THE RATIONAL RELIGIONIST'S HYMN.

I.

Brothers, arise! behold the dawn appear
Of Truth's bright day, and Love's Millennial Year!

See how the Millions hail, with lifted eyes,
The glorious change that gilds their troubled skies!

Hark! hark! the Anthem, pealing from on high,
Community, Community, draws nigh!

II.

The midnight gloom of Ignorance retires;
   And fast are fading Error's fatal fires
From broken clouds effulgent Science beams,
With facts, dispelling fear and fiction's dreams.

The Social Age, - divinest birth of time! -
To being springs, in bliss and beauty's prime.

III.

The woes of war shall hence for ever cease,
And plenty bloom amid perpetual peace;
Mankind shall turn from Competition's strife,
To share the blessings of Communial life.

Justice shall triumph - leagued oppression fail -
And Universal happiness prevail.

Edward Royle found the above 18th century 'Owenish' verses in the Rational Hymn Book. Could they possibly exemplify that elusive 'rational religious sentiment', the cultivation of which remains formally one of the objects of this Society?
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New Members

Obituary
We regret to report the death of George Hutchinson. An obituary appears on page 21.

Lettings Assistant
There is a vacancy for a part-time person, competent at accounts and happy using a computer, to assist Peter Vlachos in the Hall Lettings office. For further details, contact the Admin. Secretary at Conway Hall.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY
Registered Charity No. 251396

Founded in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement whose aims are:
the study and dissemination of ethical principles based on humanism,
the cultivation of a rational and humane way of life, and
the advancement of research and education in relevant fields.

We invite to membership all those who reject supernatural creeds and find themselves in sympathy with our views. At Conway Hall there are opportunities for participation in cultural activities including discussions, lectures, concerts and socials. The Sunday Evening Chamber Music Concerts founded in 1887 are renowned. We have a library on subjects of humanist concern. All members receive the Society's journal, Ethical Record, eleven times a year. Funerals and Memorial Meetings may be arranged.

Please apply to the Admin. Secretary for membership, £18 p.a. Concessions (over 65, unwaged or full-time student) £12 p.a.

Ethical Record, February, 2000
Robert Owen announced the commencement of the millennium with predictable regularity: in 1816, 1817, 1825, 1834, 1841, and 1855, to mention a few of the dates on which he chose to proclaim this momentous event, but in fact throughout his public life, from 1812 onwards, the concept of the millennium was at the heart of his thinking.

This may seem a paradox. Robert Owen was a rational, secular, deist, opposed to the kind of religious enthusiasm associated with the millenarian sects. To make sense of Robert Owen's millennium, one has to ask what he thought he meant by it. But first it will useful to outline what the millennium was.

The Millennium
In the Book of Revelation, especially in Chapter 20, events leading to the end of time are prophesied. The background is the belief among the first followers of Christ that he would come again, and come again soon, to begin the Kingdom of Heaven. When that did not happen, theories developed to give a longer time-perspective to events and to link contemporary history into those events to reassure early Christians that their sufferings were not in vain and that good would eventually triumph over evil. The Book of Revelation is part of this process, emerging as it did out of the persecution of early Christians by the Roman Empire. The language of Revelation is partly borrowed from the Book of Daniel, in which the Jews had interpreted their relationship with the Empire of Babylon.

The story prophesied in Revelation 20 is that an angel will come down from heaven to bind Satan for a thousand years; at the start of this period the bodies of dead believers will be resurrected to begin their rule on earth. At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released for one final battle with God at Armageddon in which Satan will be vanquished for ever, there will be a general resurrection of all dead, and the new age will begin - a new heaven, and a new earth with a new Jerusalem. The story is added to elsewhere in Revelation and with borrowings from Daniel and other prophetic books from the Old Testament.

Though all Christians believed in the Second Coming of Christ, just as all Jews awaited the First Coming of the Messiah, not all Christian leaders encouraged the literal interpretation of this heavily symbolic message. Augustine, for example, opposed millenarian speculation. But human nature was not so easily restrained and throughout the ages since these ideas were developed, Christians as well as Jews have sought signs for when these important events might commence.

Types of Millenarianism
Two broad interpretations developed, though it was only in the course of the nineteenth century that they became really distinct. The first has been called the 'Pre-millennialist' position; the second the 'Post-millennialist' position. Pre-millennialism draws on the literal tradition established in the Old Testament. Christ or the Messiah will come to inaugurate the thousand year rule of the saints, at the
end of which will come Armageddon and the end of time. Post-millennialism, on the other hand, sees the thousand years as a period when the saints will prepare for the Coming of the Messiah at the end of the period. The first is a cataclysmic view of history: the second is a progressive and gradualistic view. In the nineteenth century, the first inspired a number of millenarian sects, while the latter motivated many missionary organisations working to spread the redeeming message on earth. It was believed that one of the final signs that the earth had been prepared for the Coming of the Messiah would be the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.

The question of timing occupied many minds, as men and women searched the scriptures for clues and then did their calculations to predict the date. This was of more importance to pre-millennialist than to post-millennialist, as by its nature gradualism does not rely on chronological precision in the same way that a cataclysmic crisis by definition must.

I stress, though, that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the pre-millennialist and post-millennialist positions were not so clearly differentiated that we cannot find elements of both in the same sect or movement.

Signs of the Coming Millennium
The French Revolution and events after 1789 heightened millenarian speculations in Europe and North America. The sweeping away of one of the most powerful absolute monarchies in Europe seemed like the dawn of a new age - a sure sign of the commencement of the millennium. Prophets appeared who, if not the Messiah himself, were his prophets or closely related to him. Richard Brothers appeared in London in 1795 as 'the Nephew of the Almighty', and Joanna Southcott had it revealed to her that she was the 'woman clothed with the sun' referred to in Revelation 12:1. From the 1790s to the 1840s, millenarian sects multiplied while respectable and earnest theologians calculated the last days and in 1809 launched a mission to convert the Jews.

This is the intellectual context within which Robert Owen's thoughts were maturing, first in Manchester and then, from 1800, in New Lanark. Owen was not, in any orthodox sense, a Christian, though he had been brought up as one and his language shows he was well-acquainted with its terminology. He could not, therefore, be called a millenarian in any theological sense of the concept: he did not look for the coming of the Jewish Messiah or for the Second Coming of Christ. But he did have an expectation of a future state of the world in which the old would be swept away and a new state of existence would take its place. Moreover, he sometimes presented the transition between the two as a sudden one, a transformation which could sound very much like that of the pre-millennialist; though at other times he spoke in terms of the gradualism of the post-millennialist. Moreover, he did not announce the new world as its prophet but more as the man who would bring it about: to that extent Owen was the Messiah, or at least a man with a providential role.

Robert Owen's Ideas on the Millennium
The word 'new' was very attractive to Owen and runs through his public career. He was not responsible for 'New' Lanark itself, but from his early essays, *A New View of Society*, New Harmony in 1825, and his periodical of 1834-45, the *New Moral World*, to his 1854 compilation of earlier writings, *The New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Owen was very much a fulfilment of Revelation 21:5: 'Behold, I make all things new'.

*Ethical Record, February, 2000*
At New Lanark Owen became convinced that he had discovered and proved the correctness of his answer to the secret of how to create this new society: perfectability not through individual salvation, but through rational control of the environment with a rational education for the next generation to stamp out past errors. Thus his first clear announcement of the millennium came on New Year's Day, 1816, at the opening of his Institution for the Formation of Character. This Institution was not, he explained in his speech to the inhabitants, merely for their benefit, but also for that of the neighbourhood, the British dominions, and lastly, "to the gradual improvement of every nation in the world". His object was no less than to effect a 'permanently beneficial change in society'. Like any good revivalist preacher, he painted a dismal picture of the existing state of society, its poverty, crimes and general state of wretchedness - what an orthodox preacher would have called 'the sinfulness of the world'. Owen's message was one of salvation. But because the misery of the present state of existence was due to bad circumstances, not original sin, salvation would come through creating the right circumstances, not through orthodox repentance and conversion. Nevertheless, there was to be a turning point as marked as any conversion experience: 'from this day a change must take place, a new era must commence'. The Institution was to be the first stage in bringing this about. The new age thus began on 1 January 1816 and he continued by painting a glowing picture of it, again a standard item in the revivalist preacher's rhetoric:

What ideas individuals may attach to the term Millennium, I know not; but I do know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly increased, with little, if any, misery, and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundred-fold; and no obstacle whatever intervenes at this moment, except ignorance, to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal.

As Owen went public with his views the following year in two addresses delivered at the City of London Tavern, a large lecture theatre which was later to become the headquarters of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, he developed the means by which the millennium could be brought about, and through the Institution, the first stage in the progress of that millennium. The context was no longer New Lanark. The truths revealed there by experience were to be implemented throughout a scheme of rational control of the environment. This Institution was no longer a local New Lanark venture, but a national one. The millennium was no longer a local phenomenon, the institution of a new age was meant to have a national impact. The Institution was henceforth to be Owen's centre of gravity, his headquarters. This was Owen's millennium. It was secular in that he had divested it of its theological underpinnings. It was to be brought about not by divine intervention but by human endeavour. However, like any millenarian, he was to be involved in the founding of the new age, the work of creation, the creation of the millennium. He was to inaugurate the millennium on earth.

The Millennial Moment, 1817

It might be argued that Owen was here using the millennium as a metaphor for the new age and that he cannot really be regarded as a millenarian. However, the combination of language and style in Owen's delivery are so consistently millenarian that I do not think we should impose our completely secular expectations on him. Beyond the language there seems to have been a conviction which was to carry him through the rest of his life, that if not millenarian, it was at least millenarian in spirit. This was Owen's message.
first devised by Owen in 1816 for the relief of the poor, when he had envisaged the creation of self-supporting pauper communities. Now he wanted to extend this idea to the creation of communities which would abolish not merely pauperism but all the miseries of the world. The context was the recently established peace in Europe in 1815, after a generation of international warfare; and the remarkable advances made in the economy, especially in cotton textile production, with its capacity for generating undreamed of wealth; yet the war was followed by economic depression and unprecedented hardship. The contrast between present evils and future happiness could not have been greater as Owen explained what was necessary. The moment of his revelation of the truth was the commencement of the millennium, the beginning of the new age. In the press release Owen prepared of his speech at the City of London Tavern on 21 August 1817, he left a critical passage blank. The reporters would have to wait for the moment to hear the message.

Owen's account of events, recalled in old age, is worth repeating at length:

When I went to this meeting, ever-to-be remembered in the annals of history, no one except myself had any notion of what I intended to do and to say in the part of the address alluded to. The public mind of the metropolis on the morning previous to the commencement of the meeting was in a most excited state. The then friends of my views, so far as I had disclosed them, came in continually increasing numbers, - the great majority of these being of the best disposed among the upper classes in church and state, and of the upper portion of the middle classes, who were sincerely desirous to improve the condition of the poor and working classes, if it could be done in order, in peace, and without a revolution of violence....

This meeting was densely crowded, although held at noon, and again hundreds and thousands had to be disappointed who could not gain admittance, and many waited until five o'clock before any moved to allow of their entrance, and even afterwards, until its dismissal at seven, it remained crowded; for as soon as any retired, others who were waiting immediately occupied their places.

Knowing what I intended to do, I went alone, that no one might be implicated in my proceedings. When I went to this meeting I was on the morning of that day by far the most popular individual in the civilised world, and possessed the most influence with a majority of the leading members of the British cabinet and government. I went to the meeting with the determination by one sentence to destroy that popularity, but by its destruction to lay the axe to the root of all false religions, and thus to prepare the population of the world for the reign of charity in accordance with the natural laws of humanity, - or, in other words, in accordance with all facts and common sense or consistent reason.

I commenced my address, and continued amidst much applause and cheering from the friends of the cause which I advocated, until I approached that part in which I denounced all the religions of the world as now taught; when by my manner I prepared the audience for some extraordinary proceeding. And when in a firm voice I said - 'A more important question has never been put to the sons of men - Who can answer it? Who dares answer it? but with his life in his hand - a ready and willing victim to truth, and to the emancipation of the world from its long bondage of error, crime, and misery? Behold that victim! On this day! in this hour! even now! shall those bonds be burst asunder, never more to re-unite while the world lasts! What the consequences of this daring deed shall be to myself I am
as indifferent about, as whether it shall rain or be fair to-morrow! Whatever may
be the consequences, I will now perform my duty to you and to the world. And
should it be the last act of my life, I shall be well content, and shall know that I
have lived for an important purpose. Then, my friends! I tell you, that hitherto
you have been prevented from knowing what happiness really is, solely in
consequence of the errors - gross errors.'

The meeting here became excited to the highest pitch of expectation as to
what was to follow; and a breathless silence prevailed, so that not the slightest
sound could be heard. I made a slight pause, and, as my friends afterwards told
me, added a great increase of strength of feeling and dignity to my manner, of
which at the time I was wholly unconscious, and in that state of mind I finished
the sentence... and I then again paused for some seconds, to observe the effects of
this unexpected and unheard-of declaration and denouncement of all existing
religions, in one of the most numerous public meetings of all classes ever held in
the British metropolis under cover and at mid-day.

My own expectations were, that such a daring denouncement in opposition
to the deepest prejudices of every creed, would call down upon me the vengeance
of the bigot and superstition, and that I should be torn to pieces in the meeting.
But great was my astonishment at what followed. A pause ensued, of the most
profound silence, but of noiseless agitation in the minds of all - none apparently
knowing what to do or how to express themselves. All seemed thunderstruck and
confounded... and had I not purposely paused and waited for some demonstration
from the audience, I might have continued my address in the astonished silence
which I had produced. But when I did not proceed, and while I evidently waited
for some expression of the feeling of the audience, after the long pause in silence,
about half-a dozen clergymen, who had attentively listened to all I had said,
deemed it incumbent up them on account of their profession to attempt to lead the
meeting by a few low hisses. But these, to my great astonishment, were instantly
rebutted by the most heartfelt applause from the whole of the meeting, with the
exception stated, that I ever witnessed, before or since, as a public demonstration
of feeling.

I then said to the friends near me - 'the victory is gained' Truth openly stated
is omnipotent. I then proceeded, and finished my address, which was again loudly
cheered...

I have from that day to this considered that day the most important of my life
for the public: - the day on which bigotry, superstition, and all false religions,
received their death blow. For from that day to this they have been gradually
losing their strength and power, and dying their natural death in all advanced
minds over the world, and soon they will cease to make the human race irrational,
divided, and wicked, and to retain them in ignorance of God or nature, of
themselves, and of the road to wisdom and happiness.

The deed was done. Truth had escaped, as it were by a miracle, from the
hitherto never unfixed grasp of the false religions of the nations of the earth. And
it was sent on the wings of the press to the people of all lands, in such manner as
ultimately to destroy all falsehood, bigotry, superstition, disunion, ignorance,
crime, and misery, and to insure a continued progress without retrogression of
knowledge, union, wisdom, and happiness.
Owen was here manipulating his audience with all the skill of a revivalist preacher, stressing the contrast between the world as it was and the world as it could and inevitably would become. This was his 'millennial moment'. Though the occasion has a pre-millennialist cast, the agenda was post-millennialist. The truth now revealed would gradually spread until all the world was convinced and converted. Owen's future work was to be as a missionary and the best way to commence was with a small scale experiment - by which he meant demonstration of the great truth he had realised at New Lanark but in a perfect form. He offered his plan in 1820 in his Report to the County of Lanark, but having failed to persuade a public body to adopt his scheme he was to spend the rest of his life trying to raise private funds for his model community.

To be concluded in the March Ethical Record.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE SINCERE?

Jane O'Grady
Lecture to the Ethical Society, 14 November 1999

Looking at the etymology or historical provenance of a word is often irrelevant and distracting, but it must be indicative that the first usage of the word 'sincere', as opposed to 'truthful' or 'honest', is not recorded before 1533.

The word is derived from the Latin word 'sincerus' = clean, pure, sound. Initially it had the sense of 'unadulterated' or 'pure', and was applied to objects like wine as much as to humans. The meaning quickly shifted, however, and the definition of 'sincerity' in the Chambers Dictionary charts the transitions: 'Pure, unmixed; unadulterated; unfeigned; genuine; free from pretence; the same in reality as in appearance'. The overall shift seems to have been from a concentration on the state of the object or self as an integral unit, unpolluted by things outside and alien to it, to concentration on the state of the object in relation to others (or to itself as other). The relation is one in which the object successfully matches up in external appearance (for instance, actions and speech) to its internal reality (feeling, thought, personality). Or in the case of sincerity to self, the way one part of the self views or describes the self, its behaviour and feelings, has to match up to what the self, behaviour and feelings are really like. If these inner/outer, reality/appearance distinctions have a suspicious ring of Cartesian dualism, this seems unavoidably implicit in the concept of sincerity.

The Rise of the Individual

Why did the word 'sincerity' enter the English language when it did? Was sincerity not an immemorial moral notion? Not according to Lionel Trilling (in Sincerity and Authenticity). He declares it would be 'comic' to describe Abraham, Achilles or Beouwulf, for instance, as sincere, and that it was because the late 16th and early 17th centuries were the era of the dawn of modern man, of the individual, that the concept of sincerity emerged at that time.

Of course individualism's rise tends to be located according to the locator's purposes. Surely the 4th century Confessions of Augustine (chronicling his progress through Manicheanism, to neo-Platonism, to Christianity) are full of self-reflection? Yes, but they are not written, as a diary might be, concurrently with the search for truth they profess to chart, but retrospectively, celebrating the goal not the process.
Commentators tend to view his self-examination as artificially systematic, an illustration of his own method for instructing converts. What about the practice of confession itself, the notion of 'conscience', and the importance of guilt, as opposed to shame, in Christianity? Although in one sense confession (and the Confessions) demanded sincerity, perhaps it could be said that until the Reformation more emphasis was placed on truth, less on the degree of conviction with which it was reached or espoused; more significance attached to the committing of sins or good deeds, less on motives and feelings with which they had been done. Modernist agonising over the individual's relation to truth, to her own feelings, to herself, is lacking.

Something of the shift from medieval to modern mentality is captured and epitomised by Proust's description of Giotto's frescoes of the seven deadly sins and of the virtues. As a modern, Proust's narrator scours the face of each sin or virtue depicted for an expression that manifests the inner feeling of envy, love, anger, or whatever. But the faces convey nothing; Charity's seems 'devoid of charity'. Envy's is merely an aperture for its snake. It is the symbols, not the emotions, of each vice or virtue that predominate, and there is a 'lack (or seeming lack) of participation by a person's soul in the significant marks of its own special virtue'. This absence of subjectivity is characteristic of the pre-Reformation Catholic emphasis on 'salvation by merit', (and for that matter, damnation by sins), on good deeds more than on good motives.

Luther reversed this dogged would-be objectivity when he set salvation by faith above salvation by merit, that is, put the emphasis on what we are and believe, rather than on what we do. He insisted that the mere accumulation of good deeds was immaterial for salvation. 'Although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience.' It was not what he did but what he was that condemned him. There had to be a reorientation brought about by God (which was of course private, unverifiable, subjective, dependent on individual interpretation).

In the early 17th century, Descartes, although he was a Catholic, made the criterion of truth not the authority of the Church but 'the natural light of reason', implanted by God in each individual, and the 'clear and distinct ideas' which this light made manifest. The thinking subject was the basis and starting-point of knowledge, the one certainty. Only a non-deceiving God could rescue the disembodied 'I' from solipsism by guaranteeing an external world, but Descartes' arguments for His existence were so implausible that in effect the external world was not satisfactorily reinstated (as it never really can be if you start with subjectivity), leaving the existence and veracity of everything outside the self, although not arbitrary, at least subject to the self's arbitration.

Less and less did people believe in Christianity as a monolithic package of doctrines. The Church had fragmented, and continued to do so, so that there were different types of Christianity to choose from. The emphasis was now on individual salvation, interpretation unmediated by priests, each person being a unique individual before God.

While the earth had been demoted from the centre of the universe to a mere planet circling the sun, the experiencing self had become the centre of reality. There is me and there is not-me, but not-me includes my body and what I do. The more the split opens in choice, and between inner self and outer appearance, the more the opportunity to be insincere, and therefore also to be sincere.

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The Increasingly Subjective, Distinctive 'I'

Descartes' 'I' had represented human subjectivity against the objectivity of the world (a subjectivity that was itself impersonal, universal to all humans, because dispassionately rational). Increasingly, however, the focus shifted to the unique subjectivity of each self as opposed both to other selves and to the objectivity of society (a newly-risen 18th century concept) or of social consensus. As the 20th century philosopher Charles Taylor says, when moral philosophers like Hutcheson and Shaftesbury speak of human beings being endowed with an intuitive feeling for what is right and wrong, there is a crucial difference between their notions of a 'moral sense' and earlier ones. Previously moral intuitions had been considered a means to the end of acting rightly, therefore had a purported objectivity. Conscience was the voice of God speaking within each of us. Increasingly the moral intuitions themselves were their own end. It was my own unique voice, my own idiosyncratic self, different from other selves, that mattered, precisely because of its uniqueness. (Kant is on the pivot of this different focus of subjectivity - his 'categories' of perception are impersonal and homogenous to all humans, his morality a consensus, common pool morality, yet his moral agent is an autonomous law-giver, and (in the Metaphysic of Morals, 1797) he discusses lying as the first of the duties 'owed by man to himself, as a moral being singly', concentrating on lying from the point of view of sincerity, rather than of honesty - i.e., of the outer matching up to the inner. 'Man... is obliged to veracity towards himself.')

This new development might superficially seem to conflict with the 18th century ideal of politeness. However, 'politeness' was not a matter of etiquette and convention, but a complex combination of self-regulation, good taste, refinement, consideration for others, agreeableness, sociability, tolerance. To achieve it required exquisite self-fashioning, for which Addison, writing in the Spectator early in the 18th century, recommended keeping a journal. According to cultural historians like John Brewer, 17th century Protestants had kept journals, but they had recorded moral struggle between the forces of darkness and light. There had been 17th century biographies, but they had only been of famous people, and had statutorily invoked the authority of Plutarch if ever touching on intimate details or private actions.

Now, however, the goal of journals was self-understanding and self-explanation, many of them being written for public, at least limitedly public, consumption, and, for the same reason that the idiosyncratic self was interesting to itself and to others, so biography changed its nature, spectacularly Boswell's Life of Johnson (which also (as Selina O'Grady points out) was perhaps the first example of 'New Journalism' - the recorder recording himself as well as his official subject). Rousseau in his Confessions trumpets his own weaknesses. They are delicious and significant because they are his. And indicatively autobiography, which had been in almost total abeyance since Augustine's Confessions, had perhaps its greatest flowering between 1782, when Rousseau's Confessions was posthumously published, and 1831, when Goethe's Poetry & Truth was completed. Edward Gibbon's Memoirs of My Life, says of literary figures' self-portraits that these 'are often the most interesting, and sometimes the only interesting parts of their writings; and, if they be sincere, we seldom complain of the minuteness of prolixity of these personal memorials'.

But the ideal of politeness was, says Brewer, haunted by the ghost of artifice. It soon evolved into the cult of sentiment and sensibility. Critics of politeness began to applaud the simplicity and true refinement of rural life over the luxurious

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corruption of London. As wilderness shrank, it came to be cherished instead of feared, promoting exhortations to wander in the mountains, rather than 'cultivate your garden'. Pope in the early 18th century had regularly conjoined Nature and Law ('Nature, like Liberty, is but restrain'd/By the same Laws which first herself ordain'd'), but to the Romantics, Nature was gloriously lawless. The Enlightenment equated Nature with Reason, which they thought consonant with emotion. The 'natural', for them, was to do with balance, due proportion, harmony. The Romantics equated Nature with emotion, which they opposed to reason, preferring emotion. Rousseau asserts as an 'incontestable maxim' that 'the first movements of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart', effectively making original sin the imposition of social conventions on the unpolluted 'noble savage'. The rot began with 'whoever first enclosed a plot of ground'. 'Laws and decorum,' says Goethe's Werther, 'will destroy the true feeling of Nature and its true expression!'

This brief gallop through history is meant to indicate the progressive subjectivisation of selfhood and sincerity. How far we have come from medieval ideas of self and truth - neo-Platonic debates over whether the self (identified with intellect, not emotion) is identical with the world of essences it knows; Christian certainty that you couldn't even begin to be virtuous unless you were acquainted with the truth (i.e., Christianity), that to be a good pagan was impossible. An important modernist theme was articulated by the 19th century philosopher Kierkegaard when he wrote that, for a subject to be 'in the truth', the truth per se is in many ways less important than the subject's relation to it. '[I]f only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true.'

D.H. Lawrence, Marcuse and others have only extended the subjectivist, emotion-focussed, anti-intellectual legacy of the Romantics. It has been further complicated by Freud's discovery or invention of the unconscious. Are we to identify the real 'I' that is capable of sincerity, emotion, rottenness, guilt, etc., with the ego or the id? And if with the id, as seems to be our Romantic tendency, then to combine Freudian with Rousseau-type beliefs (as we implicitly do) seems hardly coherent. For Rousseau, the pure primeval self is corrupted by civilisation. Freud's id is 'a cauldron full of seething excitations', which, with its death instinct, Oedipus complex and other terrifying paraphernalia, should, Freud urged, be sublimated or civilisation would not exist.

Tensions in Sincerity
This contradiction seems germane to some of the tensions in our concept of sincerity, between the early monolithic concept of the unadulterated self - which lingers, and is emphasised in Rousseau-esque notions of the pristine self - and the later relational one. It is not the case that 'to thine own self be true,/And it must follow, as the night the day,/Thou canst not then be false to any man'. The self is necessarily not its unadulterated original sincerus self in its civil interactions. Not just because it can't afford to be its wild unfettered iddiness but because sincerity is more than instant-bound truth-telling - it is always tied to a context.

Firstly being sincere is not just a matter of telling the truth, or showing what you feel, but a matter of your relation to the truth. You need to be telling the truth intentionally (it would not be sincere, for instance, to tell the truth by accident), but even intentional truth-telling is insufficient for sincerity: what are your intentions in telling that particular truth at that particular time? In flattery, the content of your
flattery may be truthful (‘What a wonderful writer you are!’), but, if the intention with which you say it is to ingratiate yourself with the writer you sincerely believe to be good, simultaneously what you say is sincere flattery, yet you are insincere (with the added insincerity that you plead ‘honesty’ as your motive, when your real motive is malice). It seems as if, for sincerity to get off the ground, truth must be cared for an aimed at, and sought or spoken disinterestedly.

There are further complications when another relational factor is added, that of time. The lingering yen for Romantic elan (one-off, spontaneous passion) tends to be fuelled by an implicit commonsensical correspondence theory of truth (which regards truth as piecemeal correspondences between words & things at a moment in time). Together they induce an notion that the more sincere an emotion, the closer it is to a physical, unmediated, unpremeditated act. Thus Lawrence in a letter to Edward Garnett applauds what is ‘physic, non-human, in humanity’, the ‘inhuman will’, claiming that ‘what is interesting in the laugh of the woman is the same as the binding of the molecules of steel or their action in heat’. He wants to chart the ‘allotropic states’, whose underlying substance is physiological rather than mental-carbon rather than diamond (as in ‘the ordinary novel’).

In the Romantic spirit, Lawrence takes feelings on the model of physical occurrences, regarding as suspect the element of deliberation. He does not question how far emotions necessarily correspond to palpable feelings; how far they are dispositional and to be viewed across time; how far they are more easily gauged and adjudicated by observers of the emoter rather than by the emoter herself. The criterion for loving sincerely, for instance, might be whether I feel love at a given moment; or it might be whether, over a period of time, I have performed certain actions, something perhaps more accurately assessed by a dispassionate observer rather than by me. We say ‘He can’t really love his wife if he’s not prepared to...’ And we can be empirical and third person about ourselves: ‘I can’t really love him because I never...’ There is surely an insincerity in saying to someone: ‘I love you’, however sincerely you feel it at that moment, if you are unsure how much the utterance conveys to the other person and how far you can carry through what the utterance might seem to convey. George Eliot, describing precisely such an outpouring of emotion, comments: ‘It was one of those times when speech is at once sincere and deceptive, when feeling, rising high above its average depth, leaves flood-marks which are never reached again.’ What she, unlike Lawrence, seems to urge is that we each measure our own emotional average, and act accordingly, rather than identify with the ephemeral, travelling fragments of self and emotion. Is it not this steady calculation ultimately more sincere than Romantic or romantic spontaneity?

Is (romantic) love a lake into which you dive, or which you find yourself in (in either case subject to drought), or a thread you spin? For sincerity of emotion both the behaviourist and the palpability criteria are needed. To only go with the behaviourist criterion, and take it to its logical conclusion, could lead to saying that you loved someone without ever feeling anything for them, which would clearly be very odd. Yet people presumably undertake arranged marriages hoping that the sheer enactment of loving actions over time will breed palpable love. And conversely, those who do feel palpable love for someone, and marry or make a commitment to this person, are not merely making a prediction about their feelings in the future but forming an intention. They know, if they’ve any sense, that they are unlikely to feel palpable love for the other person unremittingly. At certain times it will surely be part of the sincerity of their commitment to be insincere (e.g., to enact concern,

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sympathy, joy they don’t feel). In the case of love of children, or, to a lesser degree, love of siblings, there is anyway less of a premium put on palpable love. These are usually unquestioned loves, and we don’t (can’t) continually ransack ourselves for feelings, and decide to give up on those for whom we fail at that moment to feel the right feelings. The mother who stays with the difficult child, instead of abandoning it, does not talk about ‘living a lie’ (just as she is likely to be more reluctant to confess dislike or indifference for her child than for her husband).

Further complicating the factor of time is that of acting and interacting. To be sincere, as I’ve said, carries the implication of outer appearance according with inner reality, yet outer appearance is not static. What we do tends as much to change as to mirror what we feel. The irritating fifties song that exhorts us to whistle a happy tune when we’re down, and we’ll feel better, is twee but true. Similarly, if you make an effort to welcome an undesired visitor, you tend, in doing so, to escape your lethargy and begin to enjoy their company. Is that insincere? Is it more sincere to just lie down under the lethargy and make no effort to welcome the visitor? There is a feeling-engendering aspect of action. To act means ‘to do’ and also ‘to simulate’. ‘To perform’ covers both these senses, and carries an inevitable suggestion of the spurious. But, as Whistler said, to say nature must be taken as she is is to say to the player that he may sit on the piano.

For us human players, there is no natural, or very little. An existentialist philosopher like Sartre could be said to exaggerate the extent to which we have no essence but, ineluctably, are free to create ourselves. Where he is surely right is in stressing that to describe ourselves as ‘x’ or ‘an x’ is spuriously to reify ourselves and to project past behaviour into the future. The person who denies he has a drink problem and insists that he can give up drinking tomorrow if necessary is self-deluded, but equally insincere is the person who caves in under his self-ascribed alcoholism, predicting that he will be unable to discard the habit. Honestly to admit you are an alcoholic (or in Sartre’s example, a homosexual), is to give yourself a false essence, and falsely to predict your future actions, falsely to preclude the future possibilities you might have en passant instantiated. Sartre, paradoxically declaring that the goal of bad faith (self-delusion) and the goal of sincerity are the same, seems to despair of the possibility of sincerity, and perhaps of insincerity too. But when he says ‘Actually sincerity presents itself as a demand and consequently is not a state’, perhaps he manages to reconcile his paradox. Perhaps, too, this is the beginning of an answer to the question of whether or not it is possible to be sincere. Certainly it is hard to be sincere, but sincerity is an essential tool, a necessary investigative method, in the way we examine ourselves, our feelings, other people, and reality.

SPES EVENING COURSE

ASPECTS OF THE PARANORMAL

7-9 pm TUESDAY EVENINGS from 22 Feb to 28 March 2000
conducted by Wendy Grossman (writer for The Skeptic)

The Library, Conway Hall. Fee £2 per evening includes refreshments.

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The prospect of human cloning and designer babies may hog headlines, but genetics may not be the device by which we reinvent ourselves in the 21st century. In neuroscience a quieter, but swifter, scientific revolution is taking place which will soon give us the power to reconfigure our minds, and thus our society, to an extent undreamt of except in science fiction.

Our minds are more malleable than our bodies, and you don’t have to fiddle with genes to change them radically. The technology required to tweak brains is simple, cheap, and with us already. States of mind that we feel are complex and beyond manipulation - love, despair, joy, belief - can be flipped on and off in the brain like lights.

Unlikely? Consider this incident. A few weeks ago surgeons at the Pitie-Salpetrière Hospital in Paris were probing the brain of a patient with Parkinson’s disease, trying to find the tiny clump of neurons that control tremor. The plan - which is known to work - was to ‘turn on’ these neurons with a live electrode so the tremor would stop. Instead the doctors touched by mistake on some neighbouring cells and the patient, who was fully conscious, suddenly started crying and moaning. For the next few minutes the woman exhibited all the symptoms of severe depression: ‘I don’t want to live any more’ she said at one point, ‘I am disgusted with life’.

The doctors removed the electrode, and within 90 seconds the patient - who had no history of depression - was back to her normal self. Next day the surgeons stimulated the area a second time and again she responded with cries of despair. When the doctors touched the area with the current turned off there was no such reaction, even though the woman thought the current was on. (Reference 1)

The stray electrode created the experience of depression by switching on a specific circuit in the woman’s brain. There was no ‘reason’ for her feelings - just a flurry of electricity in a particular neural pathway. Everything we see, think, feel and remember is generated similarly by the activation and interaction of dedicated modules, circuits and systems... One brain area, for example, creates a feeling of disgust (2) another circuit makes everything seem funny. There is even a system which, when stimulated, produces a state of quasi-religious transcendence. (3)

Most of the time these pathways are turned on by ‘appropriate’ things - sensory experiences, memories or thought. But once we have a detailed map of the brain’s components - something which is being built up fast - we will be able to bypass normal causation and manipulate our consciousness directly with precisely targeted drugs, or even by implanted electrodes and magnets. If we choose to use these techniques to the full we will no longer have to strive to change our environment in order to be happy; or struggle to overcome mental frailty. We could select our moods, and even our personalities, in much the same way as we might choose to wear a certain outfit or get a new nose.

Talk like this inevitably arouses mutterings about ‘Brave New Worlds’ - always it is assumed that any movement towards mind control must be sinister. I believe, however, that it could ameliorate suffering and enhance our lives hugely, provided we can overcome our fears.

Again there are parallels with genetics: the panic we are in now about ‘tinkering with nature’ will do very little to stop commercial exploitation of genetics but it may well slow down the development of genetic therapies and prevent many people from taking advantage of a potentially wonderful opportunity to free themselves from a frail genetic heritage.

Similarly, brain manipulation could give us a breathtaking new capacity for self-determination, but only if we embrace and steer the technology rather than allowing it to be annexed by medicine and the (mainly drug) companies that supply their tools. Sadly there is little sign of this - we are hurtling backwards into the neuroscientific revolution - swallowing psychotropic pills by the billion yet frightened, ignorant, and mindlessly rejecting what it has to offer.

The potential for altering our lives is probably greater for neuroscience than for genetics because genetic engineering in humans has proved to be very difficult in practice while brain manipulation is turning out to be surprisingly easy - think of those French surgeons flipping depression on and off in their Parkinson’s patient. The very ease of it, though, is one of the things that makes people so suspicious. We want cures for people who are locked into awful states of mind - depression, say, or obsessive-compulsive disorder, or anxiety - but somehow we feel the cures should not be too easy. In matters of the mind we are convinced there can be no short-cuts to betterment.

This is not surprising. Our mental life does not feel as though it is underpinned by physical processes - it seems mysterious. And when our thoughts and feeling are disturbed we assume there must be complex psychological reasons for it and that any remedy must unravel those reasons. But neither of these assumptions is correct. There is no ghost in the machine, and mental states with complex causation do not necessarily require long-winded ‘cures’.

This is not to say the human brain is a simple, hard-wired, machine. All psychological conditions - healthy or not - arise out of a phenomenally complex interplay of genetics, environment and personal history; a train of events that could be traced back into genetic antiquity or extended to the breadth of human culture. But the final link in the causal chain lies right inside the skull: a spark passes from neuron A to neuron B and - multiplied a billion times - what emerges is a perception, a thought, or a feeling. If you want to manipulate a person’s state of mind and, ultimately, their behaviour, this is the best place to intervene.

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Why should we want to intervene? Because mental suffering is increasing at an alarming rate and social and psychological approaches to relieving it have signally failed. The World Health Organisation claims that 500 million people are currently mentally ill and between one in four and one in seven of us - depending on the survey - will be treated for mental disorder at some time (4). In the grey area between mental illness and social disorder millions of lives are disrupted by their own and others' inability to control their rage, anxiety and addictions. Misery stalks the planet and no amount of getting richer, or healthier or better educated seems to reduce it.

Millions of people already manipulate their brains by taking psychotropic drugs - prescription anti-depressants, tranquillisers and stimulants. But even as we take the pills we disapprove of them. Grudgingly we admit that they work - but if you flick through the popular press or listen to people talking you hear far more talk of side-effects, risks and drawbacks than of drugs' proven ability to alleviate mental suffering. It is true that the drugs in use today are still crude, and they do have side-effects. But these complaints are the rationalisation rather than the cause of anti-drug feeling - the real objections are intuitive. By contrast, therapies which claim to be directed at the 'root cause' of mental distress - counselling and psychotherapy, social support schemes and education initiatives - are almost universally perceived as good.

This has led to the growth of a huge, costly and mainly useless industry. A recent Department of Health report suggested that as many as two and a half million people in the UK now offer some sort of talking treatment to others, and psychotherapy is on offer for practically every twinge of mental angst. Yet there is practically no hard evidence to show it actually does any good. In 1996, however, three hospitals ran controlled trials which showed that mentally traumatised people who were counselled ended up feeling worse than those who weren't. Since then further studies have cast serious doubt on the efficacy of all forms of counselling other than the very rigorous cognitive and behaviour forms which actively avoid delving into the causes of a person's psychological problems (5).

Yet 'talking things out' remains popular because it feels right. Even personal experience does not seem to dissuade people from the intuitive idea that it must work. In one study psychologists gave diaries to people who were receiving psychotherapy for a mental condition and asked them to keep a daily record of how things went. At the end of the therapy they took away the diaries, waited a year then asked the same people to give a brief description of the course of their illness. In most cases the diaries written a year later showed a neat narrative structure: the illness was brought on by some definite, appropriate cause; it got worse up to the point when therapy was started, then got progressively better until, by the end of the therapy, it was cured. When the original diaries were compared it was found that the patients' recollections were entirely different from their contemporaneous reports - the real course of events was far messier (6). The diarists' memories seem to have been distorted by their need to make a narrative that fulfilled their prejudices.

Weaving events and experiences into meaningful, pre-ordained patterns allows our brains to 'make sense' of things, but it also makes it very difficult for us to recognise that some things are not meaningful at all. Mental states - especially emotions - seem particularly drenched in meaning. It is practically impossible to feel an emotion without attaching a cause to it: worry is always about something; we get depressed because of something and become obsessed with something. But often
these ‘causes’ are just attendant facts - the brain casts around for reasons like some angry drunk looking for an innocent bystander to pick on. Another brain operation incident demonstrates this. A couple of years ago Californian surgeons were probing the cortex of a girl with epilepsy, trying to find the focal point of her seizures, when she started, suddenly, to giggle. The surgeons asked her what was so funny. There was very little in the girl’s situation to prompt merriment but her brain seemed forced to create a joke in order to explain itself. ‘You guys’ she said to the operating staff, ‘standing around... you’re just so funny!’ A little while later the surgeons touched the same spot and again the girl started to laugh. This time, when asked the joke, she pointed to a perfectly dull drawing of a horse which happened to be in the theatre. ‘The horse’ she said, almost falling off the bed with laughter ‘it’s so... funny!’ (7).

In most cases, of course, the circuits which give rise to feelings - be they amusement, depression or anxiety - are triggered not by electrodes but by things we perceive or which happen to us, and the brain states they produce ‘make sense’ in that they seem to be appropriate responses to these stimuli. A threat, for example, produces fear; an insult produces anger, and loss or overwhelming challenge sometimes triggers depression. These feelings undoubtedly evolved because they helped direct our actions appropriately: fear is part of the physical process that gears us up for flight and when the most likely threat was from a dangerous animal or a marauding tribe the reaction was obviously useful. Anger, similarly, is associated with the urge to hit out, and even depression may once have protected us by laying us safely low when life was too much to cope with.

Society, however, has changed far faster than our brains have evolved. Our anger, fear and depression circuits continue to be triggered by threats and challenges but the feelings and behaviour they induce are rarely useful in today’s world. What’s the advantage of fleeing from threat or hitting out at an insult if the cause is an overbearing boss or a rude neighbour? And what good does it do to be paralysed by depression if the loss that brought it on was the loss of your job? Detached from their evolutionary role as survival mechanisms these feelings become pathological, and this probably accounts for a large amount of the unease we label mental illness.

Many people object to the ‘medicalising’ of emotional responses and instinctive behaviours that are merely out of kilter with modern society. A current focus of these objections is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children. Brain-scans show that the behaviour that typifies this condition - constant flitting of attention; grabbing anything that comes into focus; continuous movement - is associated with relative inactivity in the frontal lobes, the part of the brain which, among other things, endows us with self-control and the ability to focus (8). The

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Frontal lobes are the last bit of the brain to mature, and, left untreated, a large proportion of children with ADHD grow out of it. So it is perfectly reasonable to regard the condition as immaturity rather than an illness. In today's society, however, such immaturity is seriously problematic.

There are two ways to pep up a child's frontal lobes: you can either provide phenomenal amounts of environmental stimulation, or give it an amphetamine-type drug which excites the cortical neurons. On the whole we have opted for drugs. UK prescriptions for Ritalin and similar drugs have increased from 2,000 in 1992 to 92,000 in 1997, and today the figure is almost certainly much larger still. This has caused such concern that the International Drugs Control Board (a UN agency) have called for an investigation into possible excessive use of the drug by British doctors.

Concern at dosing large numbers of children with amphetamines is natural enough, but consider the alternative. To focus a child with ADHD without using drugs you need to give it constant attention - ask any parent of such a child. At school you need to provide practically a one-to-one teacher-pupil ratio. It is simply not practical to provide this for all affected children. You could simply endure the child's behaviour and hope it will grow out of it - but, although this might happen (especially for privileged children whose parents provide strong discipline and stimulation) many children won't mature spontaneously - they will go on to become drifters and criminals, unable to cope in the adult world any better than they could cope in the classroom. Is this better than giving them drugs?

From now on issues like ADHD will come thick and fast. Cognitive enhancers - drugs which can improve memory and speed of thought - are already in the pipeline. Almost certainly there will soon be drugs to calm foul tempers, increase affection, amplify sexual response and heighten sensory perception. Should we use them. Later there may be drugs to enhance our appreciation of music, or give us a keener intellect or a sharper sense of humour. Who will decide if we may have them? We will find out how to turn off rage, reverse addictions, deter people from wanting to take silly risks or indulge in petty crime. Will we 'treat' antisocial people with them - perhaps even without their consent?

Mind control is coming. If we turn away in distaste it will be annexed by medicine and driven by the drug industry. Better by far to turn around and face the responsibility of becoming our own creators. We have only our minds to lose.

References:

5. Bisson et al, Whitchurch Hospital Cardiff; Mayou et al Warneford Hospital Oxford; St George's Hospital London.

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF G.E. MOORE
Goodness Itself (and the purpose of SPES)

Christopher Bratcher
A Lecture to be given to the Ethical Society on 9 April 2000 in the History of Ethics Series

1903 was a good year for philosophy. The Cambridge fellow Apostles', 30 year old Moore, and 31 year old Russell, respectively published *Principia Ethica* (C.U.P. paperback, in print) and *The Principles of Mathematics*. There is no doubt which book had the greater influence. The methodology of the subject of Ethics, defined by Moore as 'What is good', was recast for evermore. Moore's thoughts in the book's final chapter on what is *The Good*, i.e., what has intrinsic worth, for human beings, became the primer for the Bloomsbury group, and, I will suggest, expresses the past and future *raison d'être* of SPES. It should be a fixture in our library.

Russell said of Moore ('Portraits from Memory'): 'Moore, like me, was for a short time a Hegelian. But he emerged more quickly than I did, and it was largely his conversation that led me to abandon both Kant and Hegel.' 'For some years he fulfilled my ideal of genius... with a look almost of inspiration, and with an intellect as deeply passionate as Spinoza's. He had a kind of exquisite purity. I have never but once succeeded in making him tell a lie, and that was by a subterfuge. 'Moore', I said, 'do you *always* speak the truth?' 'No', he replied. I believe this is the only lie he ever told.' Moore supported Russell in his WWI conscientious objection, and over his consequential loss of his university fellowship: they later became distant; as the quotation hints, Moore was too purely good a person for Russell's nature. Moore, too, became an OM before his death in 1958; not before he enjoyed fellow Apostle, Jonathan Miller's 1954 Footlights sketch, in which 'Russell' fails to get an answer about apples and a basket because 'Moore' is too great a stickler for precision to reply!

The Analysis of Good
The book, and its arguments, like the man himself, are disarmingly simple. Its case is made in the first ten pages. What is good depends on how good is to be defined. Moore saw this as not simply a matter of word usage or verbal definition, but of analysis. Analysis, as then conceived, was an attempt to get at the real nature of the thing or notion that a word denoted, by examining its conceptual building blocks. Moore says we can give a definition in this sense of a horse, because it has many properties and qualities that make it up, some of which, say, differentiate it from a donkey. It is a complex of attributes: unlike good.

'My answer (to what is good?) is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' my answer is that is cannot be defined...' 'It is one of those innumerable objects of thought that are themselves incapable of definition, because they are the ultimate terms by reference to which whatever *is* capable of definition is defined.'

'The university elect and formally secret society (with life membership from selection as undergraduates), founded in 1820. The thirty elections to it between 1892 and 1912 included Lytton Strachey and Keynes, Rupert Brooke and Wittgenstein. See Moore: *G E Moore and the Cambridge Apostles*, Levy, O.U.P. 1979; my primer for Moore's publicly uneventful life.

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Consider, says Moore, the colour yellow, for example. We may state what kind of vibrations must stimulate the normal eye, in order that we may perceive it. But they are not what we mean by yellow. Yet a mistake of this simple kind has commonly been made about ‘good’. It may be true that all things which are good are also something else, just as it is true that all things which are yellow produce a certain vibration in light. [Q. How satisfactory do you find this analogy?] Ethics (does) aim at discovering what are those other properties belonging to all things which are good. But many philosophers have thought that when they named those other properties they were actually defining good... This view I propose to call ‘the naturalistic fallacy’.

Most of the rest of the book is devoted to instances of it. The fallacy has nothing to do with the identification of good with a property, or process, in our nature. It also becomes evident that it can be grounded in a difference that is other than that between simple (indefinable) and complex notions, although the argument is originally put in terms of indefinables. Moore conceived of ‘good’ as a simple ‘non-natural’ property. The property of being ‘non-natural’ boils down to being evaluative. (Defenders of naturalism naturally point out that it is a strange property that is only defined by what it is not, and the division of category is arbitrary.) The fallacy is the identification of good with anything other than a cognate ethical term, or the inference from non-evaluative (factual) premises to an evaluative (particularly, ethical) conclusion.

Against Mill, Moore says, in a famous critique: “Good’, he tells us, means ‘desirable’, and you find out what is desirable by finding out what is desired’. ‘Well, the fallacy in this step is so obvious, it is quite wonderful how Mill failed to see it. The fact is that ‘desirable’ does not mean ‘able to be desired’ as ‘visible’ means ‘able to be seen’. The desirable means what ought to be desired... Desirable does indeed mean ‘what it is good to desire’; but when that is understood, it is no longer plausible to say that our test of that, is what is actually desired.’ All forms of Metaphysical ethics, where, as Moore characterises it, good is identified with something supersensible (such as we met in Bradley; the realisation of an ideal in oneself) equally fall foul of the fallacy. He says that metaphysicians are not merely asserting that something which is (really) real possesses all the characteristics necessary for perfect goodness. They are saying that an ethical proposition follows from some proposition that Reality has such-and-such a nature.

Moore points out that we do not intend a tautology when we say something is good because it is ‘x’. We are not saying, for example, intellectual pursuits are mind-improving because they are mind-improving. Something else is conveyed by saying that they are good. Later philosophers got away from the obfuscation of this being some non-natural property, by developing a wider notion of the functionality of words (see later talk).

Moore suggested that one can non-ritually ask ‘Is it good?’ of whatever is put up as the ‘stuff’ of good. I personally go along with him, because I think the question asked the ‘x’ to be evaluated; and that is always possible. However, as a litmus test, it is open to denial. If you equate ‘good’ with the ‘greatest happiness of the greatest number’, the question whether the latter is good will be nonsensical for you. Naturalists may also say that they are not trying to analyse ‘good’ in Moore’s sense of reaching a definition, but are proposing that happiness, or whatever, is the criterion of what is good; or that it is the good: which is quite another question, as
Moore is at pains to point out, and to which he finally turns.

Moore’s technique for answering the question ‘What things have absolute value?’ is to consider the candidates in isolation, much as he did with the term ‘good’. For example, freedom is a means to an end; and, against Bradley, we should ask whether ‘realising the true self’ in isolation would have any value whatsoever. ‘Either the thing which does ‘realise the true self’ has intrinsic value, or it has not; if it has, then it certainly does not owe its own value solely to the fact that it (does so). What follows is a famous conclusion, put with all the simplicity and modesty that were ‘natural’ to Moore.

‘...the answer, in its main outlines, appears to be so obvious, that it runs the risk of being a platitude. By far the most valuable things, which we know or imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasure of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects.’ (He proceeds to develop an aesthetic that places music within his framework; which we could discuss). This civilised and contemplative conception was seized upon by the Bloomsbury group as their creed. The question may be raised whether it is able to encompass all the (perhaps) robust satisfactions of the ‘hoi polloi’. If it does, it could be argued that it loses its distinctive appeal.

Howbeit, if this is what constitutes the Ethical ultimate goals of life, then it is a readymade legal and practical raison d’etre for SPES. Moore’s pleasures, etc, have, in essence, been the core of much of what we have promoted. We should perhaps consciously re-evaluate, in another forum, what we put on, and what we licence, in the light of it.

OBITUARY - GEORGE HUTCHINSON 1906-2000

George Hutchinson, who died on 22 January, aged 94, was secretary of the South Place Sunday Concerts from 1947-1987, when he returned to his native north-east England, where his father had been an employee of the then London and North Eastern Railway, rising, finally, to the position of stationmaster in York.

George grew up in Seaham, County Durham, where amateur music-making flourished. He learned the violin as a boy and soon became proficient enough to play with the local orchestras and to take part in the many oratorio performances which were an integral part of the social scene of the period. This early experience laid the foundation for his love of music, so that when, after teacher training he took up his first appointment in Whitechapel, he was quick to avail himself of the opportunities which the capital offered. He took violin lessons from a good teacher and learned to play the viola. When a colleague introduced him to the South Place Ethical Society and its concerts, he became a devotee and played in the resident amateur orchestra which performed sometimes at the Sunday concerts.

In 1930 he joined the concert committee and became in effect a trainee secretary to Alfred Clements, who had been running the concerts from the start and now foresaw the need to initiate a successor.

Clements, a printer by profession, was a stickler for detail and George learned the hard way to compile and to proofread the intricate weekly concert programmes. In 1932 he became co-assistant secretary with Mrs Clements, gaining thereby an
intimate knowledge of the problems of programme planning. His responsibility was considerably increased when Dora Clements assumed the secretaryship on the death of Alfred in 1938.

The same year George married Joan Rowley, a professional cellist and a fellow committee member. Together they made music at home with their friends until their life was disrupted by the war in 1939. George’s school was evacuated first to Northamptonshire and then moved to Burford in Oxfordshire where Joan remained for the duration when George was called up. Most of his service was spent with the Education Corps in North Africa and the Middle East, whence he returned in 1945 to rejoin the concert organisation.

He succeeded to the Hon. Secretaryship when Mrs Clements retired in 1947 and, supported by Joan and a loyal committee, continued for the next 40 years to run the concerts in the spirit of their tradition but with the necessary insight into contemporary musical trends.

He and Joan took up the double-bass and George became proficient enough to play from time to time with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He was even invited to take part in its American Tour in the early 1950s. His school would have released him but he felt unable to desert the concerts at a crucial time.

He served loyally both the concerts and SPES, of which he was a trustee and a frequent General Committee member. In this capacity, however, he was renowned for refusing to remain at a meeting after 9.30pm.

For some years he was on the staff of Henry Compton School in Fulham, where he taught mathematics and subsequently became head of music.

Like Clements, he was a perfectionist and further, had enormous energy and stamina. Single-handed he converted his Earl’s Court house into three flats, with faultless workmanship and every mod. con.

With advancing years and after George’s heart valve replacement, they both gave up playing the more physically demanding orchestral instruments and took up the viols, thereby exploring the pleasures of Renaissance music.

Joan’s death in 1984 left him bereft of a lifelong companion and helpmeet. It was especially poignant that he could not share with her the honour of receiving an MBE soon afterwards. He soldiered on with undiminished determination until his retirement, aged 80, after the concerts’ centenary celebration in 1987. He moved to York to be near his niece and savour his old haunts. He enjoyed extensive concert-going until his failing hearing and eyesight restricted his activities.

Although he rejected conventional religion and espoused a humanist philosophy, he tended towards intolerance of eccentricity which conflicted with his own orderly lifestyle. In his late years as concert secretary he distrusted his failing memory and feared making a mistake. He would ‘phone me or my husband several times a day to ensure that some message had been received and fully understood.

Those of us who had worked with him will remember him with affection and respect for his musical talent and organising skill. M.L.L.

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

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Humanist Holidays  
Friday 21 April - Tuesday 25 April 2000

Get away from it all...  
...for a long weekend in the company of other Humanists!

The Spring 2000 Humanist Holiday takes place in the historic market town of Norwich.

Planned activities so far include a guided tour of the town with visits to local attractions, museums and a stop at the Colman's Mustard Shop for supplies (!), a river tour of the Norfolk Broads and an opportunity to socialise with and meet local BHA members.

For more information about the holiday and a booking form, or to be put on the Humanist Holiday mailing list, please contact Justine Brian at the BHA.

British Humanist Association  
47 Theobald’s Road, London WC1X 8SP  
email: member@humanism.org.uk  
Tel: 020 8430 0908  
Registered Charity No. 285987

‘ASPECTS OF EVOLUTION’

Saturday 18 March 2000  
10.30am to 5.00pm  
Conway Hall

This event, a part of National Science Week organised by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, is being put on by the London District of the Workers’ Educational Association in association with the Ethical Society.

Professor Chris Stringer: Neanderthal expert, will present new genetic analysis of ancient DNA, new discoveries and new dating evidence, shedding further light on the origin of ‘modern’ humans.

Dr Richard Fortey: President of the Geology section of the BAAS, will explore the Cambrian evolutionary explosion and the controversies around the Burgess shale fauna.

Dr Edward Holmes: Lecturer in evolution at Oxford University, will investigate the evolution of human pathogens, especially AIDS and hepatitis.

There are 40 free tickets for members of the Ethical Society - apply soon. Cost otherwise £5.

I am interested in attending the ‘Aspects of Evolution’ day on 18 March:
Name:  .................................................. Whether member of SPES: YES/NO
Address: .................................................................
.................................................................Tel:
.................................................................Cheque for £ ...... enclosed for ............... tickets

Ethical Record, February, 2000
PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AT THE ETHICAL SOCIETY
The Library, Conway Hall Humanist Centre, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, WC1R 4RL.
Tel: 020 7242 8037/8034 Registered Charity No. 251396
Website address: www.ethicalsoc.org.uk email: library@ethicalsoc.org.uk

MARCH

Friday 3
7 - 9pm ANY QUESTIONS R4 broadcasting from Conway Hall main hall

Sunday 5
11.00 am THE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS: AN INSIDER’S VIEW.
Will Economics Always Drive Out Ethics? Paul Rhodes
3.00 pm TOPICAL DISCUSSION with Terry Mullins

Tuesday 7
7.00 pm ASPECTS OF THE PARANORMAL (3). Can You Believe Your
Perceptions? Non Human Visitors - ghosts, angels, UFOs with Wendy
Grossman. £2

Sunday 12
11.00 am THE ISLAMIC LEGAL SYSTEM: ONE SYSTEM OR MANY?
John Strawson, University of East London.
3.00 pm ‘WHY ARE MORALS SO REPULSIVE?’
Turn of the Century Moral Crisis and the Solution of F.J. Gould.
Susannah Wright

Tuesday 14
7.00 pm ASPECTS OF THE PARANORMAL (4). Can You Believe Your Physical
Limitations? ESP, Firewalking and Mind Over Matter. £2

SPES CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE WEEK

Saturday 18
10.30 am - ASPECTS OF EVOLUTION in association with WEA. £5 (40 free tickets
for SPES members). Main hall.

Sunday 19
11.00 am SCIENCE VERSUS RELIGION. Norman Bacrac.
3.00 pm TOPICAL TOPICS IN SCIENCE. Mike Howgate.

Tuesday 21
7.00 pm ASPECTS OF THE PARANORMAL (5)
Can You Believe... those who claim to live on light? Wendy Grossman. £2

Sunday 26
11.00 am THE ABOLITION OF WAR. Have the Hague Conferences Made Any
Difference? Bruce Kent, Vice-President, CND.
3.00 pm MY TRAVELS IN CAMEROON Pt 2. David Wright.

Tuesday 28
7.00 pm ASPECTS OF THE PARANORMAL (6) How To Create your Own

SOUTH PLACE SUNDAY CONCERTS AT CONWAY HALL at 6.30 pm. Tickets £5
Season’s programme from D. Morris. PO Box 17635, London N12 8WN (send S.A.E.)
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Businesses often keep records of their operations, including client information. Records managers routinely encounter challenges that can present an ethical crisis, such as improper disclosure, alteration, destruction or withholding of records. A proper records management structure requires those in charge to practice