court the fee is £173.45 in my home town of Reading, unless the work done 'escapes' the upper limit of £298.45, calculated in accordance with the hourly legal aid rates of £49.70 for attendance and preparation and £62.35 for advocacy. Work between £173.45 and £298.45 has to be done for love. The idea is supposedly that with 'swings and roundabouts' firms should not lose. In practice it means that idleness is rewarded and preparing a case prejudices commercial survival. The rate for a magistrates' court trial is £306.25, which includes all preparation – seeing witnesses, listening to any police interviews, researching any odd point of law, all letters and phone calls. Unless the work 'escapes' the upper limit of £512.70 this is all that can be billed. Travel and waiting is at present paid at

the rate of £26.30 per hour, but in the major conurbations like Manchester, London and Merseyside, everything is wrapped into one standard fee: £221.59 for a guilty plea and £378.46 for a magistrate's court trial. The solicitor who arrives at court for a trial previously listed to start at 10 am only to find that he is kept waiting until the afternoon, eventually to be sent away altogether because the court has double-listed its trials yet again and there is no time for the case to be heard, has no compensation for his wasted day.

You cannot run an office with this level of pay. If a person is acquitted and the court makes an order that the defence solicitor's costs should be paid, an hourly rate of £203 will generally be agreed. An office assessing charges nationally for private work thinks it reasonable. Solicitors doing private commercial work, or even ordinary matrimonial cases, will normally be able to charge far more. In November the Law Society published its final report in its *Access to Justice Review*. They pointed out that the current legal aid contracts 'specify in remarkable detail not only what work solicitors do but how they should do it. The criminal and civil specifications are full of rules about how casework is to be carried out and recorded.' If the government wants to make cuts, it could start by abolishing such monitoring.

Politicians like to use buzz words like 'radical' and 'reform'. Scrapping the work of the Legal Services Commission and putting all manuals and specifications in the nearest dustbin would be a true 'reform', but I will be surprised if they have the courage or the sense to do it. The only true competition is created by the freedom of clients to choose their own solicitor. I always knew that if I did not give a good service, if I was habitually late at court or declined to go to the police station for someone in custody, he would go to another firm. Criminal clients are not fools; someone in trouble instinctively knows who is to be trusted to take care of him and who is not. He also has access to sources of information not available to the Legal Services Commission. Focussing on making a file look good for the LSC auditors has little to do with 'quality'. Lord Carter, in his report on legal aid in July 2006, noted that the cost of administering legal aid had increased from £58 million in 1997-1998 to nearly £100 million. He also said the reason for the overspending 'is difficult to quantify'. Going through the specifications and the unnecessary monitoring procedures with a red pencil was not part of his work. Public money paid for his lengthy report to be produced, and yet it was not part of his task to identify the causes for the increase in spending.

One wheeze in the government's proposals is for the same fixed fee to be paid to the solicitor in a case where the defendant eventually decides to plead guilty in the crown court as would have been paid in the magistrates' court. They say they want to remove 'perverse incentives'. If they are suggesting that there is evidence that solicitors are deliberately advising their clients to plead not guilty in order to be paid more, then we would all like to know what the evidence is. The choice of whether he pleads guilty or not guilty and where his case is to be tried should be that of the defendant. He should not be put at risk of being given flawed advice by a solicitor only concerned about his profitability.

This and other proposed cuts are nothing compared with the threat of competitive tendering. The government would not dare to suggest such a system for doctors or dentists, but few people perceive justice as a necessity. It seems that Ken Clarke can do as he likes. Tendering, as previously devised, would be at three-year intervals. Anyone contemplating taking out a long office lease or giving staff security of tenure will have to think again. Even the present three-year contract which firms signed last year gives no security, since the right to amend or abrogate it altogether was reserved.

There is an unpleasant rumour going around amongst legal aid practitioners. Every firm will, as the price of retaining a contract, have to be audited by an external organization and at its own expense. Health and safety criteria and diversity and ethnic monitoring regulations will be used to put small firms out of business. The only way to make any sort of living out of criminal law is to trim overheads to the bone. Sole practitioners operate out of their garden sheds or from their kitchen tables. They provide a good service to their individual clients, visiting them at home, arranging to meet them at court buildings to take detailed statements from them, chasing witnesses by doing home visits, and making themselves available at all hours in police stations. They do not, however, have the funds on legal aid to run conventional offices. It is rumoured that the external auditors have instructions to put these firms out of business deliberately. The Coalition government can then blame the auditors.

Whatever else solicitors voted for in the last election it was not this, for many trusted the assurances of politicians like Dominic Grieve. Of course cuts must be made in many areas, and legal aid is an obvious target, but the government could start by cutting the bureaucracy drastically, trusting the profession to find ways of saving money and demolishing the Legal Services Commission. The arguments for setting up this bureaucratic monster in the first place were never convincing. Those who voted Conservative or Liberal at the last election are not likely to do so again.

Jan Davies is a solicitor.

Goodbye to the House of Lords?

Don Briggs

Friedrich Hayek wrote that in a society that treasured freedom no authority should have the power of positive command. It must be negative because 'only fools believe they know all, and there were many' of those, he added. The finest form of government must be negative because of the 'unalterable ignorance of the single mind or of any organisation that can direct human action.' Disasters were inevitable because they 'institutionalised ignorance.' He maintained that even when society's need for security was greatest, the highest authority necessary was still one which could merely say No to others while having no positive powers itself.

In the third volume of his *Law, Legislation and Liberty — The Political Order of a Free People* (University of Chicago Press, 1979), Hayek also wrote that there was no moral reason why poorer regions should tap the resources of richer ones. Yet centralisation abounds, not because the people of the richer region want it, but because those in government need to buy the votes of those in the poorer regions to stay in power. This is the negation of the rule of law. Vote-buying was morally indefensible and produced all that was contemptible in politics. The right course was for the richer countries to invest capital in enterprises in those countries whose economic policies they believed would benefit the population, rather than waste funds on their socialist experiments.

In a little over a decade, centuries of careful fine-tuning of our system of government is being destroyed. In its place, the Government is planning a Senate stuffed with party place-persons, either elected wholly or in part, perhaps with some appointees.

The one place in our system of government where wisdom, experience, expertise and caution have been found for centuries, is in the House of Lords, especially among the independent Cross-Benchers. Two former Speakers of the Commons, Viscount Tonypandy and Baroness Boothroyd, immediately spring to mind. As the ultimate guarantors of our liberties, peers unlike MPs have more often acted altruistically in the face of oppressive acts by government. That altruism was found among many prescriptive peers, those once-wealthy, taxed-to-death and independent-minded hereditaries whom the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg condemns as 'an outrage' in a democratic society. The protective function of the Lords is now under serious attack from all three parties.

The Coalition Government's intention is clear: it wants to tear up the Constitution and to destroy the Lords' effectiveness by turning them into a second-rate version of the Commons. Peers would become puppets of the Executive, just as MPs — whose primary duty is to control the Executive — now are. In a little over a decade, centuries of careful fine-tuning of our system of government is being destroyed. In its place, the Government is planning a Senate stuffed with party place-persons, either elected wholly or in part, perhaps with some appointees.

Anyone who doubts the value of the Lords should read the speeches in the Lords debate in December on the Second Reading of Lord Steel's Bill to reform their House. They can be found on the website *TheyWorkForYou.com*. For search-words I recommend 'Baroness Boothroyd', who was one of the stars of that debate. She has gone into battle over the Government's plans for a 'Senate' and is waging 'hostile opposition to the demands of the major political parties who wish to bring radical and destructive changes to the House of Lords'. In her speech, she delivered a withering response to Clegg's claim that the Lords were out of touch and that reform was '100 years overdue'. To Clegg and the Coalition Government, which continues to be dogged by rows over Commons expenses, she riposted: 'We do not hanker for the faded aristocratic glories of centuries past. When I leave here, I get the number 11 bus home.'

Quoting Shami Chakrabarti, the Director of Liberty, she said that the House had always protected fundamental rights and liberties and that of vulnerable minorities. Supporting Lord Steel's latest, pre-emptive attempt to arrive at sensible reform, she said she was firmly against an elected Chamber. She condemned Clegg's proposals as 'a smokescreen for packing the Lords with new peers on a scale never seen before'. She said there would soon be 800 Members — more than when hereditaries were sent packing 11 years ago. Just to reflect the votes cast at the last Election, the Tories would need to create another 86 peers, and the Lib-Dems another 99. The Government, to gain control of the House, would need 1,000 peers in

the House, 'an absurd number'. The scale of what is happening is astonishing,' she said, adding that 105 peers had been created in six months, the lion's share being the Coalition Government's. There were other interesting figures revealed during the debate. Between 1997 and 2010 Labour created 351 peers: 203 Labour, 84 Conservative, and 64 Lib-Dems. The present composition of the Lords is 743: Coalition-combined 316, Labour 244, Cross-benchers 183.

Lord Lothian, making his maiden speech as a life peer after 36 years in the Commons as Conservative MP Michael Ancram, said that 'the independence of the Lords must not be lost'. Any reform must enhance, not diminish their ability to check the Government and ask it to think again. That was essential. Cross-bencher Lord Bilimoria also waded into Clegg's claim about the alleged irrelevance of the Lords. The House of Lords cost a quarter of what the Commons did. The Lords were 'the Guardian of the Nation, the cornerstone of our democracy'. Few MPs read the Lords debates, yet 40 per cent of peers' amendments to Commons legislation were accepted by the Commons.

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An elected House of Lords would end in deadlock —just as it had done in Australia. Elected peers would insist on similar powers to MPs. That would lead to a written Constitution, with the new Supreme Court having power to strike down legislation, and calls for judges to be elected, as they were in America.

Proportional representation would follow with European-style coalition governments — the road to ruin, he called it. Governments were becoming too powerful and elected dictatorships were the result.

There was a sparkling maiden speech from Cross-Bencher Lord Hennessey, the former *Times* journalist, broadcaster and constitutional expert. He reminded peers that the Lords had once been a perfect place to put failed politicians as an alternative to executing them and recalled a conversation with Lord Robertson, the former Defence Minister, about the value of the House and its future. Lord Robertson said that after the Cold War had ended he had made a similar point to the Russians on a visit to Moscow as NATO Secretary-General. He told them that 'if they had had an institution like the House of Lords into which they could have decanted Leonid Brezhnev, they might still have a Soviet Union'.

Yet another Cross-Bencher, the Earl of Errol, feared that the provision in Lord Steel's Bill to phase out the remaining 92 elected hereditaries would end in the House coming under the control of unaccountable people who made the appointments. An appointed House would have no democratic authority and the place would just become a club for people without power to influence legislation, and without rebels. He feared the Commons would love this growing concentration of power. Lord Taverne (Lib-Dem) admitted that he no longer favoured an elected House after hearing the arguments about expertise and independence. He recalled that the Speaker of the Lords had called a conference of scientists and science journalists, of whom he was one. At the end, one journalist, the Editor of *Nature,* asked: 'How many of the science journalists here would stand for election?' The answer was none. The overwhelming view of those present was: 'For God's sake, keep the Lords as an appointed [not elected] Chamber.' If an elected Chamber did result, 'we may be surprised at the consequences. As Ernest Bevin once said . . . 'When you open that Pandora's box, you never know what Trojan horses will jump out.'

Lord Lea (Labour) favoured an elected House, saying it 'would shake up the Commons but wondered whether it could provoke a constitutional crisis if election gave peers the right to alter money Bills sent by the Commons, which they presently could not do under the 1911 Parliament Act. Viscount Falkland (Lib Dem) praised 'a remarkable debate' saying it was worth the three-and-a-half-mile walk he had made in the snow and admitted that anxieties about the future of the House were creeping in on him. He wanted big donors to the parties excluded, and urged that no one party, nor a coalition of parties forming a government, should have a majority of members in the Lords.

Lord Stewartby, Conservative, observed that legitimacy did not depend on election. The unelected House of Lords was held in greater respect than the elected House of Commons. It was the role of the House, not the people within it which was its most important feature. Labour's Lord Hunt said the Lords could not be a revising Chamber unless it had a fair chance of defeating the government of the day. Peers suffer a disadvantage that most of us do not: they are denied the vote. We should be reminded of that fact when we are next asked to vote.

Don Briggs was a Daily Mirror *journalist in Manchester*

Letter from Australia

John Stone

Any letter from Australia must acknowledge that we have just lost the Ashes comprehensively to a clearly better English team. With the exception of the third test, Australia was not only outplayed by a better team of cricketers, but also evinced a lack of grit unworthy of a team wearing those baggy green caps.

The other notable recent events here, the widespread floods in Queensland and, to a lesser extent, New South Wales, have not gone unremarked in Britain. I wonder whether the scale of these floods can be fully appreciated from afar. In Queensland alone an area greater than France and Germany combined was at one time under water. The water flowing to the sea each day past Rockhampton was roughly three times the volume of Sydney harbour. The downpour responsible, which has largely ended the widespread drought of the past ten years, calls to mind Dorothy Mackellar's line describing a 'sunburnt country ... of drought and flooding rains'.

Loss of life and short-term damage apart, the rain has done much good, and will continue to do so for months as swollen rivers slowly meander over the old, flat land through which many of them flow to the sea. As artesian basins are recharged and sub-soil moisture restored with its promise for the future, there will be much to be thankful for. With the federal Parliament in recess, and many people taking their annual holidays, the weeks between Christmas and Australia Day (January 26) are traditionally a period when only some major disaster – such as the 2004 Indian Ocean *tsunami*, or our floods today – can engage the Australian public's attention. Ill wind though the floods may have been, therefore, our media have appreciated their blowing some good in their direction.

None of our many global warming alarmists has yet sought air-time or newspaper space to tell us that this extreme weather event has been due to our emissions of carbon dioxide. Even our Bureau of Meteorology, which has become intellectually corrupted by the global warming dogma (though not yet as badly as its British equivalent), has been quite properly attributing the change in our weather to a naturally occurring *La Niña* event associated with the Southern Pacific Oscillation in Pacific Ocean air pressures. The Prime Minister, Ms Julia Gillard (heading a minority Labor government supported by one Green and three assorted Independent members of the House of Representatives) has those global warming fantasies much in mind. Having gone to the federal election last August swearing that there will be no carbon tax, she has since told us, although not in these words, that one price of cobbling together her motley majority has been that she will, after all, introduce such a tax this year.

More generally, Australian politics in the year ahead show signs of being interesting. Writing in *The Australian* on New Year's Day an article deriving from the Archives Office release of the Cabinet papers for 1980 (when I was heading the federal Treasury), I noted some parallels between then and the year now ahead:

> A resource-related private investment boom was gathering force. Skilled manpower necessary to undertake that investment was scarce. Wage pressures from that quarter, fostered by a highly regulated labour market, were threatening another wage explosion... The federal budget deficit, and public sector borrowing requirement more generally, were still far too large. All this, and a government that was, so to speak, in the process of 'losing its way'. So much for 1980; welcome to 2011.

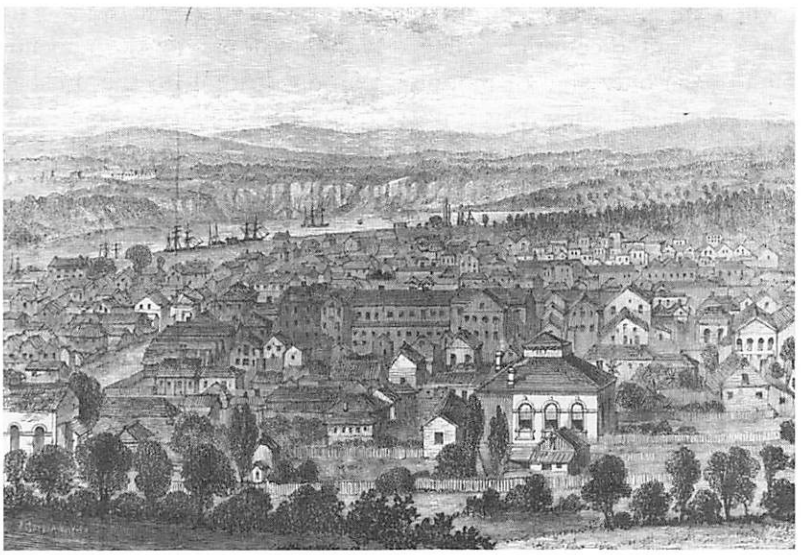
Thirty years ago, that combination of circumstances ended badly for the (Liberal-National parties Coalition) government then in office – due partly to its own failings, and partly to a strong trade union movement aggressively exploiting a bargaining position enhanced by a then still nascent investment boom. La Gillardine (as she has become widely known) and her ministers may now be facing a similar outcome. If so, that will result not only from their own broken promises, but also from a trade union movement determined to rebuild numbers much diminished during the past 20 years. A recently re-regulated labour market, and a resource-related investment boom already strongly under way, will certainly assist it.

Another and almost more important sign that the tide is finally turning against the Greens has been the January announcement by Tony Abbott, that the Coalition will develop a plan to build a series of dams as part of its flood mitigation policies for the next election.

Meanwhile however an important new development seems to be occurring on the Coalition side of politics – a long overdue push-back against the Greens. Years

ago, all the major parties always advised voters, when filling out their preferential voting papers, to put the Communist Party last. Yet for years now every Labor and Liberal voter has preferred the Greens as a second choice. (Hence that Green in the House of Representatives mentioned earlier, who won his previously Labor-held seat via Liberal preferences). Since the Greens are, in effect, the old Communist Party, wolves in Green sheep's clothing, this policy has long been inexplicable.

On the Coalition side at least that seems to be changing. In the Victorian State election last November the Liberals finally plucked up courage and advised voters to put the Greens last. In a closely fought contest finally won by the Coalition, the Greens, who under the previous preferencing policies had been judged likely to win three or even four seats in the lower House, won none. The new Liberal Premier is now seen as a strong leader and his party's decision as a decisive factor in the outcome. With a New South Wales election imminent, the Coalition parties there seem likely to take a leaf out of their Victorian counterparts' book.



Brisbane 1880

Another and almost more important sign that the tide is finally turning against the Greens has been the January announcement by the federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, that the Coalition will develop a plan to build a series of dams as part of its flood mitigation policies for the next election. He wanted, he said, 'to put dams back on the agenda'. This is revolutionary stuff, largely because of exaggerated arguments from the environmental movement about so-called threats to endangered species or 'despoliation of the natural landscape'. It is decades since a major dam was built in Australia. Indeed, when the Queensland (Labor) government started to build one a couple of years ago, it was eventually vetoed by the federal (Labor) Minister for the Environment because of the threat it posed for some ecologically insignificant species of lungfish.

Even the recent decade-long drought over most of Australia, which led to harsh restrictions on water usage for gardens and the death of many trees, failed to break the no dams taboo, with governments in all States except Tasmania constructing expensive desalination plants for their capital cities. These white elephants now stand idle everywhere but in Perth (where the drought remains unbroken), eating their heads off in interest and maintenance costs. Tony Abbott, who (like Mrs Thatcher) has always been a conviction politician, is on to something.

Could this return to sanity go further? For years the quality of our social and political discourse has been demeaned by our intellectual elites, and politicians from all sides, vying with each other to cast that discourse in Orwellian terms. Think of words such as 'compassion', 'racist', 'human rights', 'progressive', 'refugees' .... The arrival of a horde of people-smuggler boats in 2010 bringing 6,535 illegal immigrants to Australia has sent our refugee advocates into a frenzy of condemnation, on human rights grounds, of the redneck public who demand a return to the effective policies of the previous Coalition government, which saw this criminal traffic slow to a trickle.

In 1975 Charles Goodhart, a Cambridge economist then working in the Bank of England, famously enunciated what became known to monetary economists as Goodhart's Law: that any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes. I am now beginning to detect an automatically adverse reaction when political advocates use a word like (say) racist, as they commonly do, to shut down debate about the composition of our immigration intake. Increasingly such verbal bullying is greeted with a shrug of the shoulders. The human rights lobby push for a federal statutory (or even constitutional) Bill of Rights is foundering upon the same rock – distrust of the use of once respected words for purposes of political control. So I leave you with Stone's Law: that any word will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for political control purposes.

John Stone was Secretary to the Treasury of Australia (1979-84), and later, a Senator for Queensland and Leader of the National Party in the Australian Senate (1987-90).

My Days Fly Faster than the Weaver's Shuttle

Caroline Martin

If the Earth stood still for a split-second the heavens would hurtle in, obliterating us and all that we know. However, when we gaze up at the night sky, we feel as if, blanketed by the celestial sphere, we were at rest beneath it, the only sign of motion without being the odd meteor shuttling by. This is not quite the case. If diligently observed, on occasional evenings, the Moon, starting high overhead, can be seen descending behind the horizon as if it had been flung vigorously in a great arc across the sky. The explanation for this is that when the moon and earth are at their closest the moon exerts her greatest drag on our tides, thereby slowing the earth which makes the moon appear to drop more quickly down the sky. Curiously, instead of invoking the peaceful sense of *ad infinitum* usually experienced whilst gazing at the Milky Way, a quickly-descending moon awakens the realisation of one's own finitude.

Since the perspective of Nicolaus Copernicus overthrew that of Ptolemy and paved the way for the Scientific Revolution, western science has, in its reductionism, taught us to know our place in the universe: that however significant we might be to each other (and indeed to ourselves), our imprint amidst the stars remains relatively indiscernible. Ptolemy's inherited wisdom suffered because it was not derived from observation, and disintegrated entirely when challenged by the unquestionable evidence that Galileo provided. Meanwhile we human beings, burgeoning in population through the combined effects of agriculture and industry, have been systematically modifying the terrestrial surface for centuries, influencing in our wake every conceivable niche on the planet. Regardless of our possible reverberations in the solar system and beyond, our impact on Earth is so 'astronomical' that we ourselves cannot accurately measure it.

To offer an example of humanity's ingenuity, I refer to John Kay's inventive weaver's machinery, which incorporated the controversial flying shuttle, and transformed the textile industries in Great Britain and France prompting the steam-inspired Industrial Revolution. Notwithstanding the successes that stemmed from new technologies, the extraordinary increase in productivity (and steam), continuing unabated through the succeeding two and a half centuries and still rising currently, particularly in the far East, has been fuelled by the combustion of tremendous volumes of previously-innocuous, safely-sequestered carbon, leading to the present planetary condition quaintly named by American Scientist Wallace S Broecker as Global Warming.

Despite there being a vociferous argument to the contrary, most climate experts concur that if the world's lifestyle continues unchecked into the next half-century, Global Warming will too, and that as a result a transition will take place towards a new warmer and wetter phase in Earth's history. But in which direction will the tide turn for humanity's fate? We continue to charter carbon-fired cruise liners to Norway's fjords and through Alaska's Inside Passage to gaze at the wondrous world of glaciers and snow while believing that we do no harm. Earth's icecaps, despite being strongly suspected of irreparably calving and stranding legitimately pitiable polar bears, continually invite calorie-emitting onlookers which worthy lot, in return, are rewarded with scenes of vast, and enduring terrestrial landscapes as timeless and captivating as the surface of the Moon.

A quotation from Robert Service's poem *The Spell of the Yukon*, 'It seems it's been since the beginning; / It seems it will be to the end', demonstrates how ungraspable the history of the icecaps must have been to the pioneering men of the Gold Rush. Is it an artificially constricted sense of time that allows us to perceive the solid waters in such a way, or is it that the time-spans during which the great icecaps wax and wane are too extensive for our common senses to truly understand? Alternatively, can we simply put our misconceptions down to failings in our observational methods? How ephemeral are the polar ice caps and what are the consequences of their transience for *Homo sapiens*?

Climate change on planet Earth is the *status quo*. For most of Earth's history, 4.567 billion years to be fairly precise, the prevailing condition across the latitudes has been ice free, with shallow seas awash over most land masses. Indeed, it is perhaps owing to this marine bias in the past that 75 per cent of Earth's current biomass resides

in the ocean. It wasn't until 1873 when Louis Agassiz performed his meticulous Alpine field investigations, that previous ice ages were understood to have existed at all. Since then discoveries about the impact of glaciation on human evolution have continued. Evidence of *Homo* in Britain extends as far back as 500 thousand years, but Ireland, despite having been connected to Britain and mainland Europe via land bridges, remained unpopulated (or at least evidence is as yet unfound) until only nine thousand years ago.

The disparity in the timing of human settlement across the two land masses was caused by Ireland having been completely covered with ice sheets, whereas southern Britain, at least, was a habitable warm patch. Humanity's fate was also decided for it when the icecaps formed from the sudden and intense crystallisation of water into ice during the Last Glacial Maximum in the northern hemisphere, around 22 thousand years ago. Sea level responded with a sufficient fall (at least 360 feet below the present mean value) to allow the passage on foot of man (and beast) across Beringia, the connective land-bridge fording the passage from northeast Asia into the Americas.

The punctuated growth of icecaps has had far-reaching consequences for human migration pathways around the globe which in turn has influenced our population dynamics, feeding strategy, ability to trade, and even, in the case of Britain and Ireland, our political and social relationships. There is little doubt, that if the melting of the icecaps continues into the next century, coastal ecosystems will be displaced, coastal aquifers will be contaminated, and coastal people will migrate, bringing to inland and upland regions the whole gamut of their cultures, livelihoods, faiths and traditions. Whether or not the potential re-settlement of up to one fifth of the globe's population would be exercised peacefully, I leave to the reader to ponder.

To the best of geologists' 'retro-dictions', Earth has experienced four ice ages, each lasting millions of years and each having far-reaching consequences for the course of evolution of life on Earth. If our climate is getting warmer and wetter, the present-day icecaps will melt and sea level will rise in response. If the icecaps contradict our measurements and accumulate again the sea level will fall and Taiwan will become physically a part of China. One thing is certain, their size and shape will change, most likely dramatically; let's hope we are here to record the process and monitor its course so that we can continue to steer our way through the confusion.

Caroline Martin is a post-graduate researcher at St John's College, Cambridge.

Fixated on Inner Purity

Paul Gottfried

Christie Davies in his review of Eamonn Butler's *Ludwig von Mises: A Primer* raises many sound points and correctly notes that while the Austrian economist brilliantly dissected socialism and government social planning, he did not offer the last word on economic methodology. Davies suggests a question without directly posing it: Why can't admirers of some aspect of the work of dead thinkers, composers or artists focus exclusively on what the objects of their tributes did well? Why do they seem driven to idolize everything about people who were good in some things but not in others? It should be possible to admire Marx as an historical observer or as a journalist, writing about revolutionary events in France in 1848 and about the accession to power of Louis Napoleon, without having to praise him as an economist or socialist visionary.

One should also be able to appreciate the magnificence of Wagner's music without having to extol his anti-Semitic tracts. Equally, one should be able to admire the theological depth of Karl Barth but also feel repugnance for his post-World War Two whitewashing of Soviet aggression. Certainly we respect Newton as a mathematical genius without having to extol his opinions about astrology. It should be possible to respect Jean Bodin as a hardheaded political observer without having to include his sixteenth-century views about the danger of witches. Why does recognizing someone's talent or even genius in a particular endeavour require sweeping idolization of everything associated with that person?

Perhaps having noticed this problem, Paul Johnson in *The Intellectuals* dwells on the personal foibles of thinkers whom he wishes to make us despise. He relates how Rousseau put his own children up for adoption, although he poured enormous energy into advising others about how to educate the young. Johnson also emphasizes that although Marx's life was usually in shambles, he presumed to outline a perfect society under socialism for others.

A friend, who feels obliged to disparage Rousseau

in order to build up his own hero Burke, strongly recommended Johnson's hatchet job. Burke, who famously considered Rousseau to be 'the pale knight of metaphysic,' must have been right in his judgement. After all, Rousseau was shown to be a cad when he escaped his parental obligations. I responded by asking my friend whether he would agree less with Burke and more with Rousseau if it was Burke and not Rousseau who had abandoned his children. Or: are Marx's historical insights less noteworthy because he ran up debts or impregnated the housemaid? The only people I find who could believe such nonsense are sectarian Protestants, who are fixated on inner purity. Less sanctimonious people, looking at the intellectual and artistic achievements of others in the past, can judge them by their intrinsic merit, not by the degree of righteousness they attribute to creative minds.

Our PC Left has its own variation on this decomposing Methodism or whatever name one chooses to bestow on our Religious Right enthusiasts. My academic colleagues are also infected by a concern with total righteousness in those whom they exalt, whether living or dead. Every good dead person must have shared the current progressive notions about caring and sensitivity or else have been among the oppressed victims of Western white Christian civilization.

I knew academic Marxism was going into the dustbin in the late 1960s, when I heard self-professed Marxists argue that Marx's historical predictions were obviously correct because he fought anti-Semitism and cared about the problem of racism. When I dared to answer one of these noisemakers that Marx despised Jews and was openly racist but that his predictions were either right or wrong on their own merit, I received a look of icy silence. Such a response is glaringly un-American because it fails to make moral judgments.

Having moved from an endorsement of Christie Davies writing on Mises to potshots against tiresome American moralists, it behoves me to mention the one case in which I too may be accused of righteousness. Although a fan of the Philadelphia Eagles football team, I can no longer bring myself to watch Eagles games since that dog-murderer Michael Vick became the team's highly prized quarterback. Vick not only killed his pit bulls but seems to have enjoyed torturing them in various grisly ways.

When discovered *in flagrante delicto,* he was placed in jail for more than a year and then forced to do 'communal service' while, at least publicly, deploring his misdeeds. Moreover, some of my academic colleagues have explained to me that his behaviour wasn't really so nasty. After all, Vick is black and may have grown up in a disadvantaged home. Another excuse has come from a Mormon writing for a 'family-value' magazine, who storms against those who complain about Vick's brutality toward animals. Apparently Americans who are bothered by Vick don't mind the high divorce rate in our country. If we were truly moral people, we would talk about broken marriages rather than grieve over tortured dumb brutes. Such justificatory drivel has made me loathe Vick even more. By now I cannot even look at him throwing a football without hoping he will miss his target.

There are two reasons I think his case is different from that of personally flawed, ideologically driven, or eccentric creative minds, which may excel in certain activities but not in others. Vick's behaviour was brutal and sadistic and not only silly or irresponsible. It is one thing to hold illusions about world government or to rant against witches, capitalists or composers; it is another thing to enjoy torturing dogs and (perhaps eventually) human beings. We are not talking here about someone who made a particular silly or contemptible statement. We are considering the proper emotional response to a sadist, one in this case whose sadism I observed on TV.

Watching the physical presence of a powerful athlete who has used his strength for outrageous acts is different from reading the theology of someone who periodically defended Stalin's aggressions and killings. One may deplore Barth's political opinions or believe that the great philosopher Martin Heidegger besmirched his honour when he kowtowed to Hitler as a university Rector in 1933. Such verbal misdeeds do not affect me the same way as watching a sadist at work and I do not think they should.

Paul Gottfried's autobiography My Life with Nixon, Marcuse and other friends *is published by ISI Books.*

A revised version of David Ashton's article on Ayn Rand will be published on the Salisbury Review *website; we apologise to him for the errors in the original version.*

Germany's Weight of History

Nigel Jones

A thousand years will go by' said Hans Frank, Hitler's Governor and chief hangman in Poland, 'And still the guilt of Germany will not have passed away'. Soon afterwards, Frank atoned for his crimes at the end of a rope in Nuremberg. More than sixty years have passed since he made his grim prediction, but there are signs that the burden of guilt Germany has long laboured under – for Hitler, the Holocaust and the unmentionable war – is beginning to be shed, shunted aside by new and more urgent concerns.

Six months ago, Thilo Sarrazin, a figure at the very heart of the German establishment, published a book that shook his own people, Germany's governing elite, to its stuffily respectable core. As a board member of the Bundesbank, the driving engine of Germany, and hence Europe's, economy, Sarrazin was one of Germany's real rulers, more powerful by far than any mere politician. Moreover as a Government super bureaucrat, he had been responsible for running both the Bundesbahn state rail network and the vast Treuhand organisation, (in charge of privatising the state-run assets of former Communist East Germany), He could, therefore, be considered as the semi-official voice of the Federal Republic itself. This was why his book surfaced amidst the normally placid, not to say stagnant, waters in which Germany's ship of state sails calmly along, with the impact of an iceberg ripping the *Titanic*.

The book's title: *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab* [*Germany Abolishes Itself*] was explosive. Here was Herr Deutschland proclaiming with the frankest possible pessimism, that Germany, with its indigenous birth-rate dwindling to vanishing point, had no future. It was digging its own grave, busily turning the soil with the spade of foreign, especially Islamic, immigration. Sarrazin's thesis is that all German cities now have substantial populations of largely Islamic immigrants with nothing in common with the 'host' German community. Moreover, the immigrants have no wish to integrate into German society, and indeed are increasingly and actively hostile to that society.

Though many of these immigrants are the descendants of Turkish 'guest workers' who have lived in the country for three or four generations, they literally and metaphorically speak a different language. They practice a different religion, wear different clothes, eat different foods, watch different films and TV, and have none of the habits, customs or beliefs of the native Germans. They are, in the words of the old song, strangers in a strange land. Sarrazin did not flinch either from putting his finger on the real reason for their alienation and his disquiet: Islam.

Of Muslims, he wrote,

> No other religion in Europe makes so many demands. No immigrant group other than Muslims is so strongly connected with claims on the Welfare state and crime. No group emphasises their difference so strongly in public, especially through women's clothing. In no other religion is the transition to violence, dictatorship and terrorism so fluid.

And, added Sarrazin, many Muslims delight in biting the hand that feeds them:

> I will not show respect for anyone who is not making that effort [to integrate]. I do not have to acknowledge anyone who lives by welfare [yet] denies the legitimacy of the very state that provides that welfare, refuses to care for the education of his children and continually produces new little headscarf-girls.

Strong words indeed coming from such a previously quiet and mild mannered man – (Sarrazin is a dead ringer for that prince of aesthetes Sir Roy Strong) – and in institutionally mealy-mouthed Germany, absolutely unheard of from a leading member of the ruling caste, especially so in that Sarrazin comes from the painfully politically correct Social Democratic Party, for which most migrants vote. Yet those words instantly struck a booming chord with the great German public. In speaking out so boldly, Sarrazin had voiced the secret fear that dare not speak its name in post-Nazi Germany, anxiety about a rapidly swelling racial and religious minority.

Sarrazin's book immediately shot to the top of the hardback non-fiction bestseller list. Though denounced by the usual leftist suspects among his erstwhile comrades in the SPD as 'crazy', the public took a different view. Eighteen per cent told pollsters that they would vote for Sarrazin in the hypothetical event of him forming a new political party, and he received strong support from Necla Kelek, a well-known Turkish-born German sociologist and critic of Islam, and from Klaus von Dohnanyi, the SPD's elder statesman, whose father and uncle, the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, both scions of the anti-Hitler resistance, were martyred by

the Nazis.

Such was the impact of his book that Germany's Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, felt obliged to waddle on to the Sarrazin bandwagon. A month after the book appeared she told a meeting of her Christian Democratic party's youth wing that multi-culturalism in Germany had 'utterly failed'. For the first time since the war, the leaders of the political establishment had dared to bring the 'verboten' topics of race and religion into respectable political discourse.

In speaking out so boldly, Sarrazin had voiced the secret fear that dare not speak its name in post-Nazi Germany, anxiety about a rapidly swelling racial and religious minority.

Sarrazin's baton has been passed, not to Germany's long-established neo-Nazi party, the marginalised NPD, but to a fledgling group founded in Berlin in the wake of his book *Die Freiheit* (*the Freedom Party*). Led by Rene Stadtkewitz, a former local Berlin MP, and a clutch of other defectors from Merkel's CDU, *Die Freiheit* refuses the 'far-right' label stuck on similar movements elsewhere in Europe, calling 'themselves' 'true liberals'.

Although, like Britain, it is difficult (for understandable historical and constitutional reasons), for a new political party to get off the starting blocks, there is no doubt that Sarrazin and Stadtkewitz are tapping into a new mood in Germany. And not just in Germany. Across Europe, *Angst* about the increasing Islamification of the continent is increasing as fast as Islamic immigration itself. Stadtkewitz pays open homage to Geert Wilders, whose Party of Freedom is now the third biggest in the Netherlands; and to Heinz-Christian Strache whose similarly named Austrian Freedom Party has just ousted Vienna's Social Democrats in the capital, scooping a quarter of the poll with its provocative slogan (in a city which twice resisted Turkish sieges): 'Vienna must not become Istanbul'. The moderate image of the new leader of France's Front National, Marine le Pen, who has shed her father's more gruesome racist and anti-semitic language, is another straw in the wind. If Gianfranco Fini in Italy can make the transition from Mussolini-worship and neo-Fascism to No 2 in the Berlusconi Government, can Germany long resist the trend?

Since the 'economic miracle' of the 1950s-1970s, built on the backs of those whom the Germans patronisingly called *Gast-arbeiter* (Guest-workers') imported from Italy, Iberia, Greece, Yugoslavia and above all, Turkey refurbished the mighty foundations of the German economy, the economic giant has behaved like a political pygmy. Because of its unfortunate recent past, Germany was content to keep its head down politically, allowing its closest ally, France, to make all the running in the EU while it got on with paying the bills. Recent events have changed all this.

Two decades after the fall of the Berlin wall and reunification, Germany is still two nations. Opinion polls still routinely divide responses into westerners and easterners – a recent one on attitudes towards Islam finding that easterners were marginally more hostile than their western brethren. The huge burden of absorbing the GDR was as nothing compared to the weight of debt that the increasingly overloaded economy is being asked to bear as the euro falters.

The eye-watering bail-outs to Greece and Ireland, and possibly Portugal and Spain in the near future, have opened up apparently bottomless pits of debt, in which hard-working, thrifty Germans see themselves being bled dry to support the short hours, high pensioned lifestyle of the Mediterranean PIGS indefinitely. As a result, they are not happy. So far, the German ship of state has weathered the squalls of popular discontent with the enemy within and without, but clouds are building and the winds are rising. An unhappy Germany should worry us all. Thilo Sarrazin is a storm warning.

Nigel Jones's forthcoming book on the Tower of London will be published in the Autumn (Hutchinson).

The Alternative Vote

In May the UK faces a £90 million referendum on the alternative voting system. Apart from the unjustified cost, a 'yes' vote would ensure permanent coalition governments and last year's election under AV would have kept Labour in power.

None of the political parties campaigned for it, and it is by no means certain that sense will prevail. Get the facts about AV from ***www.no2av.org***. There is a useful booklet: *99 reasons for voting No.*

Conservative Classic – 42

Clive James, Cultural Amnesia

Daryl McCann

Malcolm Muggeridge once dismissed Clive James' appetite for culture with the quip: 'He seeks it here, he seeks it there, he seeks it everywhere.' The inference being that 'Australian intellectual' constitutes an oxymoron, and Clive James learning Russian (not to mention Spanish, German, French, Polish, Japanese and the rest) in order to read non-English works in the original was akin to putting lipstick on a pig. Maybe James was still smarting from that long ago taunt because in *Cultural Amnesia* he indulges himself with couple of brief (and gratuitous) digs at Muggeridge.

There is, to be fair, something of a self-conscious exhibitionism about Clive James. Take his essay on Karl Tschuppin, chronicler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Having provided us with his own translation of a passage from Metternich's *Denkwürdigkeiten* (*Things Worth Thinking About*), James reproaches himself for not capturing 'the vigour' of Metternich's style. A page later he bemoans the fact that having bought gorgeous second-hand volumes of works by Masaryk and Benes in Olomouc (guest of honour at a film festival, please note), he has yet to add Czech to his linguistic arsenal.

The arts do not in themselves protect us from tyranny, and numerous great writers and thinkers failed to recognise tyranny's appearance. Having 'banished God and the Devil' from his own secular religion, Freud took too long to grasp that a very different secular religion – National Socialism – came with its own Devil incarnate.

The notion of a vulgar autodidact in search of a theme is further suggested by the very structure of *Cultural Amnesia*: more than 100 essays evaluating a range of famous, not-so-famous and straight-out infamous characters arranged in alphabetical order. A more random thematic arrangement of material is hard to conceive; and yet *Cultural Amnesia* is deceptively coherent. Although many of James' artists, thinkers and politicians are illuminated with dazzling insight, most are props in an overarching construction. *Cultural Amnesia* is not just a paean to the uniqueness and fragility of Western civilisation in the twentieth century, but also a warning about its vulnerability in the twenty-first.

In one essay James rightly disparages the idea that Trotsky should be revered as 'some kind of lyrical humanist' because he wrote more lucidly than his homicidal comrades. James' point is that aesthetic sensibility and psychopathy need not be mutually exclusive. Nothing especially profound in that, but there is more. Towards the end of the essay James coolly segues to Osama bin Laden: 'According to students of Arabic, he commands his native language with vibrant fluency, giving a thrilling sense of its historical depth...' The juxtaposition of Bolshevism and Al Qaeda alerts us to a deeper purpose in Clive James' tome.

Cultural Amnesia's not-so-secret agenda – Sophie Scholl and Ayaan Hirsi Ali are included in the dedication – is to retell the stories of our past encounters with tyranny in order to forewarn us of what lies ahead. Power, asserts James in his essay on Grigory Ordzhonokidze, a Bolshevik apparatchik, is the real goal of humanity's oppressors, the various ideologies of the world no more than a ruse. The victim with a boot in his face or gun to his head or electrode to his genitals can never expect sympathy from his tormentor: any sympathy on the part of the tormentor is jealously reserved for himself: 'Himmler was always telling his lovingly nurtured SS officers how hard it would be for them to overcome their natural compassion.'

The arts do not in themselves protect us from tyranny, and numerous great writers and thinkers failed to recognise tyranny's appearance. Having 'banished God and the Devil' from his own secular religion, Freud took too long to grasp that a very different secular religion – National Socialism – came with its own Devil incarnate. The French high priest of human freedom, John-Paul Sartre, got totalitarianism wrong not once or even twice but three times. He brazenly lied about his exploits against the Nazis: 'He pretended that he had been brave: the single most shameful thing a man can do when other men have been brave and paid the price.' For a number of years after the Second World War Sartre was an apologist for the USSR, and on one particular trip to Moscow unknowingly stood within feet 'of a black Maria full of innocent prisoners': darkly ironic considering he refused to believe there

were innocent prisoners in the Soviet Union. One of the famous philosopher's final incarnations was as a Maoist.

Contrariwise, some artists or thinkers have done their finest work in the shadow of totalitarianism. Heinrich Mann, a 'knockabout bore' who never scaled the heights of his younger brother, understood in 1936 what greater intellects were still refusing or unable to grasp: 'The German Jews will be systematically annihilated, of that there can be no more doubts.' Moreover, the Third Reich forced Thomas Mann 'to be a better man than he really was'. Raymond Aron was at his brilliant best during the Cold War 'saying hard things' about Soviet communism when it was not fashionable amongst his liberal compatriots to do so.

Dissent, of course, takes on an infinitely darker hue for those trapped inside a terror state or threatened by terrorists. Osip Mandelstam's satirical portrait of Stalin has to be one of the twentieth century's wittier suicide notes. In that context, Leszek Kolakowski, a Polish dissident, was 'lucky' to be exiled. He went on to write *Main Currents of Marxism*, a crucial treatise on the nature of totalitarianism. Aleksandr Zinoviev's oeuvre was the nightmare of everyday life in the Soviet Union. He too was exiled, but when the Soviet Union disappeared so did Zinoviev's prominence; today 'very little of him is in print'.

Context, then, is critical. Twenty-one-year-old Sophie Scholl wrote very little before the Nazis guillotined her at Stadelheim prison in 1943. The totality of her work is a collection of 'skimpy pamphlets'. There is nothing Shakespearean about the language she employs at her 'trial', and yet her words tell us all we need to know about the potential of the human spirit: 'Finally, someone has to make a start. We only said and wrote what many people think. They just don't dare to express it.' James' essay on Sophie Scholl is my favourite in *Cultural Amnesia*, its final two sentences the most affecting passage in the entire book: 'But part of the sad truth about Sophie Scholl is that nobody remembers a thing she said, and in her last few minutes alive she said nothing at all. If she had said something, the man who bore witness to her bravery would have remembered it.' Sophie's stillness, James intimates, is a valiant girl's fierce concentration as she heroically conquers her sense of horror: 'The rest is silence'.

Clive James's fate – the fate of most writers and artists and thinkers – is not to play Hamlet the Dane and be 'set naked' upon the shores of an evil kingdom in order to right all wrongs. More than enough to be Horatio: to tell the story of Hamlet – or Sophie – and thus reclaim a 'wounded name'. Better, as James argues, to be a literary 'plodder' like Victor Klemperer, conscientiously assembling a detailed study of evil (*I Shall Bear Witness* and *To the Bitter End*), than a literary savant who fails to recognise the 'most deadly enemy of the humanist culture' he purports to embody: a point as true today as ever it was.

Clive James is the best kind of expatriate. His leave-taking in 1962 proved a blessing for Australia, although not in the way (say) John Pilger's departure the same year was a blessing. In his essay on another Australian émigré, Alan Moorehead, a notable Second World War correspondent and author (*African Trilogy*), James acknowledges the importance to adventurous Australian artists of 'Moorehead's pioneering example of the confident interloper who showed how it could be a positive advantage to come from somewhere else'. Moorehead not only paved the way for those who came after him, his work helped explain to Australia its role in the world – the significance of Tobruk, for instance. This is an echo of James' line about a very different expatriate: 'Gombrowicz served the eternal Poland by being Polish in Buenos Aires.'

Western civilisation, when we open our eyes, is in peril. The great paradox is that a person who lives their entire life in walking distance of the Louvre can be more blinkered than someone who spent their childhood in the dusty outer suburbs of Sydney.

The writings of Alan Moorehead are an antidote to Australian parochialism: the same might be said of Clive James's work. Still, if Australia benefited from the dispersion of its finest artists and thinkers to the wider world, then the wider world profited in equal measure. James speaks not only of the 'dignified vigour' of Moorehead's prose, but also of his capacity to see the world with fresh yet knowing eyes. A European of sorts, Moorehead was a European of no particular persuasion: just like Vivian Clive James. A man from the Antipodes can be truly cosmopolitan, a writer or artist who speaks 'complex and vital truths' to Europe without fear of national chauvinism. Here, rather than some cheap jibe, is the perfect rejoinder to Malcolm Muggeridge.

Western civilisation, when we open our eyes, is in peril. The great paradox is that a person who lives their entire life in walking distance of the Louvre can be more blinkered than someone who spent their childhood in the dusty outer suburbs of Sydney. Since September 11 our destinies have become more interdependent than ever, and Clive James' masterpiece might serve as a handy reminder in any future moment of forgetfulness.

Reputations – 31

Isaiah Berlin, a great liberal or merely a man who had no strong opinions?

Helen Szamuely

In June 2009, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Sir Isaiah Berlin writer, historian, philosopher and Oxford personality, I attended a memorial meeting in Pushkin House, which is a centre of Russian cultural activity in London. The talks, discussions and reminiscences centred on Berlin's links with Russia and Russian culture, particularly his well-known meeting, with the great poet Anna Akhmatova in 1945 and 1946 when Berlin was at the British embassy in Moscow.

Other reminiscences went along the lines of 'And then Berlin asked me what's the news from Russia and I said not a great deal but we now have lots of leaders to quote whereas before we had only one'. This was less than fascinating to anyone who was not a complete groupie.

The Akhmatova meetings have been well analyzed by memoirists and scholars both in Russia and the West. Their own memories are not entirely reliable but the poetry that Akhamatova spun out of the meetings, the references in 'Poem without a Hero' to the 'guest from the future' and the third dedication, which is clearly to Berlin, though in 1956 she could hardly admit to this, are all the stuff of legends, as is Akhmatova's rather strange conviction that the Cold War was triggered off by those meetings.

One thing *was* triggered off: a renewed and more ferocious persecution of the poet that included public attacks by the Culture Commissar Andrei Zhdanov, and yet another arrest of her son Lev and the eventual arrest of her second (but by that time ex-) husband, the well-known art historian, Nikolai Punin. Lev Gumilyov survived all his arrests, Punin did not, dying in a Vorkuta camp in 1953. Nobody has ever managed to discern whether Berlin understood the damage he had done to Akhmatova as his versions of the tale changed with every telling.

The only reference to Berlin's non-Russian activity was by Professor Alexander Pyatigorsky, whose fascinating biography was matched by an eccentric mode of delivery. Enunciating every syllable in a slightly melodramatic way, Professor Pyatigorsky told us that Berlin was the last of the REAL li-be-rals and added 'with a capital L' though, I suspect, he meant with a small l. He compared Berlin to Professor Leonard Schapiro. Both of them, he said were open to all points of view, accepted all opinions. In this, Pyatigorsky was unfair to Schapiro, who was a real liberal because he believed in liberalism, freedom and the rule of law. He also understood that those concepts had to be defended, sometimes ferociously. Not for him the notion that all opinions were equally valid.

Berlin was of a different mentality. His liberalism frequently slid into a moral paralysis. One rather amusing story was told at the meeting by Valentina Polukhina, Professor of Russian Literature at Keele and expert on Joseph Brodsky's life and works. It seems that for Brodsky's fiftieth birthday she arranged a series of interviews about him, one of them being with Isaiah Berlin. To her grief and astonishment the great man talked in harsh and critical terms about the poet. Polukhina realized that he must have been influenced by another Russian poet, Anatoly Naiman, Brodsky's great rival. The interview was published but Polukhina then arranged for another one and this time Berlin spoke of Brodsky with love and admiration. Polukhina explained this as a somewhat child-like attitude to life, which meant that 'Isaiah' would be influenced by the last person he spoke to. Some of us would describe it more harshly.

Some years ago, Berlin's name came up in a conversation I had with a right-wing academic, one of those who had been under severe attack in the late sixties and early seventies from left-wing student leaders and New Left academics while spineless university authorities metaphorically wrung their hands.

Many of them were surprised and disappointed that the doyen of liberal thinking, the man who had defined the concepts of liberty and liberalism, Sir Isaiah Berlin OM, would not defend them , preferring to see everybody's point of view and, on occasion, prevaricating.

My response was that I did not think this was simply a matter of moral cowardice but a real inability to understand the difference between those who speak up for freedom and those who speak up against it. Berlin, in my opinion, could not see that a true liberal has to take sides. I had come to this conclusion a long time ago when, as an undergraduate, I read his essays on Russian radical thinkers, first published in the magazine *Encounter* and collected into one volume in 1978. These studies were immensely influential:

they introduced generations of students and scholars to Russian political philosophy, created new courses in universities and, most importantly, influenced Tom Stoppard to write his magnificent trilogy *The Coast of Utopia* – much disliked by theatre critics.

There were two problems with those essays and their influence. One was that Berlin confirmed and, possibly, enforced the view that the only thinking in Russia was on the left, ranging from the liberal Alexander Herzen and Ivan Turgenev to the more radical and totalitarian Mikhail Bakunin or Petr Thachev. This is a view with which the eminent historian Richard Pipes has been battling for some time.

That may be described as a sin of omission. There was, however, one of commission as well. Berlin, the doyen of liberal thought and the man who defined the two kinds of liberty, saw no real moral or political difference between the various strands of thought. He did not like the Bolsheviks (probably for personal reasons) but his view of his Russian subjects, be it Herzen, who was largely liberal in his views, though leaning to socialism, or Tkachev who was a radical totalitarian, was usually benign. They were all fighting against Tsarism and, naturally enough, some of them were a little carried away but, his 'liberalism' suggested, one must accept all those points of view.

It is this view that has influenced the study of Russian nineteenth century thought in British universities. Alternative points of view have been frowned upon and often discarded. It is not surprising that a man whose idea of liberalism stretched into political relativism in theory should have prevaricated in practice.

Roy Kerridge

Phrases that mean something in America often mean nothing at all in England, but this does not stop everyone over here from using them. Criminals in England have been told, in futile unheeded tones, 'Two strikes and you're out!' Journalists have repeated this phrase under the impression that it can be understood. I know that it's something to do with baseball, a game that is a complete mystery to most Englishmen.

In America, Dalmatians are sometimes called 'fire dogs', as they used to be firemen's mascots and rode on fire engines. Now people in England sometimes call them 'fire dogs' too, but don't know the reason why.

Homosexual people have long been famous for getting in or out of 'closets' in American derived journalism. English readers vaguely imagine WC's or water closets since homosexuals tend to take over places once reserved for Gentlemen. I have just realised that 'closet' in America means 'wardrobe'. Not only homosexual people have had to dive into a wardrobe when a landlady, husband or relative bursts into a bedroom. I feel sympathetic to homosexuals now I can picture them nervously cowering in the dark among coats and mothballs. Misunderstandings over words will happen less frequently as we become more American. Words that long held out against well known American usage have suddenly capitulated. Lorries are now 'trucks', lorry drivers are 'truckers', and along the motorways, tea stalls are now labelled 'Truckers' Stops' in huge letters. No one calls *on* anyone anymore, they 'call up' or 'phone', the new meaning of 'call'. Small English children now draw masked robbers carrying bags with dollar signs on them. It could be worse – they could draw euros.

Imagining that we live in America has led many Englishmen to imagine that our constitutions are similar. There is now a commonly held belief that all religions in England are completely equal under the law with no one religion having an advantage over another. Fortunately this is not the case. We are officially a Christian country, with the Church of England still under Royal protection. Our official state calendar is still Christian, and just as well, or the post office would never be open. If every religion in the world were considered, the nation would be closed down by the sheer weight of public holidays.

Moslems who came here as immigrants to find work took it for granted that they were guests in a Christian country. Their children, born over here and guests no longer, are told at school and elsewhere that all religions are equal in English law. Teachers appear to believe that Christmas and Easter are facts, not ideas, and obviously must be holidays. Observing this discrepancy, thoughtful young Moslems may feel aggrieved.

Since Americans and Englishmen both closely observe the Christmas and Easter holidays by not working, I seem inadvertently to have proved that America itself is a Christian country. Let us hope this is true.

ETERNAL LIFE

At the beginning of the New Year, the Archbishop of Canterbury urged us to read the King James Bible in order to get a glimpse of what he called 'the big picture.' Perhaps this was meant to go with Dave's idea of 'the Big Society'? This is strange advice, coming from a man who has been in positions of power and influence in the church for decades. During that time the church hierarchy has ruthlessly suppressed the King James Bible, along with *The Book of Common Prayer*. When I came to the City in 1998, I discovered that St Sepulchre's did not have a lectern Bible in the King James Version, so I asked St Paul's if they would lend me one of theirs. 'Oh yes, and you can keep it. We never use it at St Paul's, only when the Royal Family comes – awkward people like that.'

The King James Bible is a work of literary and spiritual genius. It is the religious register in English and its words and phrases have penetrated deeply into English literature. You cannot read ten pages of Dickens or Kipling, Eliot or the Brontes without coming across wholly integrated resonances of the King James Version. English poetry is saturated with it. W H Auden said, as he witnessed the sidelining of the King James Bible: 'It was our luck to have that translation made when English was at its strongest and most robust. Why spit on our luck?'

C H Sisson said that all we really know is what he called 'the reluctant deposit on the mind's floor' – what you remember when you've forgotten everything else. For centuries people of all walks of life have carried around with them echoes of the King James Version. So to throw it out as the church hierarchy has done amounts to a savage act of deprivation and, as this deprivation is the Word of God in English, it is vicious iconoclasm. Sidelining the King James Version particularly deprives our children of their heritage.

There is no such thing as noble truth expressed in ignoble words. The choice of words determines what is being said. Therefore, we should choose the best: 'Strips of cloth' is no substitute for 'swaddling clothes.' You cannot satisfactorily replace 'through a glass darkly' with the crass literalism 'puzzling reflections in a mirror' or 'sounding brass and tinkling cymbal' with 'noisy gong and clanging cymbal.' The King James Bible was designed to be read aloud in churches. All the modern versions sound as if they have been written by tone-deaf people with tin ears and no rhythm in 'em. What level of vacuity is reached when 'Son of Belial' (the devil himself) is rendered by the New English Bible as 'a good-for-nothing'? As if the son of the devil is only a truant from the fourth form who has been stealing apples from the housemaster's orchard.

Sometimes the New Jerusalem Bible's pedantry, this pseudo-scholarly fascination with all that is merely foreign and obscure, is just foolish as in 'You, Yahweh examine me'. But occasionally it is mindlessly un-poetic and banal, as in the substitution of 'Acclaim Yahweh' for the mesmerisingly beautiful and timelessly familiar 'make a joyful noise unto the Lord.' In one example of supreme idiocy the meaning becomes impenetrable: The King James Version says, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord...' In the New Jerusalem Bible this degenerates into tasteless obscurantism: 'If you live in the shelter of Elyon and make your home in the shadow of Shaddai, you can say to Yahweh...'

The Revised Standard Version loves to parade the translators' acquaintance with the slightest nuances in the ancient languages but they are ignorant of how it will go into ordinary English. It renders the 'giants' of Genesis as 'nephilim' – to the confusion, one supposes, of elderly ladies everywhere. The 'two pence' which the Good Samaritan gave to the innkeeper is 'two denarii', lest we should imagine that the currency of the Roman Empire was the same as that of England, pre-decimalisation. The familiar 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk' becomes 'Take up your pallet and go home'. We must on no account be allowed to imagine that the poor paralytic slunk off carrying his four-poster; we have forced upon us the literalism 'pallet', and the result sounds like instructions to a sloppy painter.

The New English Bible also cannot tell the difference between speech that is poetic and metaphorical and that which is literal and descriptive. For 'wolves in

sheep's clothing' we are given instead the pantomime howler 'men dressed up as sheep.' We recall perhaps Ulysses' escape from the Cyclops or else that pejorative expression 'mutton dressed up as lamb.' In the King James Version men are 'at meat' or they 'sup'; but the Revised Standard Version mentions a Pharisee who 'asked Jesus to dine' – where, at The Garrick or White's? Likewise, his rebuke to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, 'O fools and slow of heart' is emasculated to become 'How dull you are!' Can you imagine Christ on the evening of his day of resurrection using such language?

The King James Version 'pearl of great price' is translated into more of that infantilised *Blue Peter* language as 'a pearl of very special value" And then the end of the world itself is described as if it were only an exceptionally hot afternoon at Goodwood: 'My dear friends...' (that is the voice of the New English Bible's urbane, housetrained St Peter) '...do not be bewildered by the fiery ordeal that is coming upon you, as though it were something extraordinary.'

With studied pedantry, the New Jerusalem Bible replaces 'inn' with 'living space'. I suppose because they imagined readers to be so literal-minded that we might think St Luke meant the Rose and Crown. Unfortunately, most readers will associate 'living space' with Hitler's successive territorial demands for *Lebensraum.* ' The King James Version translates Psalm 139: 16 – a beautiful poem in which the Psalmist declares that God knew him 'while he was yet in his mother's womb – as thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect'. This is evocative and tender. The New Jersalem Bible gives us instead, 'Your eyes could see my embryo' – as if God were a member of the Human Fertility and Embryo Commission. It is hard not to take refuge in satire: 'Does my embryo look big in this?' What more is there to be said when we notice that the New Jerusalem Bible renders 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity' as 'Sheer futility. Everything is futile.' That phrase could serve as the motto for all the modern translations.

The Church authorities have hypocritically and relentlessly suppressed the King James Bible only to take it out and gawp at it in an anniversary year, as if it were a museum piece and we were all blundering tourists. The proper place for the King James Version is on the lectern in every parish church – to be read, marked, learnt and inwardly digested for ever.

"Of course, with you being a heterosexual couple, you'll have to apply for a special permit from the government before we can finalise your union."

LETTERS

Sir,

David Ashton's reading of Rand in his thoughtful article is possible, but it is too kind. He misses, I think, two important points: Rand was a truly awful writer and her philosophy is fundamentally pernicious, even though in her opposition to communism she was on the side of the angels (in whom she didn't believe).

Rand is the Archangel of crude materialism, the nexus at which all strands of modernity converge. She exerted a formative influence on Alan Greenspan, the Virgin to her Gabriel and one of the architects of the present crisis. Even today, almost three decades after her death, this objectionable woman still claims apostles, most no doubt attracted by her fanatical championing of free enterprise.

Few are repelled by the way Rand fuses the values of cutthroat capitalism with fascist philosophy and aesthetics. At the centre of all her musings stands the fiscally virile superman, towering over a godless world. This is couched in the literary equivalent of Nazi and Soviet paintings depicting, respectively, a muscle-bound chap sporting swastika insignia or a muscle-bound chap raising high the hammer and sickle. Replace those attributes with a wrench and a balance sheet, keeping every other detail intact, and Rand's clumsily painted picture will be complete.

To reinforce the parallel, whenever Rand delivers her views on religion, she matches the hateful rhetoric of her fascist contemporaries, like Lenin and Stalin or Mussolini and Hitler. Nor does she defer to them in the hysterical pitch of her effluvia, except that she chooses as the object of such outpourings the *Ubermensch* defined in economic terms, rather than those of race or class. Just like Marx, Rand creates an imaginary economic world that has little to do with reality. That's why, for all her economic libertarianism, she is as far from conservatism as it's possible to be.

Alexander Boot
London SW6

Sir,

In the last issue a list of suggestions which might help the nation to recover from the consequences of past guilt induced over generosity included the replacement of the dole by food stamps and travel vouchers. This might be difficult to implement effectively.

Last year I spoke to the local Evergreen Club on my recent trip to America and mentioned the distribution of food stamps there. Somebody in the audience said that when she had been part of a group operating such a scheme in a deprived area many of the recipients had exchanged their parcels and vouchers for drugs before they reached the end of the street. A brisk trade in stamps and payments in kind might lead to the creation of yet another criminal empire. Many people are incapable of seeing beyond the next five minutes. There will always be some kind of benefit. They can always claim that they lost their stamps.

The only way in which these wandering souls could be properly fed would be to supervise their meals at least once a day. This would have the advantage of keeping some check on their whereabouts and an eye open for suspect injuries. It would also make them get up in the morning, but it is hard to imagine such a policy being accepted by the Human Rights lobby.

Yesterday the headline of *Wales on Sunday* ran 'Cash Bribes To Stop Junkies Having Babies'. This mild proposal to reward temporary infertility has been opposed. It seems that any measure likely to lessen the drain on our resources will founder on doctrinaire objections.

Margaret Brown
St Davids

ARTS AND BOOKS

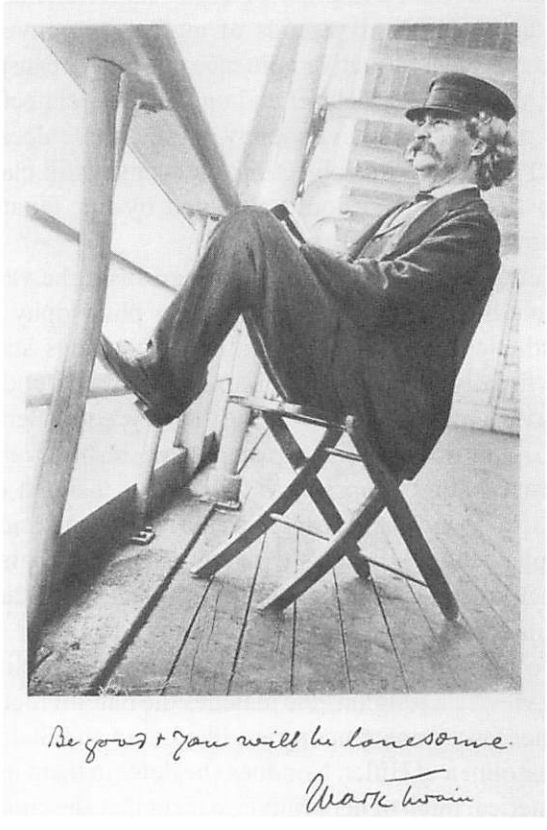
A Hundred Years on John Jolliffe

The Autobiography of Mark Twain , Vol 1, ed Harriet Elinor Smith and others, University of California Press, 2010, $34.95

This is the first of three volumes of a monumental project and represents a huge challenge to the reader, since its 737 pages weigh in at 4lbs 2 oz. The publishers' intention, backed by a string of sponsors, seems to be to construct a mausoleum to Mark Twain somewhat on the lines of the Taj Mahal, but with various useful features of the Albert Memorial thrown in. They do not have the interests of the general reader of average health and strength at heart. What they are after, and they have been for forty years, is academic monumentalism. For most of us, a process of condensation would improve matters, and the more of it the better. Nevertheless, this volume has much to offer.

Mark Twain left behind him, on his death in 1910, 5,000 pages of autobiography with instructions that they should not be published for a hundred years. A few years earlier, he had 'hit on the right way: start it at no particular time in your life: wander at your free will all over your life; talk about only the thing that interests you for the moment; drop it the moment its interest begins to pale, and turn your talk upon the new and more interesting thing that has intruded itself.' Not over-modestly, he concludes that 'this is the first time in history that the right plan has been hit on.' This self-indulgent method had the advantage that he was writing about whatever held his attention at any given time; and for a rolling stone, who was a very gifted columnist and lecturer, with no particular plan of life, it may be the right formula.

However, if you wait till you have become successful enough to please yourself in this way, a great danger arises. As he admits, the power of memory weakens; old age is garrulous; and the method of dictation, over a period of four years, encourages this. One often feels that if the author had written all this stuff down he would have saved himself trouble by cutting much of it out. Then again one comes across a page or two of such liveliness and fun that skipping would have been a mistake. His analysis of character is often a treat: President Theodore Roosevelt's 'impulses, the joyous ebullitions of excited sincerity, almost always large, fine, generous. He cannot stick to one of them long enough to find out what kind of a chick it would hatch if it had a chance; but everyone recognises the generosity of the intention and they admire him and love him for it.' As for Thanksgiving Day, it was 'originated in New England two or three centuries ago by those who were thankful for having exterminated their neighbours the Indians during the previous twelve months instead of being exterminated by their neighbours the Indians.' Of his many *bon mots* one of my favourites is 'A banker



is a fellow who lends you his umbrella when the sun is shining, but wants it back the minute it starts raining.' His new genre of ironic humour has echoed down the years among many followers including Dorothy Parker, Damon Runyon, S.J.Perelman and perhaps even Tom Lehrer.

Of course, this method does not produce anything like a coherent account of his life – the aim of most autobiographers. Do we really want to gaze at the marble quarries at Carrara rather than a statue by Michelangelo? The quarry is certainly of tourist interest, but the statue is a work of genius. The result of the publishers' treatment is not so much a conventional autobiography as a Mark Twain Encyclopedia.

As such, it is certainly comprehensive. After 200 pages of 'preliminary manuscripts and dictations', we come to six of his earliest proper pieces, describing his various meetings with Ulysses Grant, first as General and then as President. At the first of the latter Twain inquired "Mr. President, I am embarrassed – are you?" 'He smiled a smile that would have done no discredit to a cast-iron image, and I got away under the smoke of my volley.' Later, he did Grant, who had no money, an exceptionally good turn by obtaining something like the true value of his memoirs from a publisher who was not so much rapacious as totally unaware of the book's potential. Always enterprising and stylish, usually with a strong sense of humanity as well as humour and generosity, together with quite exceptional gifts as a story-teller, these are the great characteristics of Twain at his best. His childhood in rural Missouri was idyllic, at least in retrospect, and his account of it provides many clues about the origins of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn.*

In 1856, before he had earned more than a few cents at any occupation, he had found a fifty-dollar bill, blown about by a piercing wind in a snowy street, 'the largest assemblage of money I had ever encountered in one spot.' After advertising it (really?) in the papers he 'suffered more than 1,000 dollars' worth of solicitude and fear and distress lest the owner ... should come and take my fortune away.' After four days of this 'I felt I must take my money out of danger, so I bought a ticket for Cincinnati and went to that city.' It is interesting to note that Twain's father had acquired over 75,000 acres of potentially valuable land in Tennessee (though he may have had legal title to only 30,000 of them.) 'When he died, in 1847, we began to manage it ourselves. Forty years later, we had managed it all away except 10,000 acres, and in about 1887 the 10,000 went (traded by my brother for a property in the oil lands of Pennsylvania. About 1894 he sold it for $250. That ended the Tennessee land.') However, from it Twain got the idea of a book, *The Gilded Age,* based on the character of his cousin James Lambton, who was related to the Lambtons in England, and who 'floated all his days in a tinted mist of magnificent dreams'. As co-author, Twain 'got $15,000 or $20,000 from my half of the book, 'and out of the play I got $75,000 or $80,000, just about a dollar an acre.'

We then jump forward restlessly to 1906, by which time his earnings had snowballed, and he was able to spend months on end in London, Paris, Vienna and Florence, the latter chosen because of his wife's crippling ill-health, and her need for a warmer climate. There however he made the mistake of renting an enormous and unusually uncomfortable Medici villa, previously inhabited by Jerome Bonaparte after his expulsion from Spain. His account of his (American) landlady there is one of the most extended and bitter examples of invective and abuse, all, it seems, justified, that I have ever read. His wife's illness and death, together with the early losses of much-loved children, make a sad contrast to the general *joie de vivre.*

In the same year we find him appearing and speaking on behalf of the Russian revolutionary Tchaikovsky, and the *New York Times* reported in one of its charming, leisurely headlines that 'Mark Twain writes that he hopes Czars and Grand Dukes will soon become scarce'. By then he was regularly attacking, in speeches and articles, 'our lawless railway corporations, our rotten beef trusts, our vast robber dens of insurance magnates', and also speaking up for the new Institutes for the Blind, and for their astonishing creator Helen Keller.

The actual autobiography takes up 268 pages, which are followed by another 244 of appendices, notes and references, most of which are of only academic interest. All of them would have been better off in a companion volume. Gentle reader, as they used to say in Twain's day, if you have unlimited stamina, you will find many delightful plums embedded in this vast pudding. *Bon appetit!* You'll need it. And don't forget that there are two more volumes to come....

The Windsor Philosopher

Celia Haddon

Harmony. A New Way of Looking at our World, HRH the Prince of Wales, Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly, Harper Collins, 2010, £25.

I started this book with apprehension. A book about the Prince of Wales' interests, which include ecology, architecture, town planning, farming and something called 'connected reporting framework', could so easily have been either a vacuous bit of management PR or a sort of Highland diary of the kind written by his great, great, great grandmother. This book is odder and more interesting than either.

It is a brave attempt to put forward the Prince's philosophy, which lies behind these interests and gives meaning and coherence to his interventions in public life. He has named this philosophy Harmony, and defined it as an 'active state of balance' in both human society and the natural world. Of course newspapers like *The Guardian* have greeted the book with scorn and ridicule, arguing that only the title of its author makes it publishable.

In the present state of celeb-driven publishing, the Prince's name may account for its publication but it deserves it anyway. His theme is that we have separated ourselves from nature and turned our back on the spiritual dimension, the connection between us and the natural world (what the religious would call 'creation') which should resonate through our lives. As a result, we are trashing the planet. *The Guardian* sneered that this is hardly an original idea but how many environmentalists, now that Richard Dawkins' atheistic evangelism stalks the academic corridors, would dare even to use the word 'spiritual' while expounding their views?

The Prince's amateurism allows him to do this. He is not afraid to take us through what he calls 'the golden thread' from ancient Egypt through Pythagoras, through the ancient symbols of shapes ending up with what he calls the grammar of harmony in architecture. Jumping from idea to idea this chapter of the book reads rather perilously like *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, where disparate historical facts are yoked together to make a false narrative.

However, some, if not all, of what the Prince writes does deserve further serious examination. Though it may sound a bit like a *Holy Grail* narrative, it is probable that much of the design of Chartres' cathedral has symbolic meanings, as the medieval mind was so steeped in allegory that these would have been second nature to its architects. Similarly, the Fibonacci sequence of numbers may sound like a mad idea out of the *Da Vinci Code*, but it is found in the dimensions of natural objects like sea snail shells or flower heads and is still of interest to mathematicians today.

Whether measurements like these and the golden ratio are also found in buildings as diverse as the Parthenon and the Tunisian Mosque of Kairouan is much more speculative. The golden ratio arises from dividing a line into a larger and a smaller segment, so that the ratio of the whole to the larger segment is the same as the ratio of the larger to the smaller segment. The Prince argues that humans are programmed to prefer certain harmonious shapes or patterns of this kind in architecture. It is not impossible that such an innate preference exists but it is a difficult idea to test and is so far unproven.

However, studies *have* supported another idea he mentions, the biophilia hypothesis, which demonstrates that human beings have a need for and an affinity with nature. This has arisen from their evolutionary past whereby natural objects like flowers must be recognised and appreciated for their survival value as food. Likewise modern *Homo sapiens* is still particularly attentive to animals, and puppies advertise lavatory paper for this reason. Paying attention to animals that might eat you or might provide a meal has been selected by evolution as trait for survival. There are now several serious studies, which spring from the idea that most individuals are pre-programmed to respond to the natural over the artificial, grass over concrete, trees over buildings. Nor is it just the Prince of Wales who is anxious about modern ways of living. Evolutionary psychologists are now arguing that the industrialised culture we inhabit is damaging to the human psyche.

A weakness of this book is that there are too many ideas and not enough effort to explain and weigh up the supporting and the opposing evidence for each. A good example is the Prince's reference to homeopathy. There are a couple of studies that support its use in farm animals, but the bulk of studies, most of which I have read, suggest that homeopathic theory and the medicines *per se* are little better than a placebo. In a serious book, it is not good enough to merely mention the few favourable animals studies, while ignoring the rest.

Does this matter? After all the best-selling success of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* or the *Da Vinci Code* shows that ordinary readers, whose thinking he is trying to change, don't care a fig. For them narrative, rather than evidence, is what counts. If this book is the personal philosophy of The Prince of Wales, the tedious sifting of evidence is not necessary. However, the book isn't sufficiently personal to stand as an autobiography of his heart. Indeed, when it discusses the details of the Prince's achievements, which includes saving us from some truly horrible buildings, it lapses into a management speak which lets the rest of the book down.

The princely fascination with Islam emerges in several contexts. It is true that of the three sacred books, *The Koran* is probably most sensitive to the natural world, but I wish somebody would brief the prince about the creation spirituality movement. Christianity has its response to the natural world too. Perhaps the clergy surrounding the royal family are too stuffy and boringly orthodox to know or care about it.

There is nothing in the tradition of the house of Windsor (as opposed to the ferociously scholastic achievements of the Tudor royals) that would encourage a royal family member to develop his own philosophy. Yet somehow we have acquired a philosopher prince, brave enough to publish this book and pursue what he believes to be right. We can criticise him or disagree with him, but he does not deserve ridicule.

Eastern Imperialism

Jonathan Story

The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model will Dominate the Twenty-First Century, Stefan Halper, New York, Basic Books, 2010, £16.99.

When Stefan Halper began to consider China's development, he shared the widespread view that the market economy would lead towards democratisation. But he became less convinced that the story of China's convergence on the 'West' was descriptive of what was going on. Adopting Minxin Pei's argument that the CCP is trapped between its economic strategy to escape the fate of the Soviet Union, and its political strategy to keep power at all costs, he develops an interesting argument that China's domestic weaknesses cause its international assertiveness.

That argument may sound odd to ears accustomed to hear how China's leadership goes from one success to another but it is convincing. In 1990 the only way that the Politburo could conceive of China's not becoming the next communist domino was to go for growth, open the doors to inward direct investment, shake out the state and township enterprise sectors, promote private entrepreneurship, shrivel Mao's welfare system, and enter a compact with the Chinese people as the guide to selective prosperity and political stability. The result is manifested in the intense pride that Chinese citizens take in their country's emergence as a major player on the global scene, but it is also evident in the chauvinism which has become so marked over the last year. As China's Foreign Minister Jang Jiechi said at a meeting with his country's smaller Asia Pacific neighbours: 'We are big, and you are small.'

The price of growth, as Halper records, has been high, and leading to soaring inequalities, disparities of growth between regions, air and water pollution, endemic corruption and overdependence on exports to sustain the manufacturing sector. The CCP is concerned at the prospect of transforming a mainly rural country to a predominantly urban society over the next two to three decades. Up to one billion people still live in rural areas, on $2 a day, without access to adequate schooling, medical treatment or fresh water. Making sure that the growth machine keeps running is the source of China's assertive stance on the world stage. That means keeping a competitive exchange rate, amassing two trillion dollars worth of foreign exchange reserves and ensuring oil flows from the Iran, Sudan or Venezuela. China has to drag its feet in curbing nuclear proliferation and undercutting World Bank conditions attached to loans for African countries. It needs to hobnob with Fidel Castro, grant a doctorate to Robert Mugabe, support the junta in Myanmar, as well as replacing the United States as Brazil's number one trade partner and providing development finance for Argentina.

China earns its surplus funds on the developed markets of Europe and the United States, and recycles them to other developing countries, in exchange for access to land, minerals and fossil fuels. The rest is placed in the US T-bond market, and invested on global markets by state funds, both at very considerable risk. As Halper rightly argues, what makes China so attractive to developing countries' leaderships is its combination of market economics and authoritarian government. To African and Latin American countries, which have lingered in low to negative growth since the early 1980s, when China was in the first stages of its Open Door policy, the record speaks for itself. Negotiating a policy package with the Chinese leadership takes a fraction of the time that it does with western institutions, and there are no question asked – other than polite requests, please to vote for China's cause in the UN General Assembly, cut off ties with Taiwan and not mention Tibet.

Halper sees China challenging the western ideals of human rights, the rule of law and free markets. Too much of the debate on China within the Washington Beltway focuses on China's considerable military and naval build-up, or on its trade, industrial and technology policies, and not enough on the larger picture of China which is offering an alternative development path to that offered by 'the West'. Western appeal is shrinking because state capitalism, not free markets, is what much of the world experiences, and because governments from Russia to Iran or Venezuela only pay lip service to the ballot box.

He thinks that in dealing with China the US should adopt a more multilateral approach that plays on the leadership's dual fear of isolation and criticism. 'The secret of any success, is exploiting China's intense desire to be included in the top-table discourse of major powers whether it's on financial stability, energy security, non-proliferation, climate change or pandemic disease'. Along with this is its susceptibility to criticism in the world press over its treatment of Tibet, its simmering unpopularity in Africa, and the fear it engenders among its neighbours, like Russia or India and the countries of South-East Asia. He combines this with a set of sound proposals to meet the challenge at home, like domestic savings, getting the federal deficit under control, investing in R&D, and encouraging more corporate investment in America. China's

greatest fear, Halper argues, is 'American ideas' 'that represent a basic agreement, resting on the consent of the governed and committing government to ensure the rights of speech, belief, assembly and political expression'. 'They also represent a kind of political hammer, which is America's to use and China's to fear in equal measure'. No peaceful emergence here.

The one significant flaw in the book is Halper's use of the noun 'the Enlightenment', as if it were one solid block. He could have benefited from reading Gertrude Himmelfarb's *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French and American Enlightenments.* As the title indicates, there were many enlightenments, with as many progenies – nationalism, racialism, utilitarianism, liberalism, and Burkean conservatism. The book also misses that China's modernisation since the nineteenth century makes it part of 'the West'. Paradoxically, the 'West' that China adopted in the late 1970s was Burkean conservatism because the leadership had learnt the hard way that Mao's French revolutionary quest for modernity downplayed the salient political law that unintended consequences always prevail. The EU and the US by contrast adopted a facile mélange of utilitarian-liberalism, dressed up as market-democracy, which their minions proceeded to preach and impose on the rest of the world. China rejected these ideas at home, and also abroad. Halper suggests that China should accommodate 'the West's' ideas. Some house cleaning in 'the Western' intellectual attic would not come amiss.

The Subaltern's War

M R D Foot

Six Weeks, John Lewis-Stempel, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010, £20.

My father's generation never let their sons forget the expectation of life of an infantry subaltern, on either side, at Passchendaele in 1917: three weeks. John Lewis-Stempel has looked at the whole war of 1914-18 and worked out that, while it lasted, a British infantry subaltern was as likely as not to be dead after six weeks and four days at the front. His book is an account of the lives of junior infantry officers in the British Expeditionary Force in France: he believes that they were the real backbone of the army, and that their often short and gallant lives saved the nation.

This line of argument will be unwelcome to a public brought up on Owen and Sassoon, who believe that the massive casualties of the Kaiser's war were due to incompetence by the high command, and forget that both Owen and Sassoon, having made their protests, went back to rejoin their regiments at the front; from which Owen did not return. It is also repellent to those who disapprove of public schools to find that the public schools' officers' training corps, as reorganized by Haldane early in the century, provided young officers by the thousand, without whom Kitchener's new armies could never have fought at all. In autumn 1915, for the first time for over five hundred years, not a soul went up from Winchester to Oxford: every single Wykehamist of an age to do so joined up.

Lewis-Stempel bases his book on lavish quotations from the letters and diaries of the men he discusses, taking care each time to specify with which unit the writer was serving. This cannot help giving his book immediacy: it carries its readers right out into the maze of trenches, with all the attendant complications – wire, lice, hunger, mud, muddle, stench, incessant noise and incessant danger. Men in their late teens, recently at school, had to steel themselves not to show that they were afraid, and to accept responsibility for the lives of two or three score others in the platoons they commanded. Of course they had to rely on their platoon sergeants for help and advice, which they usually got; it remained their task to *lead.* Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Mao have since made leadership deeply unfashionable, but without leaders armies are mobs, and without valid armies to defend them nations perish.

The book's climactic chapter is its sixth, entitled 'Over the Top: Into Battle'; for when it came to an attack, it was the subaltern's job to be first up the scaling-ladder and over the parapet of the trench, into whatever hail of bullets and shrapnel might be aimed at him. If he had led well enough, his men would follow – often, across his dead or dying body. Young officers often had nightmares that their men would stay behind in the trench; this rarely happened.

After the war, the phrase 'the lost generation' became hackneyed. Thousands of young men were indeed lost, before they could beget children of their own, and those who survived were not always among the bravest or most competent. The real loss has seldom been properly noticed. It consisted of the men who had learned to lead, but so much loathed having to do so that, if they did survive, they turned their backs on public affairs: hence the weaknesses of post-war parliaments and diplomacies.

Out of step though this book at first glance seems to be, it is well worth reading and pondering, for the nation still owes a tremendous debt to the dead of the Great War, who saved it from being run by Hohenzollern Germany, a dark fate too often overlooked by protesters against wars of all kinds. Awful as wars are, sometimes they need to be fought; as Lewis-Stempel shows, the

young dead officers of 1914-18 were well aware that they were not giving their lives for nothing. The conviction that imperial Germany had gone beyond the pale of civilisation and had to be defeated, at however ghastly a cost, was sound.

Economical Attitudes

Christie Davies

Dismantling America and other controversial essays, Thomas Sowell, New York, Basic, 2010, £16.99.

Thomas Sowell is one of America's leading black economists and its leading black sociologist. Without the bigotry of the politically correct, his colour would not matter, for the truth of an analysis is independent of the analyst's race. Sowell expresses opinions on the positions of blacks in America that will be anathema to the politically correct, who think that they alone are virtuous and that all black Americans should agree with them.

Sowell understands that market forces are ubiquitous and that any defiance of them has to be paid for. He has seen through the destructive ideological trickery involved in the use of words like 'fairness' and 'privileged'. Sowell knows that justice involves treating people as individuals and according to their deserts and not as merely representative of a group favoured or disfavoured by the prejudices of the politically correct. He understands that it is wrong to condemn a nation's history without first comparing it with that of other nations.

There is a 'glimmer of hope' in America. The city council of Chicago with the support of many black leaders voted to impose a minimum wage of $10 on the big retailers in that city. What is hopeful is that other black leaders now had the sense to denounce the proposal because they could see that it would lead to higher unemployment and would keep stores and jobs out of black neighbourhoods, the new segregation that has been given the epithet 'redlining'. Economists know that forcing up prices leads fewer people to buy and that this also applies to employers hiring labour. Such laws particularly hit the employment of young inexperienced and unskilled workers such as black teenagers because wage rates are being set way higher than the value of what they can produce. Black teenage unemployment was low in the 1940s and only rose with the hiking upwards of the minimum wage after 1950. Until now the politicians have been unwilling and unable to understand and accept this piece of commonsense economics. Sowell calls the new attitude in Chicago 'a glimmer of hope'.

When are we going to get a glimmer in Europe? Why is unemployment so high in France? In Britain there is a minimum wage even for piece-workers and those working on commission, for trainees and apprentices, for foreigners and seafarers. Only illegal immigrants get paid less which is why they are so popular with unscrupulous employers. Under the Labour governments the minimum wage rose faster than the average wage. There are now two and a half million unemployed in Britain. Boris Johnson has just had the minimum wage paid to his London employees. How many people will he now be forced to lay off and how many other workers will be laid off when the rates go up and employers cannot fund as much employment? Someone should send him a copy of Sowell's book, since he knows little of economics.

Even more ignorant than the politicians are America's judges and likewise Britain's, and worst of all the buffoons of Strasburg. Sowell tells us 'After Arthur Goldberg had served on the Supreme Court he lamented that more of society's problems could not be dealt with as that court dealt with them – by reaching a decision, and then declaring "It is so ordered".' Why does no-one ask how much each fatuous new human right they have invented is going to cost?

Sowell condemns those who 'distort reality' by seizing 'upon slavery to denounce American society'. As he shows Western civilisation was the first to abolish slavery. Yet who today remembers the Barbary Pirates, the Muslim slave traders of the southern shores of the Mediterranean who, Sowell points out, captured Europeans and Americans as well as Africans to be traded as slaves, until put down by the US Marines, as their battle-hymn says, on 'the shores of Tripoli'? It was America's first war against Koran-justified terror. Liberals have selective memories. How many of them know, as Sowell knows, that gay activists in Los Angeles shouted racial abuse at blacks after Californian voters rejected 'gay marriage'? Among the blacks seventy per cent voted against gay marriage, which was a far greater majority than for other groups. For once an N-word followed a Q-word in the lexicon.

Perhaps Sowell's best essay is 'The Fallacy of Fairness', which points out that life *cannot* be fair. Some disparities between individuals and groups are based on discrimination but many that are 'automatically blamed on discrimination have other causes'. In the 'language of the politically correct achievement is equated with privilege...' A study of incomes of various groups in Toronto concluded that Canadians of Japanese ancestry were the most 'privileged' group in that city. You would think that working their way to the top despite blatant

discrimination before and especially during World War II deserved our respect. But no, they are 'privileged'. Canadian liberals only respect failure, for the failed must be victims.

Thomas Sowell has once again emerged as the scourge of sloppy and unjust 'liberal' thinking. He condemns 'President Obama's own contempt for America's values and traditions...'. Sowell is fighting to prevent America from being 'dismantled' into quarrelling ethnic and religious factions, many with no respect for the American way. If America is dismantled we will all go down with it. Besides, the 'diversity' dismantlers are hard at work here in Britain.

A Runaway Train

Penelope Tremayne

The Berlin to Baghdad Express, Sean McMeekin, Allen Lane, 2010, £25.

The Berlin to Baghdad Express is not suitable for railway buffs or thriller addicts, but I hope it will be widely read in spite of its misleading title, especially now when so many of us are being urged to fear not only being cooked alive by climate change but also bloodily engulfed by 'Islamism'.

The building of the railway was begun in the 1870s and most of it was in use by 1889, when the German Emperor Wilhelm II made a State visit to Constantinople. Dazzled by the putrescent glories of the dying Turkish empire, he allied himself with Abdul Hamid (later surnamed The Damned), who at the time was both Sultan and Caliph of all Islam. In subsequent visits these two evolved a plan for igniting a transcontinental Jihad. Religious fervour plus vast manpower, in harness with invincible German military might, would conquer the world. Mountains of money would be needed as well as transport on a huge scale. Obviously the railway must be completed. Turkey was bankrupt and the Kaiser's financiers and negotiators were set to work and immense sums, including a lot borrowed from Britain, were raised.

In 1908 Abdul Hamid, half mad already, was 'put aside' by the revolutionary Young Turks, who set up a secular and republican government, the Committee of Union and Progress. The change did not halt plans for the Jihad; nor did the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. The combined German and Turkish assault, under German command, was launched against the Suez Canal, in order to cut the throat of Britain's communications with both India and the Persian Gulf. It failed because Egypt did not throw off the British and join with the armies of Islam. Help from the sheikhdoms of the Arabian peninsula had been promised – a few hundred, or thousand men, from here or there, a few thousand riding-camels, transport camels, and all of them requiring large sums in advance to defray costs. Disappointingly few turned up, and even among those who did 'Islamic solidarity' McMeekin notes, 'was a sham'.

Success at the Dardanelles in 1915 raised spirits, though already the Turks, who for 400 years or so had regarded themselves as *Herrenvolk*, had begun to detest their German allies. In 1916 the German ambassador in Constantinople reported Turks 'far and wide' telling each other that 'we should do to the Germans what we did to the Armenians'. A milder German envoy wrote that 'There cannot be another example in history rivalling the way the Turks have taken advantage of us in this war.'

The Kaiser, egged on by the egregious quasi-baron von Oppenheim, proclaimed himself a Moslem, announcing it in thousands of leaflets printed in the relevant languages and distributed from the Maghreb to Mongolia. Agents covert and overt were sent out to spread the Islamic Revolution by sabotage as well as massive propaganda quoting the Prophet's own command to 'Kill the infidel wherever you may find him'.

The exploits of the men despatched on all these operations (by nations of the Entente as well as the Central Powers) were enthralling. McMeekin gives us glimpses of one or two of them, and would have done well, I think, to have allowed us rather more, to leaven the dough. He draws heavily on Peter Hopkirk, and acknowledges the borrowing generously, even telling us it was Hopkirk's *Secret Service East of Constantinople* that inspired him to take up the subject, but condescendingly refers to that book as 'that great yarn'. Most of the rest of his own text is so densely packed with historical information that although it is interesting it makes heavy reading. Now and then he throws us a biscuit: 'Lawrence of Arabia, improbably, was a closet homosexual.' But are there enough biscuits to keep us pressing on through sentences too thick with facts.

Why did all these enormous efforts trickle away into the sand? Not for lack of money, or energy, or leadership. Perhaps because within the Umma's vast but draughty tent there were too many different tribal tents and nations, fully engaged with their own wars and affairs. A worldwide Holy War lit no fire for them to combine with each other. The Arabic enthusiasm for fighting is mainly for fighting among themselves, and in 1915 too many other things were being turned

upside down. Three great and ancient empires were collapsing: the Turkish, Persian and Russian, two to be replaced by Bolshevism and chaos while in the third, Turkey, not only was the Sultanate destroyed but the still greater and more ancient Caliphate itself. The Faithful did not rise against these appalling blasphemies. Why should they do so on the orders of foreign infidels?

After 1918 the countries of the Middle East were shaken together by the victors and tipped out like dice; after another World War and another shake-up Gamal Abdel Nasser tried with his United Arab Republic to form Egypt, Syria, the Yemen and Iraq into a pan-Arab political and military force. That too failed, and its disintegration left some of its members with a sense of betrayal and humiliation which has still not died.

Since Nine-Eleven, the declared opening shots of a new world-wide Jihad, there have been several revolting incidents of indiscriminate mass-murder, with some hundreds of people killed and maimed, in several countries; and similar attempts have failed. There has been a fluctuating stream of random murders, and repeated efforts, successful or otherwise, by suicide-bombers. No doubt there is enough money in the Middle East and elsewhere to keep these things going for a long time, but the world has not been overturned as prophesied.

Has it all made many new converts to Islam? Some, maybe, especially after the bloodier coups: among the malcontents Death is 'in', yours, mine, everyone's, provided it attracts attention. Has it increased support for terrorism, specific or general? Getting the thrill is one thing; paying the bill is another, but it seems likely that these splatters of bombings and stabbings will go on, like malaria until the marshes are drained, at least until unemployed adolescents wake up and find that bombing is boring.

The goal of the self-selected messiahs is not holy obedience but power over others, as many others as possible. In the last century the most tantalising target was the British Empire; now it is America. We need to remind ourselves that the drive behind to-day's 'Islamic Jihad' (which is properly neither Islamic nor a Jihad) has much more to do with politics than with piety. It is part of the back-wash from the collapse of communism: one ideology thrusting in to fill the place of another, like weeds in a bomb-site.

The Kaiser tried to use Islam in pursuit of personal power; so did Nasser; so did Gaddafi (it was hardly for Islam that he shipped semtex to the IRA). The 'Islamists' and 'Jihadists' (gang names, really) are simply terrorists, whatever the colour of their shirts may be, with the power-hungriest deluding the weak-witted and the natural bullies into doing the menial jobs for them with explosives. If a little more history had been taught to to-day's under-25s instead of film studies they might be less gullible than the under-60s have been. Perhaps experience will fill the gap. Meanwhile the present soft-left policy or practice of answering Moslem threats against Christians by banning Christian symbols and anxiously professing respect for Islam must have the firebrand Mullahs laughing all the way to the Mosque as well as the bank.

Anti-education

Will Knowland

Why do I need a Teacher When I've Got Google? The essential guide to the big issues for every twenty-first century teacher, Ian Gilbert, Routledge, 2011, £15.99.

The length of this book belies Gilbert's paucity of ideas: the core of education should be a skills-based utilitarianism; intelligence is not fixed, and all learning and behaviour is reducible to 'electro-chemical combustions in the brain'; the traditional school system stifles thought; and the teacher must merely 'preside over the democratisation of learning'. The poverty of these ideas means Gilbert's book is like all modern educational theory: what's new isn't true, and what's true isn't new.

'In the good old days', Gilbert says, 'knowledge was fixed', but it 'exploded' at the beginning of the twenty-first century, so the purpose of education is no longer the transmission of truth: he wants teachers to 'train' children to 'save the world'. Of central importance is the development of 'skills, attributes, attitudes and commitments'. Postmodernism, however, is necessarily false because it affirms the truth of the proposition 'there is no truth'. There is much knowledge that is fixed and needs to be learnt: according to the distinguished physicist the Revd Dr John Polkinghorne KBE FRS, 'even physics, at least at the undergraduate level, is a subject on which the dust has settled'. Subordinating knowledge to 'skills' breeds nihilistic barbarians. Conspicuously absent from Gilbert's list of twenty-first century problems is the leading cause of death between the ages of 15 and 44: suicide.

The American social analyst Charles Murray has shown that family background (genetics and environment) fixes intelligence to a significant degree: intensive pre-school education for disadvantaged children can raise IQ scores in the short term, but improvements fall off within three years. This means

equality of opportunity is impossible. Even removing children from their families at birth, as T S Eliot said the totalitarian dogma of equality of opportunity would require, could not achieve it. Opportunities won't be equal at a given moment unless outcomes are, but this cannot be achieved, for people differ in their natural aptitudes.

Gilbert's assertion (it is not an argument) that all learning and behaviour is reducible to 'electro-chemical combustions in the brain' denies the freedom of the intellect and, therefore, free will. He has committed another incoherence. As M R Bennett and P M S Hacker put it in *The Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*, 'the eliminative materialist inevitably saws off the branch on which he is seated' because the theory that says thought is nothing but 'electro-chemical combustion' is itself nothing but 'electro-chemical combustion'. People who baulk at the immateriality of the intellect should note that not even the properties of matter are matter.

The traditional school system, Gilbert says, is bad because it stifles thought by initiating children into bodies of knowledge and inculcating in them a respect for authority. Consider, however, the following two mathematics examination questions. Question 4 from the June 2008 Edexcel GCSE Mathematics A (Linear), Foundation tier Paper 2 – calculator permitted: Work out £1.70x5. Question 10(ii)4 from the 1963 University of London O level Pure Maths Paper 2, Syllabus B – calculator not permitted: A particle moves from rest in a straight line and after t seconds its velocity is $(3t^2 - 4t)$ feet per second. Calculate the distance which the particle travels in the interval of time from $t = 2$ to $t = 5$. 'Stifled' candidates from 1963 were able to understand that the concept of velocity can be represented by an algebraic expression and that integral calculus is the tool required to solve the problem, whereas training 'the transition generation' to 'think, not our thoughts, but their own' has retarded their capacity to think at all.

The effects of this 'retreat from scholarship' (as Christopher Ray, the High Master of Manchester Grammar School, called it) have also extended to the majority of current teachers – of whom only 61% of those entering teaching by the BEd route in 2009 had two A-levels, despite the debasement of A-levels, – and educationalists, including Gilbert himself, who wants to free children from 'the tyranny of syntax' and uses the verb 'quote' as a noun in the book. The cavalier dismissal of didactic teaching has desolated the lives of those whom it was intended to benefit. In 1969, over 26% of the university population was of working-class origin, more than double that of our nearest rival, Sweden; in addition, 17 out of 21 heads of major civil service departments in the early 1970s were ex-grammar school pupils. Now, while pupils in Northern Ireland still benefit from a fully selective school system and outperform pupils from England, 1 in 7 pupils on the Labour government's Gifted and Talented programme in 2008 failed to achieve five A*-C grade GCSEs, and the top reasons for truancy are inappropriate curricula, bad teaching, and poor school ethos.

Gilbert's idea of the teacher as someone who 'presides over the democratisation of learning' shows that he misunderstands the nature of education. The Latin *educare* means 'to rear or bring up (children or young animals)', and it in turn derives from *educere*, 'to lead forth' or 'to lead out of'. Implicit in this is the notion that education should lead children out of their stifling subjectivism, not bolster their self-esteem. It is inherently elitist because it focuses on 'the best that has been thought and said', inherently discriminatory because it asserts that what children are led to is superior to what they are led out of, and inherently undemocratic because the child, whose judgement is juvenile, cannot be an equal partner in it and can only attain freedom by submitting to the teacher's authority. Rather than undermining the teacher's importance, the proliferation of information thus underscores it by intensifying the need for him to convey intrinsically valuable knowledge with insight and discernment.

Death of the 6th Army

Frank Ellis

The Stalingrad Trilogy, Volume 2, Armageddon in Stalingrad, September-November 1942, David M Glantz with Jonathan M House, University of Kansas Press, Kansas, 2009, £35.50.

In late August 1942 the German 6th Army failed to take Stalingrad by *coup de main*. Nevertheless, its commander von Paulus believed that there was every chance that the Soviet defences in the city and suburbs could still be overwhelmed by the systematic application of air and ground power. At this stage in the battle the tasks facing both commanders, von Paulus and Vasilii Chuikov, the commander of the 62nd Army in the city, were straightforward: von Paulus wanted to seize the city as soon as possible and in any case before the winter; whereas Chuikov sought to deny the Germans victory by a series of ferocious defensive battles. Endless attacks were launched against the Germans with the aim of slowing their advance. The flow of Red Army reinforcements was just enough to prevent Chuikov's army from collapsing and just

enough to focus German attention on the city, so diverting attention from potential dangers elsewhere. Stalin and his commanders were buying time with blood.

In this second volume Glantz expertly guides us through the various phases of this monstrous battle of attrition. The September battles begin in the suburbs, moving through central and southern Stalingrad and ending with the assault on the workers' villages and the reduction of the Orlovka salient. In October the scale and pace of German attacks reach their peak as the 6th Army fights for possession of the *Krasniy Oktiabr'* (Red October) and Barrikady factories. In both the air and ground dimension the role of the *Luftwaffe* was critical. It dominated the skies over Stalingrad in the early phase of the battle, severely disrupting Soviet resupply traffic over the Volga. Because by mid-September 1942 the 6th Army was 16 per cent below strength, a situation that was going to get much worse with the onset of Autumn and Winter, the *Luftwaffe* was able to augment its striking power on the ground. By mid-November the Red Army was still hanging on, though the failure to recognise the evidence of clear danger on the flanks was about to be apparent to von Paulus.

Chuikov sought to negate the German advantages of air power and fire power by keeping his men as close as possible to the German lines so that German air and artillery strikes ran the risk of hitting their own lines. The night-time hours were fully exploited so as to conduct recce and fighting patrols and attacks. Such was the extreme proximity of German and Soviet lines in the city that soldiers on both sides faced a real risk of being taken prisoner by an enemy snatch patrol. The urban environment, in many places reduced to rubble, assisted the defenders and impeded the attacker. Such conditions were exceptionally propitious for the deployment of snipers, and, despite the promotion of Vasilii Zaitsev as the scourge of the 6th Army, German snipers, armed with either captured Soviet sniper rifles or using German rifles and scopes, took a heavy toll of Red Army troops.

It is clear from Glantz's account that the harsh disciplinary regime initiated after the promulgation of Stalin's Order □ 227 on 28th July 1942, more widely known as *ni shagu nazad* ('not a step backwards'), stiffened Soviet resistance. One direct consequence of this order, which finally emerged as a major theme in Russian war literature in the mid 1990s, was the formation and use of blocking detachments (*zagriaditel'nye otriady*). The aim of these *ad hoc* formations was to shoot down Soviet troops retreating without orders and so prevent unauthorised withdrawals. From declassified documents which were published in 2000, and which continue to be supplemented by new material, the NKVD was well aware that the use of these formations was bitterly resented by Red Army soldiers. Patriotism almost certainly did play a role in hardening the Red Army's resistance but these savage disciplinary measures played their part as well. To quote Glantz: 'With the Volga River and the ruthless NKVD blocking detachments at his back, the Soviet soldier really had no choice but to fight on'

One question that always arises in any discussion of Stalingrad is why von Paulus and others seemed so oblivious to the possibility of a major Soviet counter-offensive. For example, Reinhard Gehlen's intelligence organization, *Fremde Heere Ost*, was receiving reports at the end of October 1942 that Soviet reinforcements were arriving in the Serafimovich area. Extensive traffic, consistent with something out of the ordinary, was also noted crossing the Don at Kletskaia. Even allowing for Gehlen's tendency to hedge his bets – the sin of all intelligence officers everywhere – the sheer volume of intelligence reports concerning a Soviet build up of forces raises the question of why the Germans ignored the implications. Glantz argues that there were at least two reasons. First, the Soviets had already conducted offensive operations in this region before (which also helped to persuade the Germans that this was likely to be just another localised offensive and not part of something much bigger). Second, the Germans had defeated these attacks before. However, by 17th November 1942, two days before the start date of Operation Uranus, the indicators were mounting that a major attack was imminent.

In any case the build-up of men and equipment on the flanks of the German 6th Army could not be completely hidden from prying eyes and so convincing deception measures were also required. When reading German archive material at Freiberg-in-Breisgau I came across a report sent from one of the 6th Army's corps to Army headquarters. The report, dated 3rd November 1942, concerns a large-scale attempt by the Red Army to cross the Volga at the very end of October 1942 with the aim of landing in the Rynok area in north Stalingrad. This was a major operation involving several Red Army battalions. It ended in complete failure. The Germans captured some 521 prisoners, and a total of 14 boats – of various sizes – were destroyed. Weapons including anti-tank guns, mortars, machine guns and other small arms were seized. At the time it seemed to me that this large raid was an attempt to mislead the German 6th Army. Glantz's detailed account, both from the German perspective and based on the accounts of Red Army survivors, strengthens this suspicion. From a purely tactical point of view the operation was a disaster.

However, in the grander scheme of things – Operation Uranus is only 16 days away – this apparently suicidal Soviet attack would have been an effective diversionary operation with the aim of keeping von Paulus's attention very firmly focused on the city, not on his Army's by now endangered flanks.

Armageddon in Stalingrad is another detailed, highly readable exposition of vital phases in the Stalingrad battle. What Russians call the truth of the trenches – *okopnaia pravda* – is fully revealed as are the hints of some dark madness that drives Hitler to cast away the magnificent 6th Army in pursuit of Stalingrad and which compelled Stalin to sacrifice so much blood to save his city. If David Glantz can meet the same standards in his third volume, he will have written a masterly trilogy.

Painting it black

Derek Turner

The History of White People, Nell Irvin Painter, W W Norton & Co, New York, 2010, £19.99.

Nell Irvin Painter is a black Princeton academic who has been president of the Organization of American Historians and the Southern Historical Association, and along the way accumulated a comet trail of honours, awards and publishing deals. This is her ninth book about racial identity, but her first about 'whiteness'. *The History of White People* is a book-length summation of the 'whiteness studies' which emerged in the 1980s. According to this now entrenched theory, although there may be 'white' individuals there is no 'white race', racial identity is false consciousness, and race has no biological basis. However, there are paradoxes within the paradigm, because this race that does not exist nevertheless needs to be harangued for its racist 'white privilege'. A second paradox is that although there may be no such thing as blancitude, there is definitely negritude. Painter believes in 'the overwhelming importance of black race in America'.

She argues that racial identity matters for blacks because blacks' appearance has been used to discriminate against them socially, but it doesn't matter for whites because they have always been at the top of the social pile. So the myths and prejudices of the former must be sustained, while the myths and prejudices of the latter must be extirpated in the interests of historic justice. This logic is reminiscent of an exchange between two of the white *resistants* in *The Camp of the Saints*:

> I see the UN has abolished the concept of race.
>
> I suppose that means ours.

Painter is a diligent chronicler, albeit prone to repetition and schmaltziness. She is at her best in her disentanglement of some of the race-rubbish written over the centuries. She starts with the ancients' speculations about what lay beyond the boundaries of the civilized world, poking fun at Pliny's cyclopses and dog-headed men, and the Greek fascination with the Caucasus region which led eventually to the 18th century coinage of 'Caucasian' to denote white. She moves on to Tacitus' observations about the Germans and infers he was as wrong about the Allemanii as Pliny was about the Panotii.

Europeans (and thereby Americans) gradually assimilated the idea of Teutons/Saxons/Nordics being enterprising, energetic and freedom-loving. Our infatuation with Greek and Roman art gave us a unifying aesthetic-cultural ideal, of pale-skinned, beautiful women and handsome, heroic men who would not bend the knee to oppression. From the Renaissance onwards, such conceits were transmitted to the whole of Europe through canonical texts and antiquarianism. This tendency was given scientific wings in 1758, when Linnaeus named four major sub-divisions of humans: Africans, Asians, Amerindians and Europeans. All of these were now allegedly quantifiable through such methods as cranial measurement. These methods gave rise to some outlandish conclusions, but there was a generic belief in the existence of discrete races, and a feeling that they should be preserved intact.

Although white identity is nowadays usually associated with the 'far right', it was long a 'leftwing' preoccupation – adhered to by Romantics, nationalists, suffragettes, socialists and eugenicists. Notable 'race theorists' included Margaret Sanger, Sidney Webb, H G Wells and George Bernard Shaw.

Painter thinks almost everyone in public life until very recently has been a racist, including some she admires. Franz Boas is criticized for using 'we' when talking of Americans. Boas' pupil (and Margaret Mead's lesbian lover) Ruth Fulton Benedict is likewise condemned for saying 'our blood brothers the Irish' and 'we of the Nordic race'. She is good at delineating cross-pollinations between race theory and politics although sometimes these are overblown. The lengthy *excursus* on the Caucasus is interesting but unimportant, because outside academia or government departments few have ever thought of themselves as 'Caucasians'. There is a rambling and contradictory discussion about slavery: blacks being slaves reinforced existing prejudice, yet she admits there were also many white slaves.

Involuntary eugenics was not specifically racial either, with sterilization practiced at least as enthusiastically

against poor whites as against poor blacks. Painter implies that it was only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the concept of 'unfit' families became widespread – yet all ages have had their Sawney Beane types who were regarded as inherently undesirable (and sometimes really were).

Lynching is characterized as an instrument of racism, but she acknowledges there were victims of all races. IQ tests are 'absurd', yet the existence and measurability of intelligence is cleaved to by universities, employers and governments all around the world. Painter believes IQ tests are culture-specific filters to exclude the non-Occidental Other – yet East Asians often score higher than whites, while historically persecuted Ashkenazi Jews score highest amongst white groups.

War, we are told, has no dysgenic consequences – although if large numbers of healthy young men die at the same time it will have a deleterious impact. A 19th century immigration restrictionist is taken to task merely for maintaining that migration from southern Europe would make Americans 'darker in pigmentation, smaller in stature, more mercurial... more given to crimes'.

Blumenbach is slated for saying that 'certain groups maintain their distinctive physical and cultural characteristics over successive generations'. It is eyebrow-raising to be told that Francis Galton 'is remembered mainly as a founder of statistics.' Linnaeus's university degree was dubious, as if that matters when seen against his contribution. Western literature gives 'pride of place to Europe', as if other cultures did not make *their* countries the centre of their universes. She scoffs at 'the intellectual inertia of medieval Western society' – so unlike medieval African society.

The US census is 'without peer in scoring the nation's racial makeup'; but census questions mix up racial and national categories, while the 'white' category includes Mexicans and Arabs. The notion that early America was really a kind of transplanted England is dismissed airily, but scholars like David Hackett Fisher reveal how much America owes to the old country. (The US/UK 'special relationship' is based partly on a vague feeling of shared blood.)

Over-hastily, Painter concludes that biologists and geneticists 'no longer believe in the physical existence of races,' co-opting DNA to argue against biological race without mentioning that James Watson is a staunch believer in heritable race differences. Moreover, the science of genomics is still in its infancy and no-one can yet say what the eventual consensus will be. The concept of 'race' has always been slippery but race does have a precise meaning, equivalent to the zoological subspecies – 'a more or less distinct combination of inherited morphological, behavioral, physiological traits' (J Phillippe Rushton). Steve Sailer of VDARE.com says a racial group is 'an extremely extended family that inbreeds to some extent'. As the author acknowledges, 'genetics could reinforce the class and race status quo.'

The oldest nations derive from ancient tribes so it would be surprising if the older national identities lacked a biological component whereby a particular physical type 'belongs,' while others 'look foreign'. Over time, physicality can become almost inseparable from patrimony and place. This physical component constantly reinforces itself, as what has been called a 'bio-cultural feedback'. Research shows that from a young age most people instinctively regard members of their own racial group differently from members of other racial groups. Some nations may be intrinsic as well as imagined communities.

A touch of biliousness informs this book. The institutions that have given the author of so many rewards have toxic taproots. Painter, who has a white husband, is an institutional insider but an emotional outsider. She concludes that although the next 'expansion of whiteness' will bring groups into the big ethnic tent previously beyond the pale, this will still leave the luckless black poor outside who will need help for years.

Arguably the most telling phrase of all isn't by Painter, but an endorsement by historian David Levering Lewis, who refers to 'the myths by which a now demographically challenged people sustained themselves and restrained others'. As the white (however understood) component of the global population shrinks to an ever smaller minority, even within parts of its ancient heartlands, perhaps the relicts may soon need these deep-laid 'myths' in order to survive into the future as an identifiable entity.

Cameron the Conservative?

Dennis O'Keeffe

The Big Society: The Anatomy Of the New Politics, Jesse Norman, University of Buckingham Press, 2010, £10.

Tory MP Jesse Norman writes well and there is much of interest in his book. He is right that David Cameron is a clever man, and that he can be bold and imaginative. Norman's text, however, has neither persuaded me that Cameron is a 'conviction' conservative, nor that the idea of 'the Big Society' is much more than a proclamation of virtue confined to the domestic front,

given the vast encroachment on things British by the European Union. Moreover, 'Big' is clearly the wrong adjective for a project favouring the local, the regional and the modest.

For philosophical conservatives Cameron's attitude to government is both right and wrong. Norman quotes from Cameron's Hugo Young lecture of 2009:

> The size of....government in Britain....is now inhibiting....the progressive aims of reducing poverty, fighting inequality, and increasing general well-being'.

British society is certainly over-governed and the state is much too big. If Cameron reduces the activities of central government, we can applaud appropriately. If he can revivify local government and regional activism, that will be better still. The talk of progressive aims, however, is dismaying. Conservative governments should not pursue 'progressive' policies of any kind. Conservatism's key purpose is to maintain and build upon the achievements of the past. The market economy is a central part of our inheritance; we invented it. It delivers, given proper scope, and worked in conjunction with the rule of law, a society which becomes *incidentally* both wealthier and more equal over time. Such gains are worthwhile bonuses; they are *not* integral to a conservative agenda. Improvements in wealth and equality are spontaneous *functions* of the market. They are not outcomes to be pursued as conservative philosophical *aims*.

Well-being is an elusive condition, of complex genesis and multiple dimensions, given the variety of human nature. It certainly does not reduce to economics, nor could it possibly be an overt purpose of government. Once adopted officially, this trio of aims – more wealth, more equality, more *well-being* – will mutate into social democratic mishmash, and if we are unlucky we will end up with a Czar or even a Secretary of State for Well-being, doubtless some avid reader of *The Guardian*. Given these dangers, one has to be glad that Cameron is seemingly not just the focus-group, social democrat opportunist he looked like before he attained power.

In unlucky societies, the pursuit of what dictators call their wellbeing yields results of the Lenin/Hitler/Stalin/Mao ascendancy. The governments of countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, at least when conservative parties are in office, do not first and foremost pursue higher living standards and greater equality: they let their people decide individually what aims to pursue under the law, and it is then what the citizens/subjects *do* which determines the patterns of affluence and equality.

The irony is that in time economic development favours equality. Neither legislation nor social engineering is required. The standard experience of a well-functioning market economy is for labour's share of national income to rise, because as the ratio of capital to labour increases, the ratio of their prices changes inversely. Labour becomes *dearer* and capital becomes *cheaper*. What Conservative governments should pursue is economic *efficiency*.

Both Cameron and Norman are right that we need wider involvement of the population in economic life. We must help all those suffering genuine hardship, but we cannot support hordes of able-bodied and deliberate passengers. As a result of our socialist education system, a huge minority of the population contributes either little or nothing to economic output, thus forcing the state to tax the hardworking majority on behalf of idlers and incompetents. Our educational sickness is a function of our over-reliance on public finance, whose deadly influence on intellectual life no government on earth seems willing to deal with. While Cameron's policies for improving schools are in principle welcome, it is doubtful how far they will get without a massive infusion of private money.

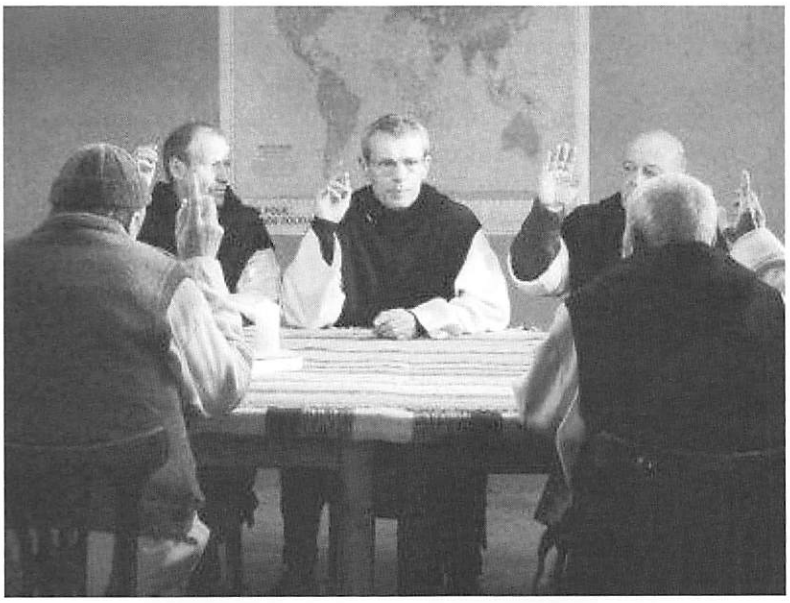
Norman sees the 'Big Society' agenda as an ambitious attempt to shift power and authority away from the state, central and local, 'the most thorough-going attempt for a century to redefine the individual, the state, and public and private institutions'. This is the very opposite of the Big Brother agenda which Orwell so dreaded, an agenda frighteningly visible in the machinations of the European elite, which, without the naked territorial smash and grab control methods of the Nazis and Communists, has even so arrogated to itself extensive and corrupting powers over countries with EU membership.

Norman quotes Matthew Parris, who confesses to being much taken with the idea of the big society; everywhere he goes he notices things that could be done both locally and effectively. Government policy is setting the scene for this and large-scale decentralisation is underway. Power is moving back to local authorities and town halls. Centralising horrors like ID cards and the National Identity Register have been scrapped. More and more spending data, central and local, have been published. The domestic gains Cameron seeks seem admirable but is there not something contradictory, even farcical, about these brave changes at home, when the British polity, the shadow of what was arguably the greatest nation of all time, is being handed over to a cynical European elite? To Parris's enthusiasm we should counter-pose Tim Congdon's poignant lament in the December issue of *Standpoint*, over the dismantling of British economic independence. Could any British patriot fail to share

Of Gods & Men

Jane Kelly

I accept the weakness of others and this makes me open to new relations not based on power,' These words spoken by Christian, a Cistercian monk, are at the heart of this strange and difficult film. Christian is one of eight French monks living in a dilapidated monastery perched uneasily in the arid Atlas mountains of Algeria. Slowly the viewer is drawn into a monastic world where the hours pass marked by bells, bees and the celebration of Mass. We see the elderly men swabbing floors, ploughing, and dispensing basic care to their impoverished Muslim neighbours. The theology instructing their lives is delivered through their singing; we hear, or read through sub-titles, that 'nothing exists except love.' They sing of 'the mystery of love,' and 'of the Easter sacrifice'.



Unfortunately for them an unloving war is raging outside. The Algerian civil war began in December 1991 when the government lost an election to Islamists, but refused to step down. In 1996, seven French monks from the monastery of Tibhirine, Algeria, were kidnapped and beheaded. One elderly monk, Amedee, played in the film by Jacques Herling, aged 83, escaped. The Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA) which had carried out a series of massacres targeting entire neighbourhoods and villages claimed full responsibility for the murders. However, according to documents from French secret services, it was possible that the killing was a mistake carried out by the Algerian army during a rescue attempt.

How monks can be beheaded by 'mistake' is a mystery. They were certainly trapped between the terrorists and the military. We see the plot of this tragic thriller slowly unwind over two hours, as the monks find themselves in 'a place of ruined hope,' which they share with the Muslim villagers they serve. They reluctantly erect flimsy barriers but inevitably the barbarians arrive at the monastery door, led by Ali Fayattia, hook nosed and terrifying, demanding medicine for his men.

The monks consider their options. Should they stay and carry on or pack up and leave? Christian says that 'help will come from the Lord,' but the others are not so sure. The youngest, Christophe, played by Olivier Rabourdin, goes through agonies of terror and his faith wavers. He is encouraged by brother Luc, an ageing doctor, surely named after St Luke, played with charming insouciance by Michael Lonsdale, 79, best known as the senior poiceman in *The Day of the Jackal*. Christian also supports him. Lambert Wilson, 52, with his sensitive mouth resembles the American heart-throb Richard Chamberlain. Here, grave and thoughtful, he brings great subtlety to the role of the group leader wrestling with his own anguish whilst trying to reassure others. The film won the Grand Prix at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival, where the jury was led by the US director Tim Burton. It has been submitted as the French entry for the next Oscars, and Lambert must surely be in with a chance for his.

The collapsing Algerian government begs the monks to leave, hating them as relicts of the French colonial era 'of plunder'. The politics in the film are not overplayed but some viewers might find the situation bewildering as no explanation is given at the beginning of the film. However, this could be any civil war, the monks any number of minorities. They disagree about what they should do but when they discover that local people believe their presence protects them from the Islamist terrorists, they decide to stay, and try to continue with their routine and peaceful psalmody. The good shepherd doesn't leave his flock, even when it is too late to save them.

What makes the film so riveting is the emphasis on

authenticity. It was filmed at the Benedictine monastery of Tioumliline, in Morocco, which was abandoned over forty years ago. The monastery was renovated so it could resemble the location of the actual events. Attention was paid to extras' clothing and Arabic intonation so that they would look and sound Algerian and not Moroccan. As preparation for their roles, the actors playing monks had a month of professional training in the Cistercian and Gregorian chants. They also spent a week living at the Tamié Abbey. This attention to detail helps to build up a feeling of dread.

The terrorists return for more help and the military begin to take an interest in the monastery. They are led by a very sour commander and we feel the monks' desperate vulnerability. United as a group, they become determined to pursue freedom as a spiritual condition only. Many in the audience must have been wondering why the French state or the Vatican didn't help them; surely it was a case for sending in the Swiss Guards, but the monks we see in the film believe that poverty, failure and death only bring them closer to 'the filial reality of Jesus Christ'. In a remarkable scene, we are present at their last supper. There are close-ups on each of their worn, leathery faces. They look like monks in a medieval painting as they drink wine and listen to Tchaikovsky.

Nowhere does the film attribute blame. When one of the terrorists is shot dead we see him laid out, foreshortened, looking exactly like Mantegna's *Dead Christ*. The military are bent on revenge, with no more understanding of the monks than a hardened fundamentalist. It might also be hard for some modern viewers to understand them either. This is French writer-director Xavier Beauvois's profession of faith: a christian film, a rare thing these days, but then we live in strange times when Christians often find themselves a hated minority under attack. A humanitarian could watch this and applaud it for its message of universal brotherhood and reconciliation, but a rabid secularist would probably be mystified by the way a group of men gave up their lives for Jesus. Such things are not easily explained.

Some critics were frustrated by the lack of action in the film, which is slow, others wanted more politics. The left wing French newspaper, *Liberation*, in true Marxist style accused the monks of 'unctuous paternalism,' kindness, towards the deprived population. The film had a meagre budget of four million euros, a humble, minimalist film about Christian duty and the place of death in our lives, but three million people in France alone have seen it and now it has international distribution, it is a great hit.

Perhaps Christians, nominal and committed, are beginning to look at their position in the world which has changed rapidly since 9/11, galvanising themselves against attacks on everything they hold dear, or at least beginning to work out how they should do so. In God they must trust as no earthly powers seem to care.

"The Spanish are coming to impose their culture and beliefs upon us, Sir Walter. Do you feel we have the right to oppose them?"

Art Watch

Andrew Lambirth

I have an abiding interest in art book publishing having written more than 20 monographs on artists, published by a variety of firms from the little-known to the famous. All these publishers share a single characteristic: they want to be paid substantial sums of money to publish books. I don't mean they want to *make* substantial sums from sales of books published – that would be an excellent aim. They want to receive money up front before embarking upon a publishing venture which will indemnify them against loss and augment their income. In many cases it seems to be their principal source of income, since so little is done to distribute or market the book after publication.

This used to be called Vanity Publishing. An unknown poet or memoirist might save up the money to have a slender volume printed and published, a dozen copies would be sold, the rest given away or stockpiled in the author's basement. A century ago, this was often the way first books of poetry became known, even those by subsequently famous writers. Nowadays it is standard practice in the art book trade. Art book publishers take no risks on artists: the artist himself, his estate or his dealer is expected to underwrite costs. The monograph is considered such a useful tool, in the sense of promoting the artist's standing and thus increasing his market value, that most people pay up.

The costs can be as much as £60,000 for a heavily illustrated book. You can pay less, but the quality would suffer. Once the handsome volume is in your hands, disillusion sets in. Your book might not get reviewed anywhere unless the artist is a household name. If he is, the publishers might put some of their own money into the venture and ensure the book is a success. Your book will neither be available in high street bookshops nor perhaps will it be listed on the internet.

Yet there are still so many art books being published that the shrinking band of specialist art publications cannot keep up with reviewing them all. Just as 30 years ago every exhibition of interest would be guaranteed at least a mention in the invaluable fortnightly magazine *Arts Review*, so would the latest art monographs be given serious attention. Not today. I have written books on eminently worthwhile painters and sculptors that haven't received a single review. I shouldn't complain but I feel sorry for the artists who have given so much of themselves and often for so little appreciation.

One of the best art book publishers is undoubtedly Thames & Hudson, both in terms of editorial practice and production values. They have published some of the most beautiful art books on the market and I am proud to have had two of mine (on Ken Kiff and Roger Hilton) produced by them. They promote their books and manage to get them reviewed. One of their latest publications has not needed much help: *The Boy Who Bit Picasso* by Antony Penrose (£8.95). This slim hardback is a sheer delight. Conceived as a children's book, it's Tony Penrose's own story, of how he came to know Picasso. His father was Roland Penrose, artist and biographer of Picasso, and his mother was Lee Miller, legendary beauty and photographer. The short text is lavishly illustrated with Picasso's art and Miller's photos.

Museum Press Officers and PR personnel (not to mention the god-like occupants of Fund-Raising Departments) are always understandably keen that journalists should mention the sponsors of the exhibitions they review. Without the feedback, sponsors might think that they were only there for their fat cheques, and that they were getting little return on their money. Every little fix of publicity is important, we are led to believe, in ensuring that the commercial sector continues amenable to disbursing its millions in the good cause of art. You might think then that the relevant departments of exhibition management would make it clear who a sponsor was. Not a bit of it. On the invitation card for the current blockbuster show *Modern British Sculpture* in the main galleries of the Royal Academy (until 7 April), three separate institutions are mentioned in a supporting role. To name them in the order of precedence established on the card they are: American Express, The Henry Moore Foundation and BBC Four. American Express is billed as 'Exhibition Preservation Partner' (whatever that arcane bit of nomenclature might mean), while the show is 'Supported by' The Henry Moore Foundation, and is 'In association with' BBC Four. If you discount the third option as an obvious kind of minor publicity link-up, you're still left with two potential sponsors. If taken in the order of seniority on the card it may perhaps be presumed that American Express is the main sponsor and The Henry Moore Foundation just stuck in a bit of extra cash. Who should be credited as sponsor of the show: one or both? Beset by such a lack of clarity, the beleaguered critic may well be tempted to

ignore the issue of sponsorship altogether and mention no one; that would surely be counter-productive for future Fund-Raisers.

I have not yet been to see the RA's exhibition, which promises to be lively and controversial. Putting a Damien Hirst on the invitation card, on the other side to the lavish sponsorship information, is predictable PR if not exactly an encouragement to visit the show, but it will also contain work by Barbara Hepworth, Leon Underwood, Henry Moore and Phillip King, all of whom I rate highly. Forget the sponsorship and go along and enjoy the art. Do be wary of any audio-guides you may be offered. I do not like these whispering boxes, which feed the gullible visitor with (often) unwanted information and encourage them to look by rote rather than discover an exhibition for themselves. Imagine my horror then to have noticed recently an added technological aspect to these devices: a small screen for images. I have seen visitors to the Tate's Gauguin exhibition completely entranced by these supposed guides, and scarcely bothering to look at the art on the walls when they could hold a reproduction of the picture in their hands more easily. It was happening too at the British Museum, at the Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead exhibition, perhaps with more justification, as bewildered visitors sought enlightenment about that complex subject.

I wish audio-visual guides could be used as a way to stop over-crowding in the nation's museums: supplied by mail order rental, for half the cost of the exhibition entrance fee, they might encourage many of those who currently push and shove to see art to stay at home and become armchair viewers. Once more public galleries would be a pleasure to visit, instead of the logjam of people fiddling with their audio-visual guides and not looking where they're going. If TV, DVD, computers cannot keep them contentedly at home, it's clear that museum-going has become some sort of confused social rite. Exhibitions are a place to be seen, not to see, and are certainly a useful subject for light conversation over lunch. Long live art!

Four Late Greats

Gerald Place

The last fifty years have seen major changes in our approach to pre-Classical music both in terms of style and instrumentation. The most exciting recent development is the way period performance practice has now entered the mainstream, with a few exceptions, and at least a nod in the direction of an 'historically-informed' approach is now expected of most students, and enthusiastically embraced by many. In the last year we have lost four outstanding artists all of whom have bridged this gap between the previously ghettoised 'Early Music' and the standard concert repertoire. Two were English, the distinguished tenors Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Philip Langridge; and two were adopted Australians, Dame Joan Sutherland and Sir Charles Mackerras.

Of these it is Mackerras who has been the most influential, in a long career with an involvement in a wide range of styles and interests. My parents' modest record collection included a 7" single of Handel conducted by him (still in Sir Hamilton Harty's arrangements for symphony orchestra) with the glamorous young conductor beaming out from the cover. There was also an LP of the score for the ballet *Pineapple Poll*, an astonishing pot-pourri of Sullivan's music created for the Sadler's Wells Ballet when the copyright in Sullivan's music ran out and such an arrangement became possible. In these two recordings both innovation and a breadth of knowledge were already evident.

Throughout his career, Mackerras was concerned to return to the sources of works, however familiar, and this informed his performances of music from Handel through Mozart to Donizetti and Sullivan. With Handel in particular he sought to reclaim the composer from the symphonic arrangements that were current and to return to a more appropriate size of orchestra and a more energetic performing style. This early quest for authenticity threw up some distinct oddities: in returning to the composer's original version of the *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, he decided to employ the number of players used at the first performance, including 26 oboes. The recording had to take place

in the middle of the night to assure the availability of the necessary players.

This was in 1959, and in the sixties he turned to that great warhorse *Messiah*, blowing the cobwebs off it in a ground-breaking recording for EMI. By then he had the clout to insist on a professional chorus, a specialist chamber orchestra and a roster of soloists who combined up-and-coming reputations with a good grasp of period style (Dame Janet Baker and Paul Esswood shared the alto honours – a unique arrangement at the time). The result raised a few eyebrows, but set a benchmark for the performance of Handel oratorio which resonates to this day. Mackerras was never one for standing still, and has since questioned some aspects of his crusading zeal in this recording, notably the gunshot double-dotting of quavers! At about the same time he conducted a landmark staging of *The Marriage of Figaro* at Sadler's Wells, iconoclastically ornamenting several arias which had always been regarded as pure and sacred in their printed form, once more returning to historical sources to back up his theories. This opened him up to serious critical attention and ridicule in equal measure.

All this path-finding was achieved long before period instruments became generally available. It was a sign of his adaptability and youthful outlook that, very late in his career, he keenly embraced the possibilities of working with orchestras like the Hanover Band and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in performances of Mozart at Glyndebourne, and a recording of his new edition of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. There is no doubt that to have a highly respected international figure associated with what were previously regarded as specialist bands did a huge amount to bring them to the fore as a serious force.

He had a brief association with Britten and Aldeburgh, giving the first performance of the children's opera *Noye's Fludde,* but an injudicious remark doubtless made with Australian directness caused him to be banished from the fold. He did go on to be a leading interpreter of Britten's music, however, and his recording of the opera *Gloriana* was *Gramophone Magazine's* 'Best Opera Recording' of 1994. He had a life-long devotion to Czech music, and conducted a crusade to have Sir Arthur Sullivan's music taken seriously, again by meticulous preparation of performing material and attention to detail in performance. One little anecdote is worth passing on illustrating both his prodigious musicianship and memory. He set about editing Sullivan's Cello Concerto for Julian Lloyd-Webber, but all his research was destroyed in a fire. Remarkably, he succeeded in re-writing the whole piece from memory, as the excellent EMI recording testifies.

In an age when the flamboyant maestro was popular, his concern to put the music first, before any ego, was indeed refreshing. His detractors claimed that he was called 'Chuck 'em up Charlie' because he was prepared to conduct anything, anywhere, but the nickname was given to him by players and singers who admired his ability always to 'chuck up' a cue in their direction when required, a skill many other conductors never acquire. His approach to music-making was supremely practical, and he wrote of rehearsals: 'I believe it's very important to edit orchestral parts as explicitly and as thoroughly as possible, so that the musicians can play them without too much rehearsal...on that occasion because the parts were clearly marked, particularly with regard to dynamics, we were able to play without needing to do much preliminary work, focusing our attention on the interpretation rather than the technical business of who plays too loud or too soft.' Rupert Christiansen: 'A Mackerras performance invariably has energy, pace, bounce, clarity and shape. With his unique gift for getting music moving, he puts singers as well as orchestras on their toes – there's no slacking under his baton, no empty sentimentality or self-indulgence.'

Equally direct and unpretentious was Dame Joan Sutherland, forever associated with the 19th-century Bel Canto opera repertory, another of Sir Charles' enthusiasms. She also made her mark in the music of Handel, notably in the operas *Alcina* and *Giulio Cesare*, and later in recordings of *Messiah* and *Acis and Galatea.* Here she displays a grasp of style which makes these recordings exemplars of Handel singing to this day, and employs a technique and flexibility which not many current Handel specialists can demonstrate. Like Mackerras, who in later years insisted on seeing the *mise en scène* of an opera before he would conduct it, Sutherland was ambivalent towards directors. She admitted to 'thinking about something else' when directors explained their concepts to her: 'I can't bear it when they ask what the motivation is behind this or that. Eventually I work out why I am supposed to be doing what I'm doing. By that time the director has usually gone to Timbuktu or wherever.'

The two tenors are of a younger generation, but both very much influenced by the singer who was Acis to Sutherland's Galatea, Peter Pears. They were of an age, but Anthony Rolfe Johnson came to singing later, after starting his working life as a farmer. Both he and Philip Langridge were persuasive performers of English music of all periods. Both singers were closely associated with the music of Britten, and both critically acclaimed interpreters of the role of Peter Grimes. Rolfe Johnson also became particularly associated with the role of Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*, and

Langridge was a steely Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*. Rolfe Johnson went on to be director of the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh. They were also remarkable interpreters of earlier music, again following in the footsteps of Pears as distinguished Evangelists in the Bach Passions: Langridge athletic and muscular; Rolfe Johnson more thoughtful and lyrical in his approach.

As with Mackerras' association with the rebirth of pre-Classical music, it was also a joy to have tenors of their calibre able to turn their talents to interpretation of this repertoire, bringing not only a wealth of experience, but also an ability to match vocal quality to the musical demands. Rolfe Johnson's remarkable Monteverdi performances stick in the mind. Langridge worked with David Munrow's Early Music Consort early in his career, and Rolfe Johnson also worked with Munrow on the Monteverdi *Vespers* recording made by the choir of King's College, Cambridge in the seventies. Incidentally, this was one of the first large-scale period instrument bands to be recorded in the UK, in an arrangement by Munrow, an earlier tragic loss to the musical world. Perhaps Langridge is best remembered for his championing of contemporary British music, a fearless presence behind many a taxing and complicated score. He was particularly associated with the works of Harrison Birtwistle. Both were remarkable interpreters of English Song. Rolfe Johnson recorded Nanki Poo in Sullivan's *The Mikado* for Mackerras, and Langridge, Prince Hilarion in *Princess Ida*.

IN SHORT

Strictly English, The correct way to write and why it matters, Simon Heffer, Random House, 2010, £12.99

Many books have been written on this subject, outstanding among them by Fowler – 100 years old and still consulted, Quiller Couch and Orwell. Sir Ernest Gowers wrote *Plain Words* after the war to counter creeping officialese in the civil service and other public authorities. Despite all this excellent instruction the standard of written and spoken English has now sunk much further as any discerning reader knows. Inadequate education is the main culprit but newspapers have also neglected the importance of good English. Years ago apparently, *The Times* employed unfrocked priests as proof readers; insufficient sub-editing accounts for the many 'gaffes' appearing, from the tabloids to scholarly books.

Simon Heffer, robust of both political views and English style, has now written his own contribution to challenge the current sloppiness. He covers a great deal of ground succinctly with wit, and with amusing examples: parts of speech – many unfortunates have never been taught these – bad grammar, the wrong tone, word order and choice of words. It is reassuring to share Heffer's bugbears: padding – of course, the fact that, literally, furthermore etc; show-offs who eschew clarity for erudition; unnecessary adjectives and adverbs among many others. Perhaps the most interesting chapter is the 'Essence of Good Style'. Heffer is not prescriptive and knows that while many of us can still enjoy Smollett or Trollope, paragraphs of one sentence or searching for a main verb do prevent clarity. Nineteenth-century prose reflected a much slower pace of life. His 'saints' are Orwell 'the finest writer of English prose', Barbara Pym, an unjustly neglected writer in her lifetime, and Enoch Powell, a superb stylist, politics apart. 'Sinners' are many: politicians, civil servants, academics and PC folk of all kinds.

This is an ideal handbook for self-critical writers and sub-editors and a pleasure for the general reader.

Merrie Cave

Islamic Jihad, M A Khan, iUniverse.com, 2009, $24.95.

This commendably comprehensive, up-to-date, closely printed 360-page information pack on the intrinsically negative aspects of Islam stands out among similar studies. Its clarity, accuracy and extensive documentation cannot be dismissed as pseudo-scholarly propaganda.

The author is a secular-rationalist apostate, whose unobtrusive lack of sympathy towards both Britain and Israel hardly detracts from his reliable coverage of the concept and practice of jihad. He details Muhammad's hostile mission against pagans, Jews and Christians; the warfare and oppression that imposed his religion on many other regions; and the horrors of slavery from the seventh to the present century. Historically related to a division of the world into 'peace' and conflict zones, jihad as a communal (not just personal) struggle for total submission to Allah requires offensive action that, according to a Sudanese submission to the UNCHR, also permits physical enslavement as its 'by-product'.

Muslim fecundity and migration into 'our' *Dar al-Harb*, the revival of militancy, dishonesty in discourse

with infidels, and an end-time interpretation of tradition, all present a grave danger, comparable to the previous Sino-Soviet 'world revolutionary process', though more intractable. This growing threat is not confined to mobs angered by events in the Middle East, or to the apocalyptic influence of minority theorists as diverse as Sayyid Qutb, Anwar al-Awlaki or Abd al-Quadir (whose revulsion at western moral and financial decadence is quite comprehensible), but rooted in the infallible Holy Quran itself and therefore potentially a mainstream phenomenon of the expanding *Ummah*.

Our first defensive necessity is a clear mind, reinforced with irrefutable facts as presented in this excellent book, which deserves the widest circulation.

The second is a cool head, as the cold war heats up between the 'irresistible force' called 'Islamofascism' and the 'immoveable object' called 'Islamophobia', with the risk that this 'riddle of the sands' is finally 'solved' only by mutual annihilation, a prospect not so inconceivable to anyone who enters 'Nuke Mecca' into a search engine.

David Ashton

Fair Trade Without the Froth, Sushil Mohan, IEA, 2010, £10.

'Fair Trade' is a system designed to give a fair return to producers in developing countries for their agricultural products such as coffee, bananas, cocoa, sugar, tea and cotton. Consumers pay a premium of 5 to 10 per cent above the normal price for the particular grade. The Fair Trade organisation inspects the producers, and ensures that some of the premium is transferred to them. In practice, wholesalers and retailers may increase their mark-up, so that as little as 10 per cent of the premium reaches the farmers. Fair Trade charges producer organisations, typically cooperatives, for registering them at a rate of £1570 initially, and then £940 per year. This can be a significant barrier for small producers in tropical developing countries.

A minimum price is guaranteed for produce bought, but the quantity to be bought is not guaranteed, so the Fair Trade route may only be an alternative sales channel for the poor farmer. It may be that the main beneficiary from Fair Trade is not the poor man in the poor country, but the rich consumer in the rich country, who gets a nice warm feeling from his charitable purchase.

There are many other labels which offer a benefit and can be used to sell more of a food product, such as 'organic' or 'no air miles'. One which is actually bad if used without thought is 'no GM' (genetically modified). This would prevent golden rice, which grows its own beta-carotene, to be made into vitamin A.

These schemes for selling more food from poor counties are not exactly new. In the thirties we had Empire Preference with tariffs on imports from other countries. Much earlier we had taxes to favour the East India Company, on tea entering North America, until the whole lot was thrown into Boston Harbour – though that has come round again and is pointed at Obama instead of Lord North.

Sushil Mohan has analysed the benefits and detriments of Fair Trade, and finds that it is not necessarily very helpful to small producers in poor countries, though it is usually good for the bureaucrats who organize it. Poor farmers would benefit much more from free trade, the reduction of corruption in their own governments, and the removal of subsidies to rich farmers in rich countries.

Robin Cave

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FutureUK

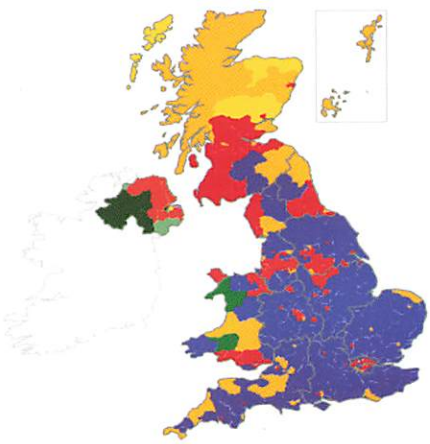
Ideas for Constitutional Development

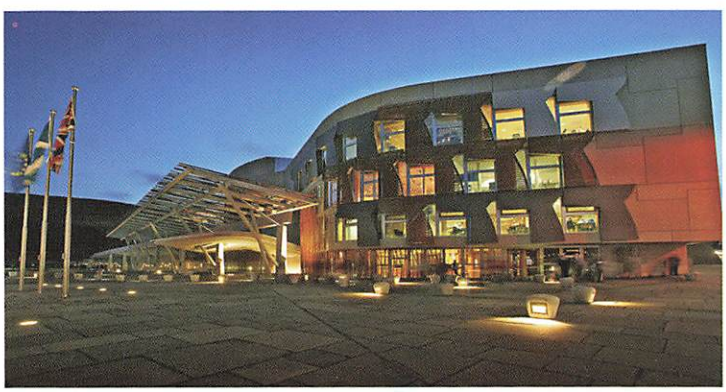
FutureUK is a newly-founded, independent political research and discussion organisation, focusing solely on internal UK constitutional affairs:

- Reforms of the House of Commons and House of Lords (including voting systems)
- Powers / proceedings of the devolved institutions & their relations with Westminster
- The structure of local government (and the London Assembly)
- Questions of direct democracy and empowering communities
- The role of the judiciary

These issues are likely to be at the cutting edge of British politics in the years ahead, partly as a result of the haphazard process of constitutional change under the last government and partly because of the policies of the new coalition.

Our goal is to be the forum for independent and conservative views and ideas on constitutional development. We also aim to transcend individual issues to consider what would be the best constitutional settlement for the UK in the 21st century.





FutureUK welcomes short articles and longer contributions on the issues above. We also hold regular social events. To find out more, email info@futureuk.org

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