JONATHAN GLOVER

Born 1941
available online at www.livesretold.co.uk

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Archived in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks, from Jonathan Glover's personal website at www.jonathanglover.org website. The website was designed and developed by New Digital Partnership (www.newdigitalpartnership.com).

1. INTRODUCTION

My working life consists of thinking, reading, writing and talking about philosophy.

Talking includes teaching, which involves listening as well. I write mainly books, with only a few articles. The books are listed in the section of the website about them. For thirty years I taught at New College, Oxford, and since 1998 have taught at the Centre of Medical Law and Ethics at King's College London. (My office in the Centre was caught in the photograph above when George Szmukler unexpectedly pulled out a phone and took the picture, in a moment wrecking my pretence of being an organised person. But its appearance at the top of this page is my admission that George was on to something.)

Some academics find teaching a chore that distracts them from their "real work", but, like many others, I find teaching enormously enjoyable. It is as much my real work as writing is. This website has a section about teaching philosophy.

Other sections of the website correspond to some philosophical interests: ethics; the light and the dark sides of human nature, and the way the dark side can issue in wars and other atrocities; genetic ethics and neuroethics; and psychiatric

issues. There is a section called “bits and pieces”, which is as it sounds: a ragbag of things I find interesting but which do not fit in any of the other sections. A section on "travesties and encounters" is also as it sounds: about incongruous encounters between unlikely people -sometimes dark incongruities but mainly bizarre or comic ones.

The idea of the website is to give information about the work I do and to make available unpublished articles, DVDs, etc. It is also to make available any stuff, previously published but now out of print, which might be worth preserving. When it was suggested that I should have a website, I wasn’t sure what it should be like. It has turned out that each section, as well as giving access to things I have written or videos of lectures or discussions I have been involved in, also has many thoughts, poems, etc by other people. The hope is that, if anyone comes to this site to track down something of mine, they may get interested in some of the other things collected under the same topic. I doubt if anyone would want to look through everything on the website. It is meant to be a changing online anthology for dipping into, not a restaurant with a fixed menu but a cafe.

2. ETHICS AND HUMANITY

Conventional morality is too easy.

“Life is sacred.” “Criminals deserve to go to prison.” “Killing people in war is completely different from murder.” “Never break a promise.” “We should respect the dignity of the human embryo.” “Lying is always wrong.” Each item of these bits of conventional moral wisdom is easy to say. And each is open to serious doubts and objections as soon as questions are asked about its assumptions, and about its human implications. Conventional morality is not only too easy: it is usually too insulated from the imagination and from intellectual curiosity. Intelligent children start to ask questions about this. Who decides what gets on the list of things it is wrong to do? What do the items on the list have in common?

These questions about everyday living are one route into philosophy. But sometimes the big, abstract questions about the world, or about what we can know to be true, are so engrossing that philosophy is not brought to bear on everyday thinking and living.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN.

You & I were walking along the river towards the railway bridge & we had a heated discussion in which you made a remark about “national character” that shocked me by its primitiveness. I then thought: what is the use of studying

philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., & if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscientious than any … journalist in the use of the dangerous phrases such people use for their own ends. You see, I know that it's difficult to think well about "certainty", "probability", "perception", etc. But it is, if possible, still more difficult to think, really honestly about your life & other peoples lives.

Ludwig Wittgenstein in a letter to Norman Malcolm.

Some people, often philosophers, have reacted against the haphazardness of conventional moralities by searching for the criterion of right and wrong, some axiom or set of axioms. They may see the solution as obeying the commands of God, or else appeal to a secular criterion such as the Principle of Utility or the Categorical Imperative. Some of these approaches provide, for many widely accepted moral beliefs, a degree of unifying explanation. But, rigidly adopted, the axiomatic approach can create a "Martian" morality through clashing with some of our deepest human responses. We are appalled if obeying God leads Abraham to agree to sacrifice his son Isaac. We are appalled if some secular principle about impartiality leads a parent with only a few places in the lifeboat to say to his or her own children that they must take their turn in the queue.

The hardest questions in ethics are often about finding a middle ground between uncritical acceptance of intuitive responses and abandoning all our emotionally rooted human values in the face of some abstract theory.

Humanity, a Moral History of the Twentieth Century, argued for the importance of the human responses of sympathy and of respect for people's dignity. The argument appealed to the horrors that can happen when these responses are over-ridden or anaesthetized. But, more generally, there are reasons to think that the purely abstract approach is too detached from other aspects of our humanity, particularly from how our moral outlook is not a purely rationalist affair, but is rooted in experiences and in relationships with people we care about. For instance, values are catching:

RAIMOND GAITA.

The philosopher Plato said that those who love and seek wisdom are clinging in recollection to things they once saw. On many occasions in my life I have had the need to say, and thankfully have been able to say: I know what a good workman is; I know what an honest man is; I know what friendship is; I know because I remember these things in the person of my father, in the person of his friend Hora, and in the example of their friendship…
They were not proud in any sense that implies arrogance, and certainly not in any sense that implies they wanted respect for reasons other than their serious attempt to live decently. I have never known anyone who lived so passionately, as did these two friends, the belief that nothing matters so much in life as to live it decently. Nor have I known anyone so resistant and contemptuous, throughout their lives, of the external signs of status and prestige. They recognised this in each other, and it formed the basis of their deep and life-long friendship.

Raimond Gaita: Romulus, My Father

Sometimes people are emotionally drawn to do things that go against the rules laid down, whether by unreflective conventional morality or by some theoretical reconstruction. From the perspective of the rules this is a weakness to be eliminated. But some (not all) of these "weaknesses" are parts of our humanity most of us can understand from the inside. The resulting empathy is also part of our humanity.

ANNA AKHMATOVA.

LOT'S WIFE.

And the just man trailed God's shining agent,
over a black mountain, in his giant track,
while a restless voice kept harrying his woman:
"It's not too late, you can still look back

at the red towers of your native Sodom,
the square where once you sang, the spinning shed,
at the empty windows set in the tall house
where sons and daughters blessed your marriage bed."

A single glance: a sudden dart of pain
stitching her eyes before she made a sound...

Her body flaked into transparent salt,
and her swift legs rooted to the ground.

Who will grieve for this woman? Does she not seem
too insignificant for our concern?
Yet in my heart I never will deny her,
who suffered death because she chose to turn.

Anna Akhmatova.
From Poems of Akhmatova, translated by Max Hayward and Stanley Kunitz.
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HUMANITY IN A DARK TIME.

On September 18, 2001, exactly a week after 9/11, there appeared in the Guardian an article under the heading "Time to talk -a sister of one of the missing calls for conciliation, not retaliation". Excerpts from it:

On Tuesday morning my brother was attending a conference in the World Trade Centre. Since then nobody has heard from him. I keep watching the news coverage in the hope that I will see him on screen. Then I'd be able to ring my other brothers and sisters and say: "He's all right. I've seen him. Everything's going to be OK."

When atrocities have happened to other people and they have reacted with hatred, wanting immediate revenge, I've never condemned them. I've always said that its impossible to know how one would react in such a situation. You can't blame others when you don't know how they feel.

My brother is missing and it's hard to stay optimistic. But I don't want to rush out and attack the people who have done this. I want to understand how it could happen. I want someone to make sure that it never happens again so that other people don't have to experience what our family is going through. Bombing other people will not stop this happening again...

This weekend the government announced that 100 Britons had been confirmed dead and that the figure was expected to rise much higher. I keep thinking about the incredibly small odds that anything could have happened to save my brother, but as the increasingly sensationalist coverage fills our TV screens, and we hear nothing, its hard not to get upset.

How have we managed to get our world into such a mess?

Catherine Dawson.

SOCRATES AND TOLSTOY

The tension in ethics and elsewhere between articulate, questioning rationality and emotional intuition is personified in the contrast between two of my heroes, Socrates and Tolstoy.

Many people in philosophy like labels, and ask about people who teach philosophy whether they are Aristotelian, Kantian, utilitarian, etc. These labels are journalistic and crude. Most of us learn from many of the great philosophers and writers of the past. What a nearly pointless affair philosophy would be if this were not so. And we also develop our own thoughts. I have an extra set of difficulties with such questions. I would want to cite, among others, both Socrates and Tolstoy. But each presents difficulties.

There is no such word as "Socratism", partly because we know of Socrates' views almost entirely through Plato and there is the notorious difficulty of disentangling the ideas of Socrates from the contribution of Plato. There is the word "Platonist", but I do not use it because it is so strongly associated with doctrines about universals, the reality of numbers, etc., which have nothing to do with what I have taken from the doctrines of Socrates as portrayed by Plato. There is the word "Tolstoyan", but I do not use that because it has been appropriated by groups of dreamy disciples attached to the simple life. And heroes should not be hero-worshipped. It would be hard to see Tolstoy as an ideal husband. And I disagree with most of Tolstoy's major official doctrines, about religion, about the wisdom of the peasants, about art and about absolute pacifism.

So here I will just signal some of the things I have admired and tried to borrow from Socrates and Tolstoy, and indicate a certain tension between them.

Neither you nor I nor anyone would prefer doing wrong to suffering wrong, since the former turns out to be the greater evil.

Plato: Gorgias.

Taken literally, this thought ascribed to Socrates is obviously false. Bankers, whose greed contributes to wrecking the economy and to other people losing their jobs or their houses, choose to retire on huge self-awarded "bonuses" rather than change financial places with their victims. Not everyone prefers suffering wrong to doing wrong.

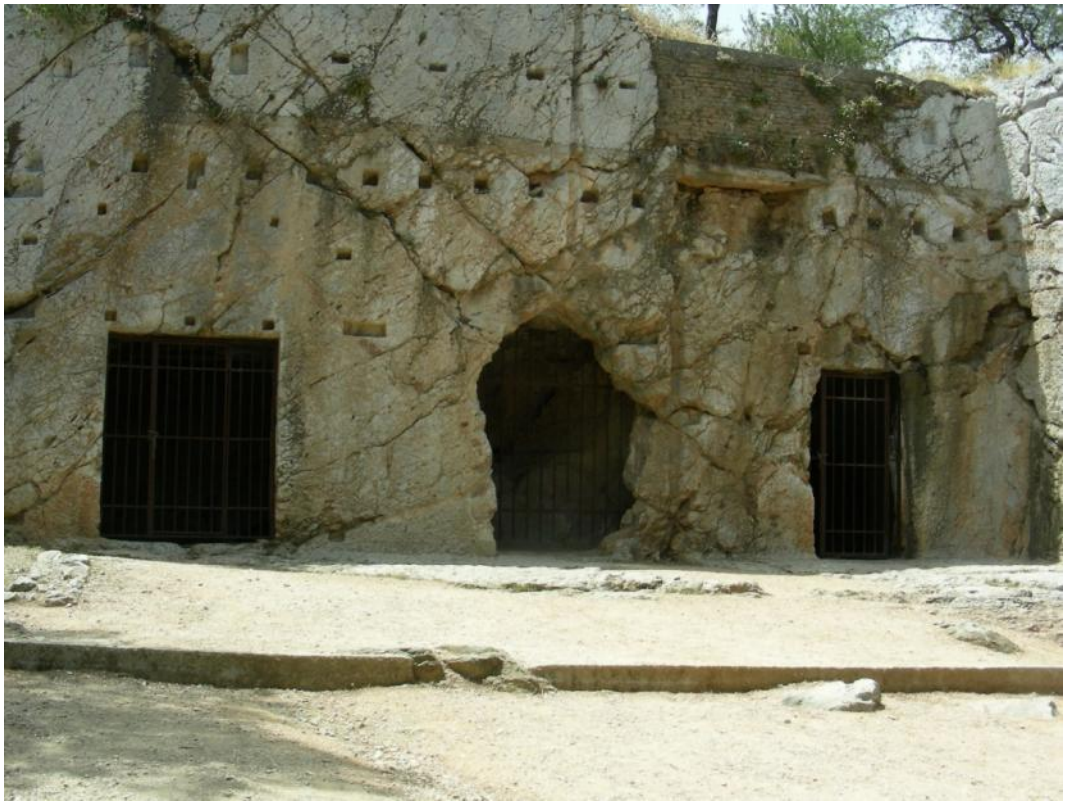
But the deeper point is the claim that (whether or not murderers, torturers, corrupt politicians, cheats, and the rest of us see this) doing wrong is worse for a person than suffering wrong. Since I first read Plato at school, this thought has been nagging somewhere at the back of my mind without my ever quite coming to terms with it. As a universal generalization, it too seems obviously false. In

the course of making off with a huge fortune, a robber causes severe permanent brain damage to a security guard. The robber is never caught and lives a comfortable life on the proceeds. It is wildly implausible to say the security guard is better off than the robber.

But, lurking underneath the obvious falsehood, there seems to be a hard-to-formulate deep truth. It is almost certainly not a universal generalization, but for many of us serious evil-doing often has huge psychological costs. (Here Socrates and Dostoyevsky seem to inhabit the same territory.) Even if not all murderers are as psychologically burdened afterwards as Raskolnikov, many may still find it harder to be at peace with themselves. There are strong human dispositions to cruelty, ruthless selfishness and so on. But there are countervailing dispositions towards kindness and towards respecting people, and a deep reluctance to torture or kill. There is also a countervailing concern with the sort of person one is or wants to be.

Because our psychology is complicated and conflicting in these ways, terrible acts often do make it hard to be at peace with yourself. Socrates gives this as part of his case for being moral even when doing so has, in external worldly terms, more costs than benefits.

There can be no greater good for a man than everyday to discuss goodness and all the other things you hear me examine myself and others about, for the unexamined life is not worth living.
Plato: Apology.



Visiting the Acropolis, Vivette and I noticed a sign "To the Prison of Socrates". I don't know how good the evidence is for this being where Socrates drank the hemlock while he carried on arguing about the obligation to obey the law. (Though it is well supported that this "prison" was where treasures from the National Museum were hidden for safety -with the entrances concreted over- during the Nazi occupation.) But the claim that it was the prison of Socrates made a visit irresistible.

Another thing that, like thousands of others, I have admired and tried to borrow from Socrates is his demand that we try to be clear and articulate in the questioning and examination of ourselves, our beliefs and our values. If we leave all this in a vague, unexamined blur, we are likely to be slaves of local prejudices or of our upbringing in how we think and act. The Socratic demand for the explicit and precise statement of beliefs and values, and the further demand to expose them to the challenge of counter-arguments, is not just uncomfortable but also liberating. And, also important, all this makes it less likely that we will, as John Donne said, go through life never thoroughly awake.

Tolstoy on the whole prefers people who trust their intuitions and who may be, like both Pierre and Levin, fairly inarticulate in discussion. He is suspicious of theorizing as glib and shallow. Napoleon is defeated by Kutuzov's deep feel for what is likely to happen to a foreign army in Russia, rather than by younger and intellectually sharper soldier-strategists. Levin finds that economic or other abstract theories about the reform of agriculture fail because they have no room for any intuitive feel for how reforms will be defeated by the pig-headed stubbornness of the Russian peasants. And when he does discuss disagreements, it is not argument that may persuade, but the sudden breakthrough of an intuitive feel for the other person's vision.

Levin had often noticed in discussions between the most intelligent people that after enormous efforts and endless logical subtleties and talk, the disputants finally became aware that what they had been at such pains to prove to one

another had long ago, from the beginning of the argument, been known to both, but that they liked different things, and would not define what they liked for fear of it being attacked. He had often had the experience of suddenly in the middle of a discussion grasping what it was the other liked and at once liking it too, and immediately he found himself agreeing, and then all the arguments fell away useless. Sometimes the reverse happened: he at last expressed what he liked himself, which he had been arguing to defend and, chancing to express it well and genuinely, had found the person he was disputing with suddenly agree. ***Lev Tolstoy: Anna Karenina.***

When Vivette and I were students first getting to know each other, she felt that there were human things I needed to know. Her way of encouraging me to learn about some of them was to give me a copy of *Anna Karenina*. Reading it was one of the changing and enriching experiences of my life. For many years I have encouraged students who have not read it to do so.

LEV TOLSTOY.

Many years later, Martha Nussbaum invited me to talk about a novel to her seminar on philosophy and literature at Brown University. I explained that I did not, and would not be able to, write or give a talk about novels. Martha replied by asking me what was my favourite novel. I said it was *Anna Karenina*. "All right. I will put you down for "Anna Karenina and Moral Philosophy". The article below grew out of the talk I gave. It appears in a Festschrift for Jim Griffin: *Wellbeing and Morality, Essays in Honour of James Griffin*, edited by Roger Crisp and Brad Hooker. I should have liked to have contributed an article about Jim's own work, which I admire. But it was a time when I was under a lot of pressure and knew I would not get it done in time. But as Jim knows well so many of the human things Vivette hoped I would come to know, I hoped this paper might be a suitable tribute.

Here is my attempt to express some of the things I started to learn when Vivette first gave me the book:

TOLSTOY WITH CHILDREN.

For a number of years visits to Moscow have been enlivened by a scientific colleague of Vivette's and a friend of both of us, Alexei Medvedev. He has taken us on many visits, including one to Chekhov's house. The most interesting of all was to Tolstoy's house at Yasnaya Polyana. Because of the influence Tolstoy has had on Vivette and me, this visit was one of the most memorable days in our life.

THE WOODS AT YASNAYA POLYANA.

It was at Yasnaya Polyana that I saw him again. It was an overcast, autumn day with a drizzle of rain, and he put on a heavy overcoat and high leather boots and took me for a walk in the birch wood. He jumped the ditches and pools like a boy, shook the raindrops off the branches, and gave me a superb account of how Fet had explained Schopenhauer to him in this wood. He stroked the damp, satin trunks of the birches lovingly with his hand and said: "Lately I read a poem:
The mushrooms are gone but in the hollows
Is the heavy smell of mushroom dampness…
Very good, very true."

Suddenly a hare got up under our feet. Leo Nikolaevich started up excited, his face lit up, and he whooped like a real old sportsman. Then, looking at me with a curious little smile, he broke into a sensible, human laugh.

Maxim Gorky: Reminiscences of Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy, translated by S.S. Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf.

GORKY IN THE WOODS WITH TOLSTOY.

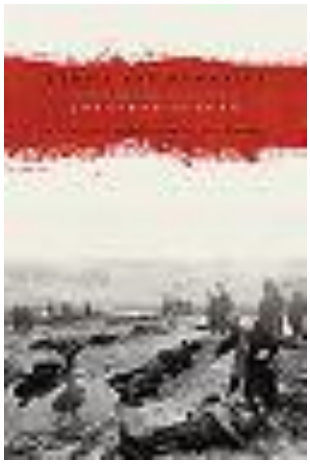
Our values are not completely insulated from episodes like the hare leaping up. Richard Keshen, commenting on an e-mail of mine about seeing two foxes behind my house in the snow, wrote, *"I know what Jonathan means by the "alien beauty" of foxes. Mary and I were out walking a few years ago and a fox appeared on our path. We looked at the fox and the fox looked at us for what seemed a long time, but was probably no more than 15 seconds. Having taken its fill of us, it turned and disappeared. After my mind refocused, I had quasi-Kantian thoughts about animals –as I often do-: they have lives as singular as our own; that they should be left to lead their lives; that their moral status rests on something deeper than the satisfaction of their interests and the avoidance of pain –the kind of intuition, I think, that pulls against the two tier view that Jeff [McMahan] so eloquently defends, or the one-tier view that Peter [Singer] makes the basis of his ethics."*

Tolstoy's grave at Yasnaya Polyana, where his brother Nikolai told him the green stick was buried.

I used to believe that there was a green stick on which words were carved that would destroy all the evil in the hearts of men and bring them everything good, and I still believe today that there is such a truth, that it will be revealed to men, and will fulfil its promise. Since my body has to be buried somewhere, I have asked that it be in that place, in memory of Nikolai.

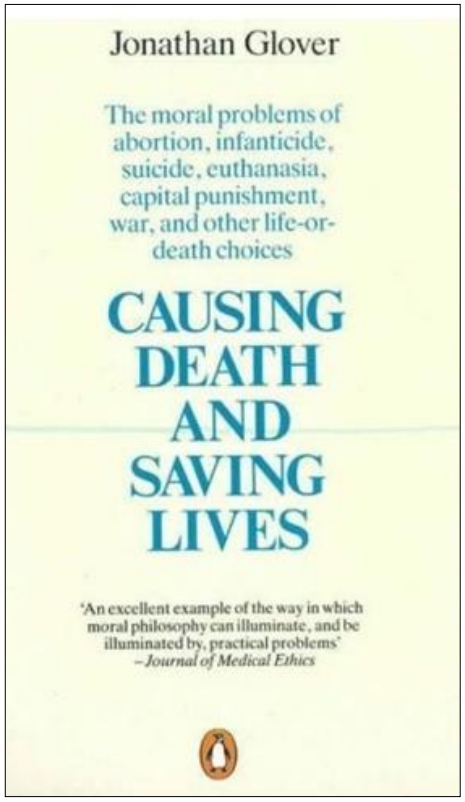
I want to be on the side both of Socrates and of Tolstoy. An attempt at this enterprise (possibly a doomed one, though I hope it is not) was my inaugural lecture at King's College London.

ADVERTISEMENT FOR MYSELF? -BUT MAINLY FOR SOME DISTINGUISHED CRITICS AND COMMENTATORS.



The title of this section of the website has been borrowed from a book edited by my friends Ann Davis, Richard Keshen and Jeff McMahan: *Ethics and Humanity, Themes from the Philosophy of Jonathan Glover*. These questions about the human and emotional strands of morality and how they interact with the rational and critical strands are a central theme of the book. As well as articles by each of the three editors, it includes articles by Allen Buchanan, Roger Crisp, James Griffin, John Harris, Thomas Hurka, Martha Nussbaum, Onora O'Neill and Peter Singer, together with my responses to the articles.

ETHICS OF LIFE AND DEATH



Causing Death and Saving Lives started with the words "Many of us find moral problems about killing difficult, and most of those who do not should do". The book was written partly because my own thinking about particular issues (abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and war) had been shaped by responses to each particular issue.

But I knew the reasons for taking a view on one of these issues had implications for the others, which I had not worked out. There were discontinuities in my thinking, which were difficult to sort out. And these discontinuities were also there in the thinking of other people, who often did not see any difficulty in them: "most of those who do not should do".

There was also a need to work out a general account of why killing was wrong, to replace the "sanctity of life" account. To a religious believer, that account –"killing people is wrong because life is sacred"- might imply that the sanctity comes from God, which would give a reason of a kind for not killing. But, for non-believers, can "life is sacred" explain, rather than merely repeat, the claim that killing people is wrong? And, if the reason for not killing people is the wrongness of taking life, it should be just as wrong to kill a mosquito. More needs to be said about the special wrongness of killing people.

The slack thinking that leaves people untroubled by the discontinuities contributes to much unnecessary death and misery. There are too many people appalled by abortion, but who support capital punishment, or who far too easily support a war. In the American election of 2004, many who voted to re-elect President Bush cited "moral values" as determining their vote. They often had Bush's opposition to abortion in mind. I wonder how many of them had opposed the Iraq war on the basis of these "moral values".

Nietzsche once spoke of someone's outlook as being his own "antipodes". The "pro-lifer" who easily supports war and capital punishment is, in this area, my antipodes. *Causing Death and Saving Lives* aimed to make such complacency a bit harder to sustain. Its central core is that we should look for a coherent approach to our life and death decisions, in which consequences for people's lives and respect for their autonomy should come before abstractions about the

sanctity of life, retribution, the dignity of the embryo, the national interest and so on.

This general approach has been taken up and developed in different directions by a number of philosophers. My version of it gave a central approach to both people's interests and to respecting their autonomy. Peter Singer then developed a version that was based purely on interests without special reference to autonomy, but extending its scope to include non-human animals. John Harris developed a version with a strong emphasis on a blend of liberty and equality. Other variants have been developed.

Perhaps the most sophisticated is the one developed in two volumes (*The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life* and *Killing in War*) by Jeff McMahan. What all these versions have in common is a rejection of any idea of the sacred, together with a shared project of basing respect for life in broader human values.

Public debate about life and death issues is often, unsurprisingly, passionate. People rightly care about these questions. But, when not rooted in thought about the underlying philosophical issues, the debates also have an angry dogmatism partly coming from intellectual insecurity. The abortion issue is striking in this respect. People passionately take sides ("pro-life" or "pro-choice" in the simplifying labels) and they so much want the issues to be simple. Hard edges, not complex gradations.

So the official doctrine of some pro-life people is that the newly fertilized egg is as much a person as you and me, and taking the morning-after pill is literally murder. And the official doctrine of some pro-choice people is that abortion is morally like removing an appendix: the only moral issue being about the woman's control of her body.

Neither of these official doctrines is remotely plausible. People are only led to believe these claims because they are taken to be essential parts of some simplifying moral package deal needed for the pro-life or pro-choice position. And probably people claiming to accept the doctrines do not fully believe them. Having to choose between saving one four year old child and ten fertilized eggs in a Petri dish, the pro-life theorist would probably do the same decent thing the rest of us would do. And a woman considering having an abortion is most unlikely to think the choice as unproblematic as one about removing an appendix. Some minimal awareness of insecurity about these official doctrines probably contributes both to the hostility shown to more complex views and to the anger and heat of the debate.

RIVAL DEMONSTRATORS.

THE BOMBING OF AN ABORTION CLINIC IN ATLANTA.

I once tried to contribute to reducing the heat and anger of the debate about abortion, and to show both sides that they had more in common about an issue more complex than they liked to think, in an article in the New York Review of Books. It was published in the mid-1980s and made reference to the then

current American politics of abortion. But it is relevant today as the underlying structure of the debate is unchanged.

Unsurprisingly, my peacemaking attempt was criticised from both sides, although I was pleased that in the end my critics on both sides and I had friendly personal exchanges.

Causing Death and Saving Lives argued that some newborn babies have such poor prospects of having a life which, from their own point of view, would be worth living, that it is not a kindness to keep them alive. Of course judgements about when this point has been reached are very difficult, but where parents and the medical team are agreed on this, the baby should be allowed to die. And where "allowing to die" is either ineffective or cruelly slow, it may be right to take positive steps to end the baby's life. This view greatly divided readers. Some thought it was right, even obviously right. Others were appalled by it. Many who had strong views one way or the other had little direct experience of the issue. (Although some on both sides who wrote to me did have direct experience. My own views came partly from close experience and partly from philosophical thought about the values involved.) I have always been struck by the way the very confident views mainly come from those remote from experience of the dilemmas, and how family members or medical teams confronting the problems are a good deal less certain about things.

There was a reminder of this when, several years ago I revisited these issues in a lecture at Great Ormond Street Hospital. The audience included some family members, some legal people involved, and many medical people whose professional lives were bound up with these problems. The topic was what should be done when the family and the medical team disagree about whether the child should be kept alive. In the discussion, that audience had an openness and a quiet seriousness unlike any other.

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3. PHILOSOPHY, BELIEFS AND CONFLICTS

We take so much on trust. We rely on the authority of experts, trusting that textbooks of chemistry or physics get things broadly right, that historians give a correct picture of at least the central chronology of the French Revolution, or that economists have at least a bit more understanding than we do of the causes of a recession. Many people take on trust much of what their parents or their society believe about morality, politics or religion. These items and others like them make up the worldview of a particular society at a given time. Often, as people get older, they notice less these spectacles through which they view the world, growing increasingly comfortable with the idea that they see the world just as it is.

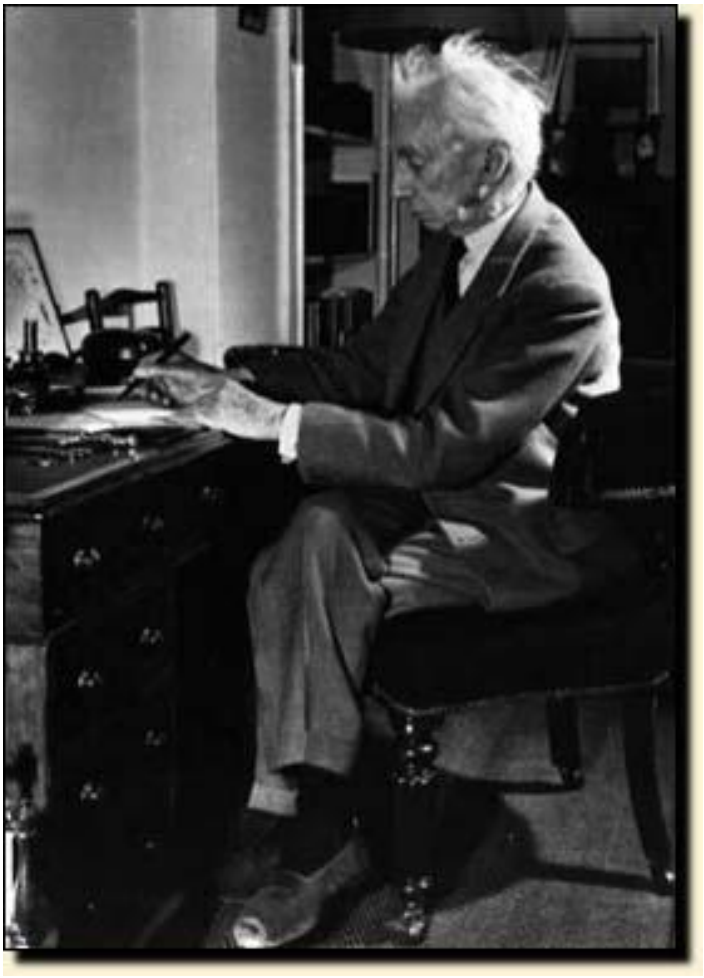
But children and young teenagers often do notice. “How do you know there is a God?” “When you see green, is it just the same for you as it is for me when I see green?” “Why is it wrong to break the law?” “Can you *prove* evolution is true?” And so on. Many of them are natural philosophers, asking questions adults have often forgotten or brushed aside as practically unimportant or unanswerable. Some teenagers are struck by the thought that, if they had lived, not in Britain but in China, or at some other time in the past or the future, they would have many different beliefs. And this leads straight to the centre of philosophy: How do I know that any of this stuff I have been taught to believe is really true?

> This teenage thought is central to a conversation Alan Ryan and I had under the auspices of the Forum for European Philosophy, at the London School of Economics. This film of the discussion also reflects the fascination our audience held for the cameraman.

Common-sense is part of the home-made ideology of those who have been deprived of fundamental learning, of those who have been kept ignorant. This ideology is compounded from different sources: items that have survived from religion, items of empirical knowledge, items of protective scepticism, items culled for comfort from the superficial learning that is supplied. But the point is that common-sense can never teach itself, can never advance beyond its own limits, for as soon as the lack of fundamental learning has been made good, all items become questionable and the whole function of common-sense is destroyed. Common-sense can only exist as a category insofar as it can be distinguished from the spirit of enquiry, from philosophy.
(John Berger: A Fortunate Man.)

Philosophers are among those who do not give up on these questions, and go on taking seriously the challenge to show which beliefs are true, or at least which

are more reasonable to accept than others. They try to work out standards that beliefs have to meet to stand a decent chance of being true. Although the standards are themselves disputed, even those that sound like platitudes often raise doubts that disconcert conventional opinion.



I wish to propose for the reader's favourable consideration a doctrine which may, I fear, appear wildly paradoxical and subversive. The doctrine in question is this: that it is undesirable to believe a proposition when there is no ground whatever for supposing it true. I must, of course, admit that if such an opinion became common it would completely transform our social life and our political system; since both are at present faultless, this must weigh against it. I am also aware (what is more serious) that it would tend to diminish the incomes of clairvoyants, bookmakers, bishops and others who live on the irrational hopes of those who have done nothing to deserve good fortune here or hereafter.
Bertrand Russell: Sceptical Essays.

You may decry some of these scruples and protest that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in my philosophy. I am concerned, rather, that there should not be more things dreamt of in my philosophy than there are

in heaven or earth.
Nelson Goodman: Fact, Fiction and Forecast.

The process of sound philosophizing, to my mind, consists mainly in passing from the obvious, vague, ambiguous things, that we feel quite sure of, to something precise, clear, definite, which by reflection and analysis we find is involved in the vague thing we start from, and is, so to speak, the real truth of which that vague thing is a sort of shadow.
Bertrand Russell: The Philosophy of Logical Atomism.

Of course many disciplines other than philosophy are concerned with sifting truth from falsehood. Each has its own standards of competence and integrity. Scientists must not fudge their experimental results, and will be found out if other groups cannot repeat their work. Historians must not quote only sources that favour their thesis. Philosophy too has its own intellectual standards (though they themselves are up for debate). The hope of progress in philosophy depends on habits of clarity, explicitness and rational argument, that together constitute philosophical competence and integrity.

I am acutely conscious of the difficulties of my views and the insufficiency of my arguments, and yet I cannot at present see any other way of describing matters which seems at all plausible. If I am mistaken in what I have said about these topics, I hope that I have at least written clearly enough to be found out quickly.
William Kneale: Probability and Induction.

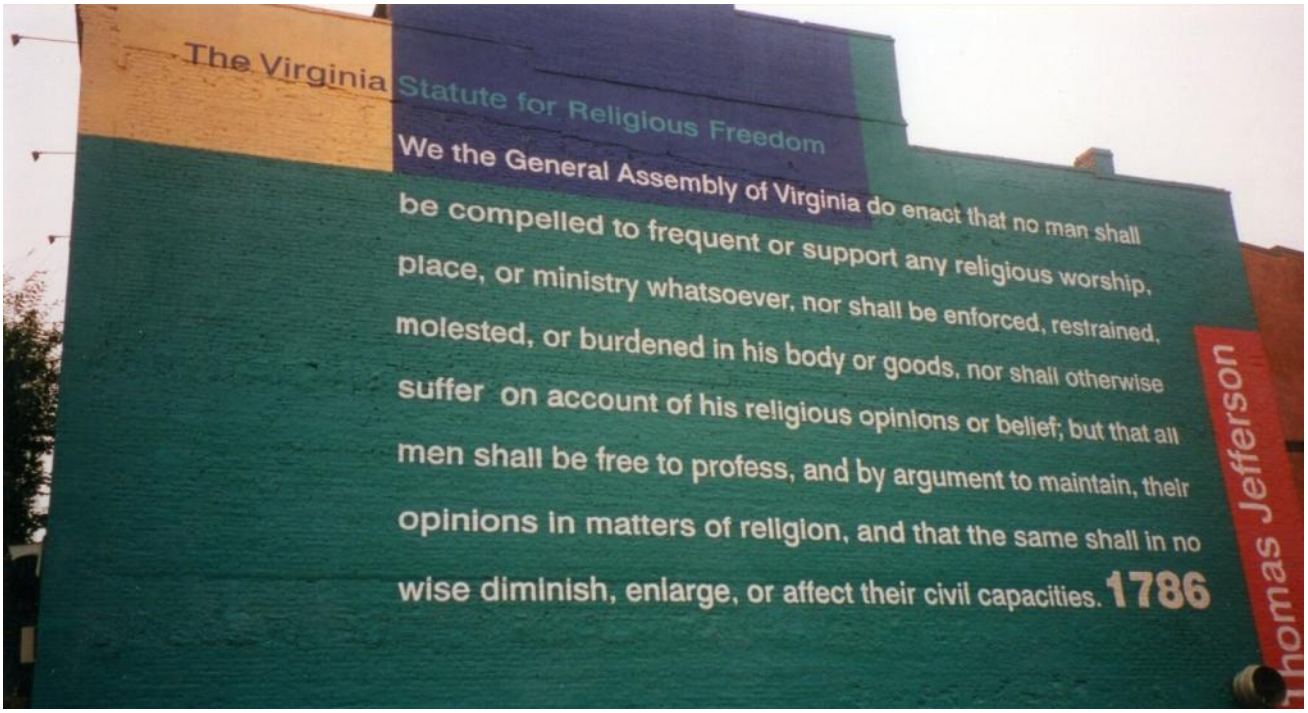
PHILOSOPHY AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN RIVAL POLITICAL OR RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEWS.

Probably most people who spend a lot of time thinking about philosophy do so because of the deep interest of the questions and the intellectual challenge their difficulty poses. But the conventional wisdom that these questions have little practical relevance is mistaken. In recent times, philosophical argument has been applied to many ethical issues: to questions about human rights and the just society, to medical ethics, to the ethics of war, to the genetic choices now becoming possible, to our treatment of animals and to environmental issues.

But there is also a case for the practical relevance of parts of philosophy other than ethics. The world is full of rival systems of political or religious belief, and these ideological conflicts sometimes lead to war or other violence.

Philosophers, at least since Socrates, have debated the relative merits of different reasons for believing something true. Yet, so far, philosophers have contributed little to the dialogue between rival believers that is surely the preferred alternative to violence. It would be a sad comment on the long history since Socrates if philosophy had nothing to contribute to the alleviation of ideological conflicts.

One merit (among obvious others) of a society where where rival beliefs are argued with rather than persecuted is that it creates the possibility of rational discussion making this kind of contribution.



THOMAS JEFFERSON: THE VIRGINIA STATUTE, ON A WALL BY A CAR PARK IN RICHMOND.

The Royal Irish Academy generously invited me to choose the topic for a one-day conference and to give the opening lecture. This gave me an opportunity to develop some thoughts on how it might be possible for philosophical discussion of the contrasts between well-founded and poorly-founded beliefs to help to reduce ideological conflict.

RIVAL NARRATIVES AND CONFLICT: TEXT OF A LECTURE, AN E-MAIL DIALOGUE, AND DVD OF ANOTHER LECTURE.

Where different "tribal" groups (whether the "tribes" are ethnic or religious or both) have been in conflict for some time, the two sides normally have rival narratives about how the conflict originated and developed and about who is to blame. For some time I have been interested in how these narratives help sustain conflicts by reinforcing negative stereotypes of the other group. In *Philosophy and the Darkness of this Time*, the five Wittgenstein lectures I gave at the University of Bayreuth in 2007, one of the lectures discussed this issue taking the Israel-Palestine conflict as an example.

When I was invited to give the Simone Weil lecture in Melbourne and Sydney in 2008, I took the opportunity to develop these ideas further.

One opportunity which the Australian invitation seemed to provide was to link up the questions about rival narratives with Simone Weil's ideas about the importance of being rooted, and I discussed links between the impact of different kinds of uprootedness, historical and present, on Israelis and Palestinians.

SIMONE WEIL.

But, while I was interested in Simone Weil's thoughts about roots, I knew much less than I should about her own history. There turned out to be a strong case for the view that the link to Simone Weil was unwise. The e-mail correspondence below, starting with a critical e-mail from the Israeli philosopher Berel Lerner,

brings out what I had to learn. Professor Lerner first came across an interview about the lecture I gave to the Australian radio programme *The Philosopher's Zone.*

I have asked Professor Lerner to introduce our correspondence.

I was flattered -and also a bit worried- when Prof. Glover asked me if he could web-publish our correspondence concerning his Simone Weil lecture. I am far from being any kind of Weil scholar and my emails were not written with the care appropriate to published work. An unfriendly reader could select sentences that sound awful when quoted out of context. Fortunately it would be very surprising if anyone thought it worthwhile to invest time on that project! There is always one more point or clarification or reconsideration to be made regarding the Arab-Israel conflict; for the moment I will exercise restraint. I hope my attack on Weil does not make me sound like a witch-hunter. After all, if we were to reject every author who has said something unfavourable about Jews or Judaism, Europe's intellectual legacy would be left in tatters.

Dear Professor Glover,

I was just listening to the podcast of your interview on the Australian "Philosopher's Zone" program. I am not entirely pleased with your take on the Arab-Israel conflict, but that is a long story; on to Simone Weil.

As a Jew and an Israeli, I find it wildly ironic to find her mentioned as a moral authority in this context. Simone Weil was, of course, born into a Jewish family. During the war she bewailed the fate of occupied France, but, as far as I know, she was never moved to any demonstration of solidarity with the 6,000,000 Jews slaughtered in those years. It has been quite a while since I read her essay on the Iliad, but I recall being taken aback by what can only be described as her intellectual antisemitism -she saw the Jewish tradition as a paradigm of chauvinist evil and insisted that all that is good and worthy in Christianity derived (but of course!) from purely Greek sources. And then there is the matter of her notorious letter to the Vichy authorities, in which she insisted that it was unfair for her to be denied employment as a Jew since she was not a Jew at all, bit rather, "mine is the Christian, French, Greek tradition".

I hope you can appreciate why it is not a little odd to suggest that Israeli Jews should learn something about the need for "rootedness" from "Saint" Simone Weil.

Best regards,

Berel Dov Lerner.

e-mail September 12, 2008.

Dear Professor Lerner,

Thank you for your message. I was on holiday in France when it came...

You obviously know more about Simone Weil than I do. I know little of her life and you may have heard me floundering a bit when unexpectedly asked about it in the Australian radio interview. If she was antisemitic this is obviously an overwhelming reason for not linking my ideas to hers. In fact I developed my thoughts on parallels between the Jewish and Palestinian experience of exile independently of Simone Weil's views. I expressed much the same thoughts in a series of Wittgenstein lectures I gave without mentioning her. But, when asked to give the Simone Weil lecture, I remembered reading her ideas on the need for roots and the consequences of uprootedness, and thought going back to them might be a useful way of linking what I had to say with the title of the lecture series. Until your message sparked my interest I had little interest in Simone Weil as a person. If she was saintly this cuts little ice with me, as it is a virtue so bound up with religious beliefs I don't share, and anyway on the whole I prefer the company of sinners to that of saints.

The force of your comments depends on the evidence for the charge of antisemitism. I have read - and mentioned in my lecture - her essay on the Iliad. When I read it, I did not notice antisemitism, but this may have been obliviousness on my part. I can't at the moment find my copy of her book (I am retiring and this has resulted in a move of thousands of my books from shelves in my office into vast numbers of bags, that are hard to sort through.) When I get hold of the book again I will re-read it with your comments in mind.

You cite two other pieces of evidence for Simone Weil's antisemitism. Both involve her refusal to identify with Jews. One of the things that make this charge in general difficult to assess comes from the familiar complexity of the concept of being a Jew. Simone Weil both was and was not a Jew. On the ancestry criterion, she had a Jewish mother and so undoubtedly was a Jew. On the religious criterion, she had converted to Christianity and so undoubtedly was not a Jew. I believe in people being free to choose their religious or non-religious affiliations, regardless of their ancestry. I had Christian ancestors and was brought up as a Christian, but have become an atheist. I find it mildly irritating if anyone describes me as a Christian on the basis of my ancestry. And I do not feel that, when a massacre of Christians and others takes place, I should protest *particularly* against the Christian deaths. What I am against is *people* being killed. These comments are probably platitudes and I suspect you may agree with them. If so, the issue is whether they do anything to exonerate Simone Weil from your criticism that she was never moved to any demonstration of solidarity with the six million Jews killed in those years. Here my own thoughts go in two different directions. On the one hand, given the horrors being inflicted on victims of whom the overwhelming majority were

Jews, and inflicted on them because they were Jews, *everyone* should have protested. That so few did is a stain, not only on Germany but on Europe as a whole. I include countries like mine, where our fathers and grandfathers fought against the Nazis, because the evil of what the Nazis were doing to Jews seems to have played too small a part in the national consciousness of what the war was about, and some policy decisions seem to have been tinged with an antisemitism sadly conventional at that time. (I have discussed this in my book *Humanity*.) So, yes, Simone Weil, like everyone else, should have spoken out, and like many others, shamefully did not. But did she have more of a duty to speak out because of her Jewish ancestry? I am not sure she did.

The other piece of evidence you cite for her antisemitism is her letter to the Vichy authorities, saying she should not be denied employment as a Jew as she was not one, but that her tradition was the Christian, French, Greek one. I did not know about this letter, and have not read it. I certainly do not like the sound of it. I am happy for her to choose whatever tradition she wants to identify with, and think that the Nazis' use of the "biological" ancestry criterion in deciding who to demonize and to murder is an additional evil aspect of what they did. But I would only think her letter acceptable if it included a protest against the discrimination against those who unambiguously were Jews. From what you say I assume it did not, and so I share your disapproval, and can see that Jews in Israel may, because of this letter, not want to take Simone Weil as someone to learn from.

You say it is "not a little odd to suggest that Israeli Jews should learn something about the need for rootedness from Simone Weil". My lecture (attached) was intended to encourage Israelis and Palestinians to think about a set of things where they might have something to learn from each other, rather than from Simone Weil. You may not agree with it, but if you decide to look at it you will get a clearer idea of its intentions than will have been given by the radio interview.

You start your e-mail by saying "I am not entirely pleased with your take on the Arab-Israeli conflict", and then move on to Simone Weil. (I wonder if it is worth making that sort of comment if you haven't time to give reasons.) The lecture will give more idea of what my "take" is. Its aim is not to make people "pleased", but to encourage people on both sides of the conflict to think again about their entrenched attitudes to it.

Thank you for taking the trouble to write and for contributing to my education about Simone Weil.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Glover.

e-mail September 13, 2008.

Dear Prof Glover,

Thank you for taking the time to answer my letter thoughtfully and at length, and for sending me the text of your lecture.

I am afraid my letter to you was a bit telegraphic and thus unclear. My main point was not to prove that Simone Weil was an antisemite but rather that she had a particularly problematic relation to her own Jewish roots. She wasn't just someone who happened to have been born into an assimilated Jewish family and came to hear reports of Jews being persecuted in some distant land. She lived in Vichy France and was personally affected by its state antisemitism. I just wanted to say that it is very ironic to suggest that Jewish Israelis learn a lesson on the need for roots from someone who so completely denied her own Jewish roots (even as her beloved fellow-Frenchmen reminded her of them!)

Was Weil an antisemite? Perhaps it was wrong of me to use that overused term. I am willing to be charitable and assume that she was not an antisemite in the technical, racial sense of the term. She did have a very low opinion of Judaism and in that sense she can be called anti-Jewish. I don't have any of her works with me ready-to-hand, but I managed to take another look at her essay on the Iliad via the "online reader" feature of the Amazon.com website. Skimming again through the end of that essay, I saw how she attributes the peculiar moral sensitivity of of the Gospels to Greek sources, while claiming that it could be found nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, except in the Book of Job. How little respect did Weil have for Judaism? Consider this quote from another essay of hers, "The Beast":

"Rome is the Great Beast of atheism and materialism, adoring nothing but itself. Israel is the Great Beast of religion. Neither one or the other is likeable. The Great Beast is always repulsive." (Pg 123 in Sian Miles's "Simone Weil: An Anthology".)

And perhaps the following has some bearing on her opinion of the Jewish right to "roots":

"Perhaps there was only one ancient people absolutely without mysticism: Rome. By what mystery? It was an artificial city, made of fugitives, just as Israel was." (Pg 24 in Miles.)

I know that these quotations refer to ancient Israel -but it is a bit creepy that they were written by someone of Jewish extraction living in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Definitely pre-Vatican II!

As for my opening line, "I am not entirely pleased with your take on the Arab-Israeli conflict." I do apologize for that; while writing the letter I had thought of addressing some other issues at length, but eventually decided to stick to the Simone Weil issue. The opening sentence was something like a mental note that somehow got typed. What was I thinking of? The Israelis are actually pretty well informed about the Palestinian narrative. Much of Israeli literature, cinema, historiography, journalism and academic research is sympathetic to Palestinian claims. It is almost as if there were no need for Palestinians to take pains to make their case: they could sit quietly on the sidelines and let the Jews do it for them!

Now for a little nit-picking. In your lecture, you wrote: "Many Jews in Jerusalem were afraid of being uprooted again". There is a part of the Old City of Jerusalem traditionally known as "the Jewish Quarter". That, of course, was inhabited by Jews before the rise of the Zionist project. (Jews also lived in the "Moslem Quarter".) On May 28th, 1948 the Jewish Quarter was captured by the Jordanian army and its inhabitants were forcibly expelled. Those Jews of the Old City were not newcomers to Jerusalem, they were not refugees who had been recently uprooted, "afraid of being uprooted again". Many of them belonged to long established Jerusalemite families, and they did not merely suffer fear of being uprooted -they actually were uprooted by the Arab forces.

More nit-picking. I noticed that in your lecture that you repeated the claim made by an unsuccessful suicide bomber that, "Soldiers had tried to strip her naked at a checkpoint and danced around with her as if she were an inflatable sex toy."

Notice that by her own account the soldiers did not strip her -they only tried to- and she felt they treated her as if she were an inflatable sex toy by "dancing around with her" -I do not have any first hand experience with such things, but I am pretty sure that such dolls are not usually used as dance partners. Could it be that this account does not accurately describe what the soldiers were actually up to?

I can appreciate that this woman felt very humiliated and I do not deny that the soldiers might have wilfully mistreated her. But I also must say that she sounds as if she is describing some kind of search that was made on her body against her will. (As far as I know, women are always searched in private by woman soldiers unless there is some immanent danger of a bombing. When a suicide bomber was on the loose in my own neighbourhood a few years ago, several members of my kibbutz who were working in the fields at that time were required to strip search when soldiers were unsure of their identities.)

So: in your radio interview, a unique report (and one lacking a source in your lecture transcript) of an incomplete sexual-assault (which actually sounds very

much like an account of the humiliation felt by a woman who had resisted being searched at a checkpoint) morphs into:

"And this is very parallel to the humiliations that Palestinians now describe in the Occupied Territories, being taunted by Israeli soldiers, women being humiliated, being treated as sex toys, forced to kiss Arab men and so on."

To me it sounds as if you were saying on the radio that Palestinian women being treated "as sex toys" is a widespread phenomenon and indicative of the general situation on the ground. The problem is that the soldiers who man those checkpoints are also human beings and they deserve to be protected from libel - even if it means that one might have to do without an especially "juicy" accusation.

Best regards,

Berel Lerner.

e-mail September 14, 2008.

Dear Professor Lerner,

Thanks for this response.

I agree about the irony of "a lesson on the need for roots from someone who so completely denied her own Jewish roots".

I too dislike the "Great Beast" rhetoric. It certainly does not sound friendly to ancient Israel, and as you say in Europe in the mid-century such comments take on a creepy note. Also, a philosopher should write clearly and without rant. The rhetoric reminds me of signs I saw in Iran about "America the Great Satan". It is rant, and whatever point she is making is very unclear.

Thanks for your explanation of your "not pleased" mental note. I agree that there is among some groups in Israel great understanding of the Palestinian narrative. As you are a philosopher you will know my friends Noam Zohar, David Heyd and Yuli Tamir. When I was in Jerusalem a couple of months ago, I only saw Yuli briefly, but I spent a lot of time with David and Noam, and was constantly struck by their sensitivity to the "other side's" narrative. (In fact both helped me enormously in my visit to Ramallah to meet friends of one of my students who is strongly on the Palestinian side and believed my teaching in our global ethics course was biased in favour of Israel.) I have also read Israeli historians who are acutely aware of the Palestinian narrative, and (e.g.) some of Avishai Margalit's articles in the New York Review of Books. So, if I seemed to suggest that all Israelis needed to hear the Palestinian narrative, this did not reflect my actual view. But I do think that quite a few on both sides do need to

listen more sympathetically to the "other" narrative. Again, we can't usefully say much about "the Israelis" or "the Palestinians", each of which encompasses many different groups.

On your "nit-picking" points. The first one I absolutely accept. Jews who had lived in Jerusalem for centuries feared being uprooted rather than being uprooted "again". I was thinking of Amos Oz's account in his autobiography, and thinking of his family having left Russia and Poland. It was sloppy if I gave the impression that for everyone Jewish it was a question of being uprooted again. On the point about actually being uprooted rather than just fearing it, I did mention Jewish villagers being massacred.

I am less persuaded by your second "nit-picking" point. Neither you nor I (nor, I guess, the woman who made the point) would claim expertise on inflatable sex toys. Probably people don't dance with them, so the analogy may be a bit off the mark. But what she actually says is that the soldiers danced around with her, and I feel that your gloss on this -that they were attempting to search her body- seems to underplay the accusation I see in her words that they were treating her as a sex object and intentionally humiliating her. Of course, anyone's testimony may be -either intentionally or unintentionally- misleading, and so it cannot just be assumed to be correct. But this is a problem for any of us who try to get a picture of any political situation. We have to listen to testimony of people about their experiences, listening either for the ring of truth or for the false note and sometimes not being sure we hear either. You and I have different hunches about how to read this woman's account. We are not very far apart, as you say that you don't deny that the soldiers may have wilfully mistreated her. But on our different hunches we both have a problem. I think my interpretation is more plausible than yours, but you think yours is more plausible than mine. We both know that the question of how plausibility should be judged is very complex and difficult, so perhaps we should not have that conversation by e-mail but save it for a conversation if we ever meet in person. I am sorry I did not give a source for the woman's story in my lecture. It comes from Sari Nusseibeh's autobiography, where he quotes someone else's report of interviews, which he does not reference. I meant to try to track down the original source and refer to that, but have not done so.

On your objection to my radio interview's interpretation, I think I stand by the substance of what I said. On my interpretation of her words, she was humiliatingly treated as a sex object, rather than just searched. So, with the substitution of "sex object" for "sex toy", I think it reasonable to say what I did. My point was that humiliation is widespread and I gave being treated as a sex object as one example. It does not imply that being treated as a sex object is a widespread phenomenon, but is one episode cited as part of the case for saying that humiliation is common. I am not out to libel people, Israeli soldiers or

anyone else. While writing the lecture, I had in mind the thing Amos Oz says at the start of "Help Us To Divorce", that Europeans discussing this conflict are often pointing accusing fingers at one side or the other and he thinks this inappropriate. So I was not out to make accusations. But, of course, the two narratives are full of accusations, and to discuss these narratives requires mention of some of them. I don't accept that victims of humiliation, like this woman (or victims of Palestinian suicide bombing policy) should be denied a hearing in order to avoid any danger of libelling people on the other side. And - the one point where I felt pained by your comments- I am not only not making accusations, but am certainly not looking for "an especially juicy accusation". (What sort of person do you think I am?)

So: some agreement and some continuing disagreement. Perhaps the best we can hope for on these contentious topics? I appreciate your seriousness and the trouble you have taken. I have learnt from you and hope we may meet some day and have a friendly conversation about our disagreements.

With best wishes,

Jonathan

e-mail September 15, 2008.

Dear Jonathan (if I may...),

Well I certainly appreciate the time you have taken to respond to my letters and the pleasant fashion in which you did so. Here I've been corresponding with Jonathan Glover - rattling the skeletons in Simone Weil's closet instead of thinking of something brilliant to ask or say about bioethics (not that I have anything particularly brilliant to say about bioethics at the moment).

I would like to offer a small bit of explanation in connection with "juicy accusations". You asked "What sort of person do you think I am?" And I would answer: "A really nice guy". However, the "juicy accusations" problem is omnipresent in contemporary culture. (Maybe it is even part of "human nature"?) Even the most conscientious among us can only steer clear of it by constant vigilance, and all of us fall into its trap from time to time.

So, next time you are in Israel, perhaps we can meet? In the meantime let me thank you again for your calm and thoughtful responses to my grumblings.

Best regards,

Berel.

P.S. If you are interested in reading something about my own "situation in the middle east" a partial picture can be gathered from an interview I gave this year , available at http:www.jewishdesmoines.org/page.aspx?id=168479.

e-mail September 18, 2008.

Dear Berel,

Thank you for ending this correspondence on such a friendly note. I very much hope we can meet when I am next in Israel. (Or if you are ever in London.) I liked your interview, especially the complexity of your attitudes and your teaching, and the thoughts on Athens v Jerusalem. I am almost entirely an Athens person, but rather fell in love with Jerusalem when Noam Zohar and David Heyd showed me round. I have mentioned our correspondence to both of them, and would like to ask if I can show it to them? I don't think that either of us need be embarrassed by anything we said, but I appreciate that you wrote as a private correspondent and so may prefer it to remain that way, which I will of course respect.

At the start I was rather daunted by this obviously well informed Israeli sending a blast of possibly merited disapproval. So it is nice that at the end I am looking forward one day to meeting you and with luck becoming your friend.

Warmest wishes,

Jonathan

e-mail September 18, 2008.

Dear Jonathan,

Actually after my first letter I started worrying that I sounded like an anti-antisemitic witch-hunter; when I originally read some of Simone's writings they really rubbed me the wrong way and I guess I never got over it. Nevertheless, I suppose what I wrote wasn't too embarrassing, so feel free to share it with others. I would be surprised if David Heyd or Noam Zohar know who I am, but they may have some interest in our correspondence.

I also look forward one day to meeting you and with luck becoming your friend.

Best regards,

Berel

e-mail September 18, 2008.

Dear Berel,

Thanks,

Jonathan

Having been persuaded that Simone Weil was not going to be helpful in the minefield of the Israel-Palestine conflict, I developed the same ideas without reference to her in a lecture at the Philosophy Department at the University of East Anglia, here introduced by Professor Tim O'Hagan. The occasion was notable for the quality of the questions asked. (Unfortunately not always matched by the auditory quality of the questions as picked up in the film.) There were perceptive questions that were demanding to answer. And there were questions from both supporters of Israel and supporters of Palestine, sometimes with an impressive openness to the experience of those on the other side.

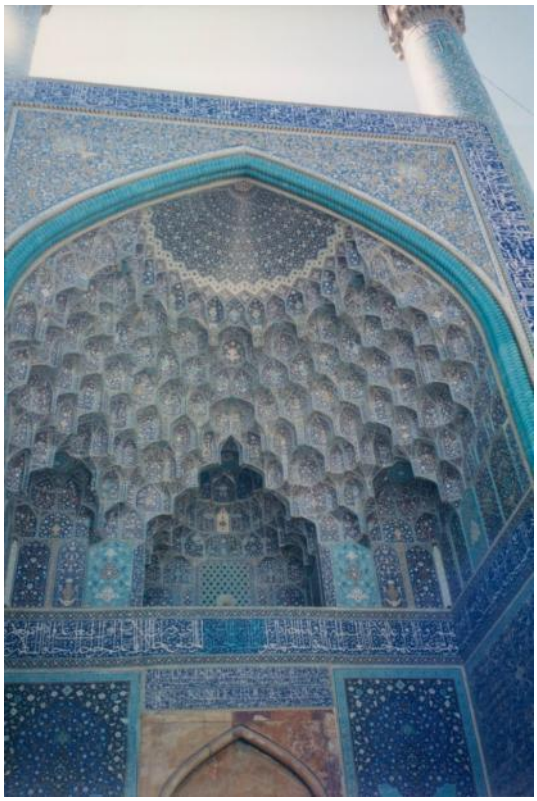
Similar issues were discussed more informally in the conversation with Alan Ryan at the London School of Economics.

A NOTE OF CAUTION: TWO ATTEMPTS AT DIALOGUE

Teheran

In about 1990, through the support of three American philosopher friends, Dan Wikler and Bill and Sally Ruddick, I was invited to go with them to a medical ethics conference in Teheran. The conference was called “Medical Ethics under Allah”. The fact that I do not believe in the existence of Allah (or of any other version of God) might seem a large disqualification. The title I was asked to speak on was wildly optimistic: “How to choose between competing ethical theories”. To answer that, just being *underneath* Allah might not be enough: one might have to *be* Allah. But my curiosity to hear how medical ethics was

discussed in Iran, together with my enthusiasm for dialogue with those of different beliefs, overcame any doubts I had on these grounds. I also had an intense curiosity to see Teheran and (especially) Isfahan, and loved the idea of such an interesting trip in such congenial company.



WOMEN AND MOSQUES, ISFAHAN.

There was another, more serious, obstacle to accepting the invitation: the Satanic Verses affair. Ayatollah Khomeini had issued a fatwa calling on Muslims to kill Salman Rushdie.

I had a tiny personal link to Salman Rushdie, not one that he would remember, but which left me a small debt of gratitude. We had both been at a conference on "The Real Me" at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. (Rather improbably, a talk of mine about self-creation and personal identity was replied to by Salman Rushdie and Oliver Sacks. I think I went partly through being flattered by this unlikely turn of events.)

Part of my theme was the way your life can be seen as a novel in which you are both a character and the author, and I talked about Proust. In Salman Rushdie's reply, he rightly reminded me that many of the world's poor are too busy trying to stay alive to have much time for self-creation. Several people in the audience did not like what I said, and one accused me of thinking of the novel purely in terms of outdated narrative in the style of nineteenth century novelists like Tolstoy. I have been forever grateful that, before I could reply, Salman Rushdie said, "*We novelists* admire those nineteenth century writers like Tolstoy".

But, even without this debt of gratitude, how could I speak at a conference in Teheran, in the presence of some of the Ayatollahs who ran the regime that had a death threat out against one of my fellow-citizens, as if none of this had happened? When I said I would have to oppose the fatwa, my family were aghast. They thought I would do nothing for Salman Rushdie and might also be locked up for years in an Iranian prison. They did not want me to go at all if it involved speaking out.

We reached a compromise I am not altogether proud of. When not on the podium, I would, and did, make my own objections clear and also tell people that there would be no better relations with Britain while this incitement to murder remained. I promised my family that, in my talk, I would not use the words “Salman Rushdie”, “Satanic Verses” or fatwa. But in my talk I did argue that “choosing between competing ethical theories” required the methods of Socrates. It also requires freedom of speech even for those whose ideas we find shocking. I reminded them of the huge mistake the Athenians made when they executed Socrates because they found what he said shocking. Looking back, I wish I had spoken in a less coded style. In one way I was pleased that the Ayatollah chairing my session gave my talk a notably frosty reception, as this

suggested the message had come across. But my invitation to discuss our differences openly in a friendly spirit met with no response.

After the bombs in Iraq and London

A GIRL VICTIM OF THE 2003 BOMBING OF IRAQ.

A WOMAN AND A BOY AT THE MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF THE LONDON BOMBS.

After the bombing of the London bus and underground system on July 7 2005, one public opinion poll reported that nearly a third of British Muslims agreed with the statement that “Western civilization is decadent and immoral and that Muslims should seek to bring it to an end”. 1% supported using violent means if necessary, while 32% thought only peaceful means should be used. The number of British Muslims was at that time estimated to be about 1.6 million. There are problems about interpreting opinion polls. But, if the poll was reliable, there were at that time around 16,000 Muslims who were prepared to give at least verbal support to using violence, and over half a million who thought that peaceful means should be used to end the decadent and immoral Western civilization.

In a country where half a million people say the decadent and immoral way of life of the others should be brought to an end, people need to talk to each other. I wrote an article in the Guardian saying this.

The dialogue advocated was a Socratic one, with each side listening to, but also challenging, the beliefs of the other. For a few days I was inundated with e-mails, the great majority supportive, but with a substantial hostile minority, mainly from the United States and Canada, some mentioning Chamberlain and unable to distinguish between “dialogue” and “appeasement”. Among the e-mails was one from Sheikh Haitham Haddad. He is a Sheikh from Saudi Arabia and also Imam of a London mosque. He thought that many who spoke for Muslims on television had a watered down, liberal version of the religion. He suggested that a debate with him would be about the real thing.

Both of us wanted our dialogue to show that deep disagreements need not lead to personal hostility, and to show how respectful discussion can be an alternative to violence. But we also wanted not to evade the range and depth of our differences. So we each came with a list of challenges, in his case challenges to Western liberal society, in my case to some things done in the name of Islam. His was mainly a charge sheet of moral and social breakdown: the high levels of crime and violence; the tolerance of pornography; the erosion of the traditional family through unmarried cohabitation and parenthood, and through the rising divorce rate. My list was mainly about inequality (the position of women and gays); about the lack of freedom of thought (the death penalty for Muslims who change their mind about the religion); and about cruel punishments (stoning women to death for adultery).

Our meeting in King's College London was called "After the Bombs". We made it clear that Sheikh Haitham opposed the bombing of the London transport system and that I opposed the bombing of Iraq. The audience was students (some from the Global Ethics course I teach on and some from the Muslim Students) and members of the public. Our meeting advertised dialogue as an alternative to violence. We listened and tried to answer carefully each other's points. The audience joined in on both sides. The atmosphere was friendly. But in another way we did not succeed. There was no move towards convergence of view: if anything, our differences were reinforced. On the death penalty for people who give up Islam, Sheikh Haitham said that in the West treason can be punishable by death, and that to Muslims abandoning Islam is treason. I understood the thinking but was appalled by it. No doubt he was as appalled by what I said about gay marriage and other matters.

I have hopes about the long-term contribution of philosophy to a shared understanding of the world and of how we should live. I mention these two attempts at dialogue, and their failure in different ways to move towards convergence, as an empirical corrective to over-optimism about those hopes.

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4. THE LIGHT AND THE DARK IN HUMAN NATURE

THE DARK SIDE, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

In his book, *Peacemaking Among Primates*, Frans de Waal passes on a striking story told to him by a German ethologist who worked among very primitive tribes in the inaccessible highlands of New Guinea. Two village heads were given a flight in an aeroplane. They asked for a side door to be kept open, despite being told this would make them very cold, as they were wearing nothing but their penis sheaths. Then they said they wanted to bring two heavy stones on the flight. They explained that they wanted to drop the stones on an enemy village. The ethologist realised that he had been present at the invention of bombing by Neolithic man.

The subject matter of the *Iliad* is a grim and protracted war with deaths and horrors often described in detail. Simone Weil was right to call it a "poem of force". The continuities with events in out own time are depressing for those of us who wonder if war and cruelty are too deeply rooted in our nature to be eliminated. But the poem -especially in the description of the shield his mother has ordered to be made for Achilles- amid the dark of war also celebrates the light. It gives a sense of the beauty and richness of life: of laden vineyards, of wedding dances, music, ploughing and harvesting.

And first Hephaestus makes a great and massive shield, blazoning well-wrought emblems across its surface…

And across its vast expanse with all his craft and cunning
The god creates a world of gorgeous immortal work.

There he made the earth and there the sky and the sea
And the inexhaustible blazing sun and the moon rounding full
And the constellations, all that crown the heavens…

And he forged on the shield two noble cities filled
with mortal men. With weddings and wedding feasts in one
and under glowing torches they brought forth the brides
from the women's chambers, marching through the streets
while choir on choir the wedding song rose high
and the young men came dancing, whirling round in rings…

And he forged a fallow field, broad rich plowland
tilled for the third time, and across it crews of plowmen
wheeled their teams, driving them up and back and soon

as they'd reach the end-strip, moving into the turn,
a man would run up quickly
and hand them a cup of honeyed, mellow wine
as the crews would turn back down along the furrows,
pressing again to reach the end of the deep fallow field
and the earth churned black behind them, like earth churning,
solid gold it was –that was the wonder of Hephaestus' work.

And he forged a king's estate where harvesters labored,
reaping the ripe grain, swinging their whetted scythes.
Some stalks fell in line with the reapers, row on row,
And others the sheaf-binders girded round with ropes,
Three binders standing over the sheaves, behind the
boys gathering up the cut swaths, filling their arms,
supplying grain to the binders, endless bundles…

And he forged a thriving vineyard loaded with clusters,
bunches of lustrous grapes in gold, ripening deep purple
and climbing vines shot up on silver vine poles…

And there among them a young boy plucked his lyre,
so clear it could break the heart with longing,
and what he sang was a dirge for the dying year,
lovely… his fine voice rising and falling low
as the rest followed, all together, frisking, singing,
shouting, their dancing footsteps beating out the time…

And the crippled Smith brought all his art to bear
on a dancing circle, broad as the circle Daedalus
once laid out on Cnossos' spacious fields
for Ariadne the girl with lustrous hair.
Here young boys and girls, beauties courted
with costly gifts of oxen, danced and danced,
linking their arms, gripping each other's wrists…

And now they would run in rings on their skilled feet,
nimbly, quick as a crouching potter spins his wheel,
palming it smoothly, giving it practice twirls
to see it run, and now they would run in rows,
in rows crisscrossing rows –rapturous dancing.
A breathless crowd stood round them struck with joy
and through them a pair of tumblers dashed and sprang,
whirling in leaping handsprings, leading on the dance…

Now,
when the famous crippled Smith had finished off
that grand array of armor, lifting it in his arms
he laid it all at the feet of Achilles' mother Thetis-
and down she flashed like a hawk from snowy Mount Olympus
bearing the brilliant gear, the god of fire's gift.

Homer: "The Iliad", translated by Robert Fagles, Viking Penguin, 1990. Reprinted by permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc.

In deliberate contrast, W.H. Auden's great poem on the atrocities of our modern world has a shield that portrays "quite another scene".

The Shield of Achilles.

She looked over his shoulder
For vines and olive trees,
Marble well-governed cities
And ships upon untamed seas,
But there on the shining metal
His hands had put instead
An artificial wilderness
And a sky like lead.

A plain without a feature, bare and brown,
No blade of grass, no sign of neighbourhood,
Nothing to eat and nowhere to sit down,
Yet, congregated on its blankness, stood

An unintelligible multitude.
A million eyes, a million boots in line,
Without expression, waiting for a sign.

Out of the air a voice without a face
Proved by statistics that some cause was just
In tones as dry and level as the place:
No-one was cheered and nothing was discussed;
Column by column in a cloud of dust
They marched away enduring a belief
Whose logic brought them, somewhere else, to grief.

She looked over his shoulder
For ritual pieties,
White flower-garlanded heifers,
Libation and sacrifice,
But there on the shining metal
Where the altar should have been,
She saw by his flickering forge-light
Quite another scene.

Barbed wire enclosed an arbitrary spot
Where bored officials lounged (one cracked a joke)
And sentries sweated for the day was hot:
A crowd of ordinary decent folk
Watched from without and neither moved nor spoke
As three pale figures were led forth and bound
To three posts driven upright in the ground.

The mass and majesty of this world, all
That carries weight and always weighs the same
Lay in the hands of others; they were small
And could not hope for help and no help came:
What their foes liked to do was done, their shame
Was all the worst could wish; they lost their pride
And died as men before their bodies died.

She looked over his shoulder
For athletes at their games,
Men and women in a dance
Moving their sweet limbs
Quick, quick, to music,
But there on the shining shield
His hands had set no dancing-floor
But a weed-choked field.

A ragged urchin, aimless and alone,
Loitered about that vacancy, a bird
Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone:
That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third,
Were axioms to him, who'd never heard
Of any world where promises were kept,
Or one could weep because another wept.

The thin-lipped armourer,
Hephaestos hobbled away,
Thetis of the shining breasts
Cried out in dismay
At what the God had wrought
To please her son, the strong
Iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles
Who would not live long.

W.H. Auden.

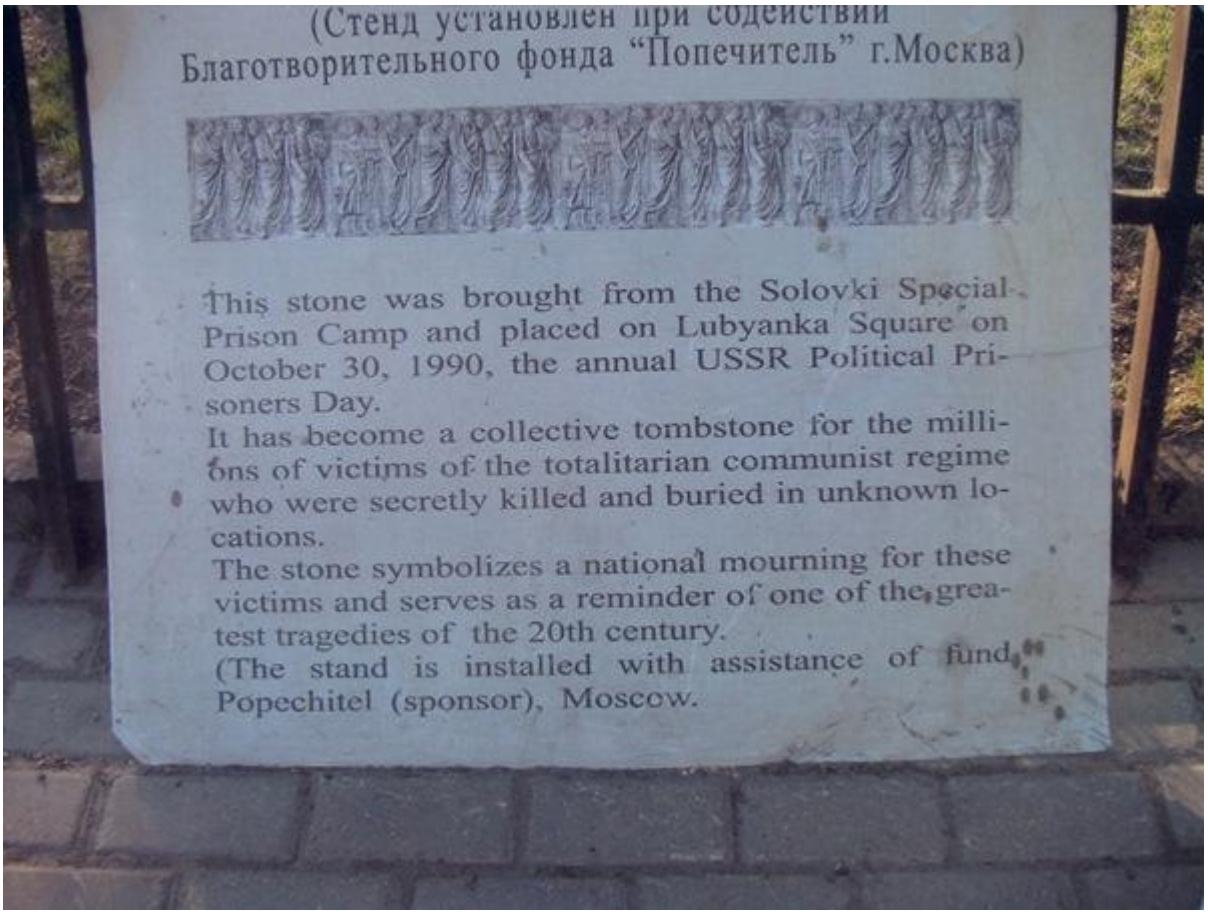
THE LUBIANKA PRISON WAS A PLACE OF TORTURE AND DEATH IN STALIN'S MOSCOW.

TODAY THE VICTIMS' STORY IS TOLD IN THE MEMORIALS OPPOSITE THE LUBIANKA.

можно получить в обществе "Мемориал" по адресу: г.Москва, Малый Каретный переулок, д.12.

(Стенд установлен при содействии Благотворительного фонда "Попечитель" г.Москва)

During the years of terror, over 40,000 people were shot in Moscow on groundless political charges. Their bodies were buried in the cemetery of the Yauza Hospital (now Hospital 23) from 1921-1926, at Vagankovo cemetery from 1926-1935, and cremated at the Moscow (Donskoi) Crematorium from 1934 until at least the early 1950s. Beginning in 1937, two NKVD execution sites in Moscow neighborhoods (Butovo and Kommunarka collective farm) were also used as burial places.
More detailed information on this subject is available at the Memorial Society in Moscow at: 12 Maly Karetny pereulok.
(The stand is installed with assistance of fund Popechitel (sponsor), Moscow.



OTHER MOSCOW MEMORIALS ARE IN THE GARDEN OF FALLEN HEROES.

THE MANICHEANS, AND FREUD'S FATEFUL QUESTION.

It is obvious that humans have the potential to do terrible things to each other. But we have another side too. The early Christian "Manichean heresy" saw the world as a continuing struggle between the light and the dark. When interpreted, not as a metaphysical struggle between the forces of God and the Devil, but as a psychological conflict inside us, the view is very plausible. Will the dark side prevail, perhaps destroying us all? Or can we leave war and atrocity behind us? Or will the struggle between the two never end?

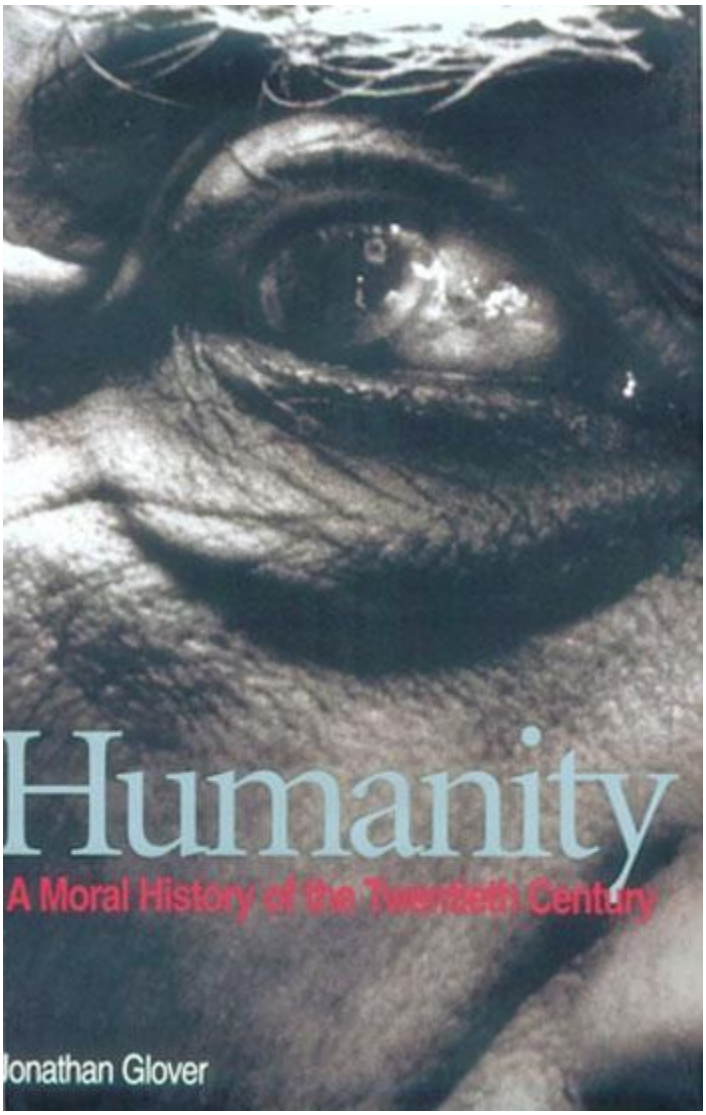
Only part of us is sane: only part of us loves pleasure and the longer day of happiness, wants to live to our nineties and die in peace, in a house that we built, that shall shelter those that come after us. The other half of us is nearly mad... and wants to die in a catastrophe that will set back life to its beginnings and leave nothing of our house save its blackened foundations. Our bright natures fight in us with this yeasty darkness, and neither part is commonly quite victorious, for we are divided against ourselves and will not let either part be destroyed.

Rebecca West: Black Lamb and Grey Falcon.

The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction.

Sigmund Freud: Civilization and its Discontents.

Some reflections on the psychological lessons that can be derived from the darker side of twentieth century history: They are linked to the project undertaken in *Humanity, a Moral History of the Twentieth Century.*



One was an interview on a Boston radio station, in a programme called "The Connection", notable for the wide-ranging and thoughtful questions of the interviewer Christopher Lydon:

Dr. Gwen Adshead, a psychiatrist working in Broadmoor Hospital, and I were interviewed together by Melvyn Bragg in his BBC radio programme *In Our Time.* One theme of Melvyn Bragg's questions was the relationship between the possible historical, social and psychological explanations I had suggested for the great collective atrocities such as genocide and what a psychiatrist such as Gwen Adshead could learn from studying her patients about the causes of murder and other violent crimes carried out by individuals.

Explanations of the great atrocities were also discussed in this unedited material for a filmed interview with David Hulme of the magazine *Vision*. His questions

came partly from his own religious perspective. I was stimulated by the challenge of articulating what we disagree about and at the same time exploring how much common ground we have.

TERROR, THE "WAR ON TERROR", ATROCITIES AND TORTURE.

Here are a few attempts to respond to some recent atrocities. The first is a comment on how atrocities carried out indiscriminately against groups, whether terrorist bombing or indiscriminate shelling or bombing by military forces, are justified by those who order them or those who carry them out. Often the justifications rest on an illusion of collective responsibility. I wrote about this in a Festschrift for Amartya Sen:

The Illusion of Collective Responsibility.

Especially when we are remembering some harm or humiliation inflicted on "us", we are prey to the illusion of collective responsibility. "They" (all of them!) have these bad characteristics, which were expressed in what they did to us, and so they are all responsible. They all deserve what they get as a result.

The illusion is found in the leaders. When Osama bin Laden celebrates 9/11, it is "America" whose nose is rubbed in the dirt. But is it likely that, of the some 3,000 people he killed, all were supporters of American government interventions in the Islamic world? Did the Islamic Americans he killed deserve to have their noses "rubbed in the dirt"? What about the 86 people he killed who came from Japan, Colombia, Jamaica, Mexico and the Philippines? The celebration depends on belief in collective responsibility, which in turn depends on not asking these questions about the actual people who get killed.

And when President Bush targeted Afghanistan and Iraq as part of his "war on terror", he was delivering on his promise that the people who knocked these buildings down "will hear us all soon". But how many of the more than 3,000 Afghan civilians killed does this fit? Were there really more people in the 9/11 conspiracy than were killed by it? And the more than 600,000 people, according to some estimates, killed as a result of the Iraq war obviously were not all involved, and perhaps none of them were. Of course other motives were in play... But one reason for early American support of the war was that it was hitting back at Iraq's supposed implication in al-Qaeda terrorism. Among the false beliefs behind this thinking was the illusion of collective responsibility.

This illusion is found not only in the leaders, but also in those who carry out the supposed acts of retribution. It is found in the videotape made by Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the terrorist bombers who struck London on 7 July 2005. He was both British and Islamic, but his words made it clear that his chosen

identity was Islamic rather than British. "You" are the people of Britain and other Western countries involved in the Iraq war. "We" are Islamic people.

He said,

our words have no impact upon you, therefore I'm going to talk to you in a language that you understand. Our words are dead until we give them life with our blood... Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetrate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation.

The illusion of collective responsibility is linked to the idea that all members of the other group have shared (usually negative) characteristics. Here "you" (British people) are all impervious to the words of Islamic people and so "blood" is chosen as "a language you understand". "Your" support of governments perpetrating atrocities against Islamic people "makes you directly responsible".

With his bomb at Edgware Road Station, Mohammad Sidique Khan killed (apart from himself) six people. One question he might have asked about his potential victims is whether some of them might have been British and *Islamic. Another is whether it was likely that all those he killed would be among the minority in Britain who supported the Iraq war. Another is whether the "you" he holds "directly responsible" would include those who took part in London's (largest ever) political demonstration: the one against that war just before it started. The illusion of collective responsibility does not easily survive such questions.*

The same illusion helps bring about the kinds of action that fed Mohammad Sidique Khan's resentment. American troops back from Iraq have started to describe atrocities in which some of them participated. According to one report,

The mounting frustration of fighting an elusive enemy and the devastating effect of roadside bombs, with their steady toll of American dead and wounded, led many troops to declare open war on all Iraqis. Veterans described reckless firing once they left their compounds. Some shot holes into cans of gasoline being sold along the roadside and then tossed grenades into the pools of gas to set them ablaze. Others opened fire on children.

Some of the soldiers were troubled when, back in America, they thought about how they had felt and acted. One said that the general attitude was "A dead Iraqi is just another dead Iraqi" and explained this: "The soldiers honestly

thought we were trying to help the people and they were mad because it was almost like a betrayal. Like here we are trying to help you, here I am, you know, thousands of miles away from home and my family, and I have to be here for a year and work every day on these missions. Well, we're trying to help you and you just turn around and try to kill us."...

The illusion of collective responsibility behind waging open war on all Iraqis... again relies on the collective "you". Again the illusion would not survive such questions as whether the children fired on are really part of the "you" who "just turn round and try to kill us".

The cycle of humiliation and retaliation, together with the linked illusion of collective responsibility, has marked the current conflict. Prisoners of one side may be beheaded, with the atrocity broadcast to the world. Prisoners of the other side may have their religion insulted and may themselves be tortured and sexually humiliated. It is easy to understand the feelings on each side of rage and vengeance. It is less easy to see how to break out of this cycle, created by those on both sides who do not understand how it works.

From *Identity, Violence and the Power of Illusion*, in Kaushik Basu and Ravi Kanbur (eds.): *Arguments for a Better World, Essays in Honor of Amartya Sen,* Volume 2: *Society, Institutions and Development,* Oxford University Press, 2009.

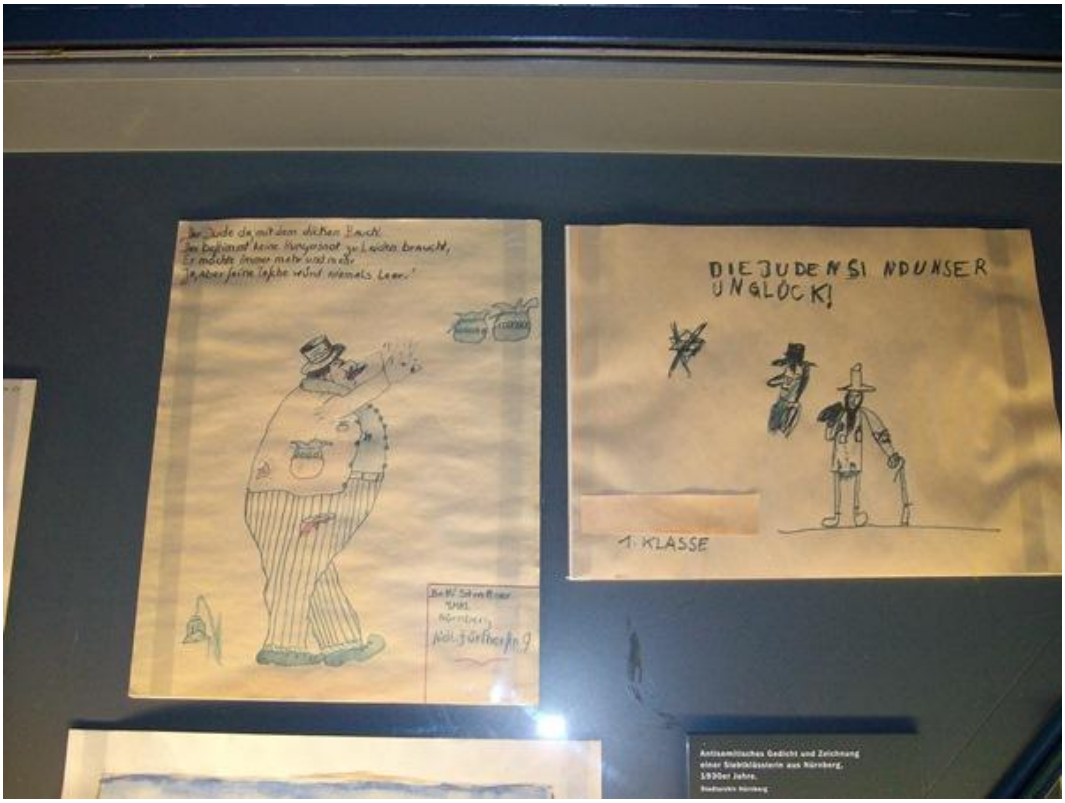
Another response to atrocity was an article requested by the *New York Times* at the time of Abu Ghraib. Despite having given the impression that it would definitely be published, they decided not to publish it, preferring a (quite good) "human interest" article on Abu Ghraib as an example of how pocket-size cameras have increased the role of photography in recording atrocities.

Another of the great moral issues of recent times has been the revival of the view that the use of torture may sometimes be acceptable. I had a chance to reflect on this when invited jointly by the Philosophy Department of University College London and by the British Humanist Association to give their annual Bentham Lecture.

MAKING GENOCIDE EASIER: PROPAGANDA THAT CUTS OFF HUMAN RESPONSES.

Most of us are familiar with the role of hate propaganda in helping make atrocities possible. But the general familiarity does not always deaden the shock on coming across a particular item of it. In Nuremberg, the Parteitag Building has been turned into a Museum dedicated to keeping alive the memory of how Nazi atrocities were facilitated by propaganda such as the huge rallies for which the building was created. Despite the familiarity of the rallies, the

exhibition is still powerful. Some items surprise as well as shock. One item is a series of quite young schoolchildren's essays and drawings on such themes as "The Jews are our Misfortune". The contents are horrifying. The teachers have corrected such things as spelling mistakes. But they have either agreed with or acquiesced in the sentiments, which are not criticized.



THE FRAGMENTATION OF RESPONSIBILITY: THE NAZI GENOCIDE, HIROSHIMA AND GLOBAL WARMING.

Modern collective atrocities are greatly facilitated by the way the social and technological complexity of modern society hooks on to an aspect of our psychology.

One of the barriers to killing or torturing people is the sense people have of their own moral identity: "I do not want to be the kind of person who murders or tortures people". But because modern industrial atrocities involve large numbers of people, who each play only a small role, no-one need feel that *they* are responsible for what is done. "I am not a murderer. I only drove a train."

The fragmentation of responsibility creates in participants illusions that each of them is doing no harm to anyone. This is clear in the case of such atrocities as the Nazi genocide or Hiroshima. But it applies equally to issues like global warming. Most of us know that, because much electricity comes from sources

that add to CO2 emissions, it is important to cut down on our power consumption. But, when it comes to switching off a light or a television on standby, nearly all of us are enormously seduced by the thought that such a small gesture will not make any difference at all, so why bother? A long time before hearing about global warming, I tried to refute the general assumption underlying this kind of thought. My switching off the light is below a discrimination threshold: it will not make a difference anyone will detect. But does this really mean that leaving the light on does no harm at all? I used a thought experiment to argue for an alternative view I called "The principle of divisibility", which says, in terms that may seem fiddly and abstract, that:

In cases where harm is a matter of degree, sub-threshold actions are wrong to the extent that they cause harm, and where a hundred acts like mine are necessary to cause a detectable difference I have caused one hundredth of that detectable harm.

Anyone who doubts this principle should consider the consequences of assigning zero harm to sub-threshold acts.

Suppose a village contains 100 unarmed tribesmen. As they eat their lunch 100 hungry armed bandits descend on the village and each bandit at gunpoint takes one tribesman's lunch and eats it. The bandits then go off, each one having done a discriminable amount of harm to a single tribesman. Next week, the bandits are tempted to do the same thing again, but are troubled by new-found doubts about the morality of such a raid. Their doubts are put to rest by one of their number who does not believe in the principle of divisibility. They then raid the village, tie up the tribesmen, and look at their lunch. As expected, each bowl of food contains 100 baked beans. The pleasure derived from one baked bean is below the discrimination threshold. Instead of each bandit eating a single plateful as last week, each takes one bean from each plate. They leave after eating all the beans, pleased to have done no harm, as each has done no more than sub-threshold harm to each person. Those who reject the principle of divisibility have to agree.

From *It Makes no Difference Whether or Not I Do It*, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume, 1975, reprinted in Peter Singer (ed.): *Applied Ethics*, Oxford Readings in Philosophy, 1986. This line of thought has been developed further in Derek Parfit's "harmless torturers" thought experiment. See his appendix on mistakes in moral mathematics, in his *Reasons and Persons*, 1984.

THE SHAPE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, A SYMPOSIUM AT A CONFERENCE IN POTSDAM.

I was a speaker, together with Eric Hobsbawm and Robert Paxton, in a symposium on "The Shape of the Twentieth Century", which was part of a conference in Potsdam. The conference, hosted by the Einstein Forum, and by New York's Remarque Institute, looked at the similarities and dissimilarities between Nazism and Communism. Many participants were historians, but a number of people were there because, being Berliners or East Germans, they had experience of both to draw on.

THE STASI, ETHICAL VALUES AND MARKUS WOLF.

One of the speakers at the Potsdam conference was Markus Wolf, former head of the external side of the Stasi. Earlier in the conference, he and I had chatted in English over coffee and biscuits. He was a nice looking elderly man, smiling and with twinkling eyes. He looked like everyone’s ideal great-uncle. I would never have guessed he was a spymaster, but no doubt that is how a spymaster should be.

His talk (given in German but which we English speakers heard in simultaneous translation) was an account and defence of his professional life. He started in a very sympathetic way, talking about his horror at Nazism as a young man, his ethical commitments to peace and to socialism, and how he became a communist because he saw the KPD as the only people really strongly standing up to Nazism. When the war came he went to Moscow to be trained to work against the Nazis. The bit about Moscow was a bit worrying. He said he saw nothing about the bad side of Stalin. And he made no mention of any reaction he might have had to the Hitler-Stalin pact. He went on to say that he was happy to come back after the war to work for the DDR, the first socialist state in Germany.

After the talk, the questions (given and answered in English) seemed not very probing. Perhaps people felt he had been punished by his prison sentence and that his presence at conferences should be welcomed. I felt a bit more probing was needed. Partly the problem was that the questions (not themselves filmed) were allowed to be bundled together and answered in groups, so that any particular question could if desired be answered very briefly.

In the answer given here he refers to my question, which had been roughly this: *"In the early part of your talk, you spoke powerfully about your youthful ethical ideals. I want to ask about your ethical views later in your career. You say you came back to the first socialist state in Germany. But the DDR was not just a socialist state, but also a state claiming to be founded on Karl Marx's teaching. Sometimes Marx was scathing about ethical ideas (such as human*

rights). Could you say a bit about your ethics while you were leading the Stasi, and in particular whether there were any ethical restraints that set limits to what you were prepared to do?" The response (starting where he says "About Marx and Marxism to discuss today I think will be dificult") does not answer this. In the background you hear me calling out for a fuller response (*"His views on morality?. On ethics? Ethical constraints?"*). But I got nowhere.

TRAPPED IN THE CYCLE OF WAR AND VIOLENCE: HUMILIATION AND THE RESULTING BACKLASH.

Nations and other groups often respond to humiliation, especially to humiliating defeat, with a backlash that may bring about the next war. This is a striking feature of the history of the states that once made up Yugoslavia. It can also be seen in the history of German nationalism. The great philosopher of German nationalism, Gottlob Fichte, gave his Addresses to the German People as lectures, after the German defeat by Napoleon in 1807, in French-occupied Berlin.

In 1871, after the Franco-Prussian war, Bismarck insisted on humiliating France in turn by a Prussian victory march down the Champs Elysees.

The cycle continued. After the First World War, it was the turn of Germany to be humiliated. In addition to the defeat, their leaders were forced to sign on their behalf the “war guilt clauses” that placed the whole blame for the war on Germany. One who felt the humilation acutely was Adolf Hitler. It is impossible to read Mein Kampf without noticing how the boiling rage -its dominant emotion- is linked with the sense of national humiliation. The allies were not subtle about this humiliation, as the photograph of the war memorial statue at Compiegne shows.

It is the German eagle that is hanging upside down and dead on the war memorial. Compiegne was where the railway carriage was used for the signing of the 1918 German surrender, the allies under Marshal Foch on one side of the table and the German military leaders on the other side.

The strength of Hitler’s response to this symbol of humiliation comes out in his arranging for the French surrender in 1940 to be in the same railway carriage, with the German delegation sitting where the Allies had, and Hitler sitting in the seat of Foch. For this second surrender, the memorial with the dead eagle was covered up, as shown at the start of this video clip:

As reported by the CBS correspondent William Shirer, Hitler did stand on the memorial slab on the ground:

I have seen that face many times at the great moments of his life. But today! It is afire with scorn, anger, hate, revenge, triumph. He steps off the monument and contrives to make even this gesture a masterpiece of contempt. He glances back at it, contemptuous, angry –angry, you almost feel, because he cannot wipe out

the awful, provoking lettering with one sweep of his high Prussian boot. He glances slowly round the clearing, and now, as his eyes meet ours, you grasp the depth of his hatred. But there is triumph there too –revengeful, triumphant hate… He swiftly snaps his hands on his hips, arches his shoulders, plants his feet wide apart. It is a magnificent gesture of defiance, or burning contempt for this place now and all that it has stood for in the twenty-two years since it witnessed the humbling of the German Empire.

AFTER ALL THIS DARK, SOME HINTS OF LIGHT.

Freud again, this time with some cautious optimism:

We may insist as much as we like that the human intellect is weak in comparison with human instincts, and be right in doing so. But nevertheless there is something peculiar about this weakness. The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest until it has gained a hearing. Ultimately, after endlessly repeated rebuffs, it succeeds. This is one of the few points in which one may be optimistic about the future of mankind.
Sigmund Freud: The Future of an Illusion.

Freud's thought is echoed by Freeman Dyson's account of the campaign against biological weapons by the molecular biologist Matthew Meselson. (I once had a conversation over dinner with Matthew Meselson when he visited Oxford to give a lecture. Having recently been reading Watson's *Molecular Biology of the Gene*, I asked him about the beautiful Meselson-Stahl experiment. He was

extremely interesting, but I wish I had known about his work against biological warfare, as I would love to have heard about that too.) Here are extracts from Dyson's account of the soft voice of the intellect not resting until it has gained a hearing.

MATTHEW MESELSON.

The man who did more than any other single person to rid the world of biological weapons is Matthew Meselson, professor of biology at Harvard... He talked with army officers who specialized in biological warfare, and read their writings. He moved freely in the world of biological agents and distribution systems. What he saw there appalled him.

The most frightening of all the things which Meselson discovered... was Army Field Manual 3-10. This was a booklet issued to combat units to instruct them in the details of biological warfare. A series of graphs is presented which tell how many biological-agent droplets an aircraft should drop to cover a given area under given conditions, daytime or nighttime, for various types of terrain and various types of human target. The text is written in the same matter-of-fact prose that the army would use for a field manual on the proper method of

digging a latrine. And the booklet is unclassified. It was, in 1963, widely distributed among United States units and easily available to foreign intelligence services. It carried a clear message to any foreign general staff officers who might happen to read it. It said that the United States was equipped and prepared for biological warfare, that this was the way a modern army should be trained, that every country that wanted to keep up with the Joneses must have its own biological agents and its bomblets too. After he read Field Manual 3-10, Meselson vowed that he would fight against this nonsense and not rest until he had got rid of it.

Dyson describes how Meselson easily persuaded military and political leaders of the danger of biological terrorism and that the U.S. willingness to use biological weapons could be a major factor in motivating others to acquire them. But it was harder to persuade them that there was no realistic military requirement for their use.

The biological warfare generals sincerely believed that we needed biological weapons to deter by threat of retaliation the use of biological weapons by others. He appeared to confront them when they came to argue for their programs before congressional committees. He asked them, in his quiet and polite voice, "General, we would like to know, supposing that the United States had been attacked with biological weapons and the President had given the order to retaliate, just what would you do? Where, and how, and against whom, would you use our weapons?" The generals were never able to give him a clear answer. There was in fact no answer to these questions. Biological weapons are so chancy, their effects so unpredictable and uncontrollable, that no responsible soldier would want to use them if he had any available alternative.

Dyson describes Meselson's influence on his Harvard colleague Henry Kissinger, who was one of those presenting President Nixon with the arguments on both sides.

Nixon announced the unilateral abandonment by the United States of all development of biological weapons, the destruction of our weapon stockpiles, and the conversion of our biological laboratories to open programs of medical research... It was a bold step to undertake a major act of disarmament unilaterally. Many people in the government were saying, "Let us by all means get rid of biological weapons, but let us not do it unilaterally. Let us negotiate with the Russians and keep what we have until they agree to destroy theirs too." Meselson insisted that unilateral action must come first, negotiation second. If Nixon had begun with negotiations, there would have been endless discussions about the technical problems of monitoring violations of an agreement, with the probable result that no agreement could have been reached... Nixon's unilateral action removed all these difficulties. After announcing the American decision to abandon biological weapons, Nixon invited the Soviet Union to negotiate a

convention to make the action multilateral. Negotiations were begun, with the United States negotiating "from a position of weakness", having nothing more to give in exchange for Soviet compliance. According to orthodox diplomatic doctrine, to negotiate from a position of weakness is a mistake. But in this case the tactic was successful. The Soviet political leaders were evidently convinced by Nixon's action that their own biological weapons were as useless and as dangerous as ours. Brezhnev signed the convention, agreeing to dismantle his programs, in the summer of 1972, just nine years after Meselson... began to read Field Manual 3-10. Seldom in human history has one man, armed only with the voice of reason, won so complete a victory.

Freeman Dyson: Disturbing the Universe. *(Quoted by permission of Freeman Dyson.)*

A FOOTNOTE TO THE MESELSON STORY.

The victory was not quite so complete. Meselson is still a fine instance of the soft voice of the intellect not resting until it gains a hearing, and in doing so making the world a better place. But the story is complicated by later evidence. (The relations between the light and the dark often are complicated.) Those who try to do good share the world with people with different motives and with people who cheat. Sometimes those aiming at good are cheated by those others, and yet even so they may succeed in saving the world from being worse. Freeman Dyson has written to me saying:

"Unfortunately your account, like mine, does not mention the fact that the Soviet Union cheated on a massive scale, maintaining a huge biological weapons program in violation of the 1972 agreement. The scale of the violation only became clear after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In spite of the gross violation, the 1972 agreement is still in force and is still helpful in keeping the world free of biological weapons. Meselson's and Nixon's actions were courageous and in the end effective."

For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by buildingand lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. This is confirmed by what happens in states; for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them... It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference.

Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics.

SOCRATES: Societies are not made of sticks and stones, but of men whose individual characters, by turning the scale one way or another, determine the direction of the whole.

Plato: Republic.

In the dark time of the 7/7 London bombings, there were reminders that society is not made of sticks and stones but of people whose characters can make a difference.

SOMETIMES

Sometimes things don't go, after all,
from bad to worse. Some years, Muscadel
faces down frost; green thrives; the crops don't fail,
sometimes a man aims high, and all goes well.

A people sometimes will step back from war;
Elect an honest man; decide they care
enough, that they can't leave some stranger poor.
Some men become what they were born for.

Sometimes our best efforts do not go
amiss; sometimes we do as we meant to.
The sun will sometimes melt a field of sorrow
that seemed hard frozen: may it happen for you.

ANONYMOUS.

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5. GENETIC ETHICS AND NEUROETHICS

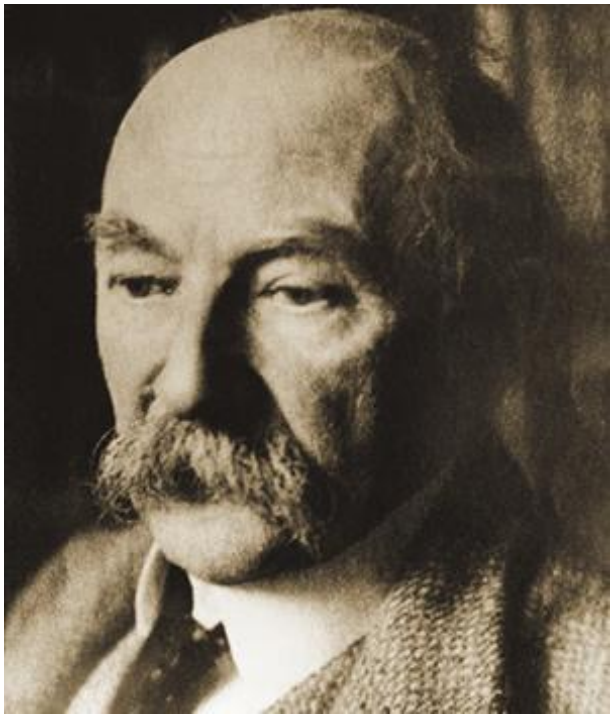
Genetics, Neuroethics and Enhancement.

In Thomas Hardy's day, most people thought that "the eternal thing in man, that heeds no call to die" was the immortal soul. In this poem, Hardy distances himself from the conventional wisdom by suggesting an utterly familiar phenomenon as a more plausible candidate.

HEREDITY.

I am the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on,
Projecting trait and trace
Through time to times anon.
And leaping from place to place
Over oblivion.
The years-heired feature that can
In curve and voice and eye
Despise the human span
Of durance -that is I;
The eternal thing in man,
That heeds no call to die.

JEMIMA HARDY, THOMAS HARDY'S MOTHER



THOMAS HARDY.

There is a nice -more personal- take on this in Owen Sheers' poem "Not Yet My Mother":

Yesterday I found a photo
of you at seventeen,
holding a horse and smiling,
not yet my mother.
The tight riding hat hid your hair,
and your legs were still the long shins of a boy's.
You held the horse by the halter,
your hand a fist under its huge jaw.
The blown trees were still in the background
and the sky was grained by the old film stock,
but what caught me was your face,
Which was mine.
And I thought, just for a second, that you were me.
But then I saw the woman's jacket,
nipped at the waist, the ballooned jodhpurs,
and of course the date, scratched in the corner.
All of which told me again,
that this was you at seventeen, holding a horse
and smiling, not yet my mother,
although I was clearly already your child.

From Owen Sheers: The Blue Book.

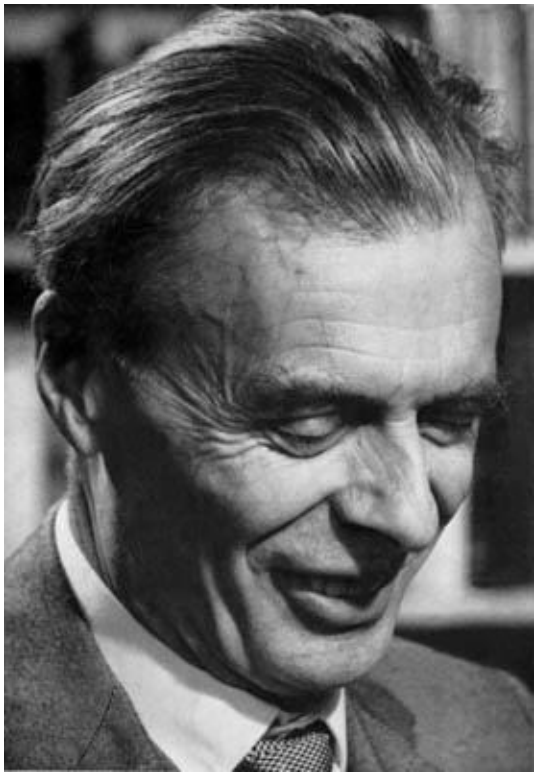
The family face is one of many ways by which human race must have been aware of the power of heredity from very early times. But now, testing embryos and fetuses for medical conditions, or testing for the precursors of other physical or psychological characteristics, have given us new ethical questions. Some of the current ones are discussed in *Choosing Children: Genes, Disability and Design.*

But some of the longer-term questions go deeper. Are there flaws in the human nature that has emerged through Darwinian evolution? Is our darker side (as displayed in war, genocide, torture and other atrocities) deeply programmed into us? Are there limits to our intellectual capacities that may set boundaries to our understanding of the world? These questions raise a debate about "enhancement". Should we attempt to transcend the limitations of the human nature thrown up by the accidents of our evolutionary history? Or are the dangers of any such attempt too huge?

What Sort of People Should There Be? (1984) was a book it was hard to know how to write, as there were no other approaches to draw on or to react against. It was the first book by a philosopher to discuss the ethical issues raised by the power (now actual but then futuristic) to use scientific techniques to choose the birth of people with some genes rather than others. It was also the first philosophical book on what is now called "neuroethics": ethical questions raised by technological interventions in the brain to change (or "enhance") what we are like. The neuroethics part considered the implications of our developing the ability to know about people's thoughts from their brain activity, of the possibility of giving people alternative "virtual realities", and of controlling mental states and behaviour through neurochemical interventions.

I say this was "the first book by a philosopher" about these questions, but what is still the greatest book in the field had been published half a century earlier by a novelist. Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* was also a brilliant and sustained philosophical thought experiment.

What Sort of People Should There Be? tried to explore the arguments on both sides of these genetic and neuroethical issues, and to bring into sharper focus the underlying values at stake. It did not take the then conventional view that any enhancement should be excluded in principle because it would be objectionable "eugenics" or would be "playing God". As a result, it was sometimes seen as a manifesto for enhancement. This was a bit ironic. While the book hoped - then unfashionably - to do justice to the case for enhancement, it was also an expression of a love affair with the unscientific alternative: the everyday ways in which we partly create both ourselves and each other.



ALDOUS HUXLEY.

After looking at what we might lose by rejecting enhancement, it stresses the danger of large scale social experiments (later to be a dominant theme *of Humanity, A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*). It then mentions another danger:

The danger is that these technologies will be harnessed to a benevolent utopianism which has too crude a view of what life can be. An example is the one-dimensional utilitarianism which aims at the maximum satisfaction of desires. A programme based on this outlook could succeed in harmonizing our desires and the world, at the cost of obliterating the self-expressive and self-creative life we now care about...

One claim here has been that consciousness is especially important: that all value derives from the lives of conscious beings. But it does not follow that pleasurable experience is the only thing of value. A whole life passively consuming pleasure is a narrow one. A broader view of the good life centres on activities and relationships. We mind about the kinds of things we do, and we want to experience things with other people. We also like to think and talk together, sharing and helping to shape each other's responses. In this way we express ourselves, and partly create ourselves and each other. Each of us, to a very small extent, contributes to the development of human consciousness. As a result we, and our descendents, go through life more thoroughly awake.

Some of the ideas of the genetic part of this book were presented in 1983. in a BBC Horizon documentary, Brave New Babies. The documentary, like the book, had to overcome the problem that almost none of the ethical questions were practical issues at that time. The project was to start a debate in time to influence thinking about scientific developments before they became actual. As a result, to some at that time the issues seemed absurdly futuristic and unreal.

The makers of the documentary, David Dugan and Oliver Morse, did a brilliant job of translating the science - and, even more difficult, the philosophy - into television. When the crew came to film at my house, my sons, Daniel and David, aged twelve and nine, successfully argued that they should be on the programme. (My daughter Ruth would no doubt have joined them if she had been a bit older than four.) Daniel and David turned out to be the stars, and their contributions made it a much better programme. I was delighted by their success, though also a little sorry that those who saw it, while rivetted by the children, could not remember anything I had said. Occasionally, in recent years, I have shown the programme to students thinking about these issues. (Now my vanity is piqued in a rather different way. When their elderly, white-haired teacher has finished bumblingly trying to work the DVD player and handed over to them, they then are greatly amused by the glimpse of my younger self before the havoc of more than a quarter of a century of the ageing process.)

SHARING A JOKE WITH JOHN FINNIS.

Soon after the broadcast of Brave New Babies, I took part with John Finnis in a television debate for Channel Four on embryo research. Most of the arguments we used on both sides are now very familiar. The only bit I would wish to preserve is John Finnis's lucid central argument, together with my gently teasing him in my reply to it.

TRANSCENDING HUMAN VALUES?

When people discuss the pros and cons of enhancement, they usually try to weigh up its implications for good or bad in terms of the things we now value. There is an even more radical question. Could our values themselves be in need of modification? Could there be reasons for believing this? If so, how could we recognise those reasons? Is it possible to escape, even to some degree from our own value systems? This is the topic of this paper on Transcending Human Values?

6. PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHIATRY

For more years than I care to admit, I have been engaged in writing a book about psychiatry. Its current working title is *Psychiatry as a Human Science.* Psychiatric disorder raises many deep philosophical questions. There are questions about interpretation. What is going on in the mind of someone who expresses a belief that seems obviously delusional? Can they really believe it? If they do, what is going on in their psychology? Are they misinterpreting evidence? Or is their belief nothing to do with evidence? Why *this* delusion rather than some other one? There are questions about psychiatric explanation. How do causes at the level of neurology or neurochemistry mesh with causes at the psychological or "human" level?

Can there be a coherent explanation that allows changes to the amygdala or changes in the dopamine level to interact with other causes such as abuse in childhood or exposure to the trauma of war? How should we think of the interaction between such disparate kinds of causes? This relates to a question about people who are profoundly changed by mental disorder. Biological psychiatry often can tell us a fair amount about the neurochemistry underlying the changes. But there are questions at the human level about what happens to the person's sense of identity. And there are questions about responsibility: psychiatrists as witnesses in court may be asked whether an act of violence came from the illness or simply from the person's own nature. How are such questions to be answered? Where the person has a disorder that radically changes character and personality, does the distinction between "coming from the person" and "coming from the illness" make sense? Psychiatry raises many other questions that are partly philosophical, of which perhaps the most fundamental is: on what basis do we decide that some conditions, but not others, are psychiatric illnesses?

The questions about psychiatry that most interest me are about:

- The boundaries of psychiatric disorder.
- The interpretation of the actions and mental states of people who have these disorders.
- The links between psychiatric conditions and personal identity.
- The links between psychiatric disorder and responsibility.
- What is going on, and what should be going on, in psychotherapy.

My interest in these questions arises partly because of the way psychiatric understanding and treatment are enmeshed with some of the deepest and most interesting philosophical questions there are. But it also comes from the belief

(reinforced by experience of psychiatric problems in people close to me, and by experience of the greatly varying quality of the professional responses to those problems) that more effective and more humane treatment needs both scientific progress *and* a deeper understanding at the human level. In one way this is a platitude. These days few people deny that biological explanations and treatments are often very important. And few deny that understanding at the human level, and interventions such as psychotherapy, are often very important. But there is an asymmetry. We have a fairly good idea about what progress at the neurochemical or genetic level looks like. But, partly because understanding at the human level is so bound up with unresolved philosophical issues, we are less clear here what kind of progress to look for. My hope is to make a contribution, together with others in the recently more flourishing field of philosophical psychiatry, to a more humanist psychiatry. The current working title of my book, *Psychiatry as a Human Science*, reflects a commitment both to scientific method in psychiatry *and* to humanism in psychiatry.

THE BOUNDARIES OF PSYCHIATRIC DISORDER.

Personality Disorders.

"Personality Disorders" tend to be thought of as rigid patterns of thought, feeling and action which are "maladaptive", and which either impair the person's functioning or cause the person distress.

It is only when personality traits are inflexible and maladaptive and cause either significant functional impairment or subjective distress that they constitute Personality Disorders.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R).

One interpretation of what a "personality disorder" is suggests that it involves a distortion of character or personality that impairs the person's capacity for human flourishing. This Aristotelian approach is plausible, but raises questions about what we should count as flourishing or as impairment:

Obviously these huge questions should not be answered by giving a single blueprint of how everyone should live. What counts as flourishing may vary with age, gender, place and time. A modern American teenage boy will not flourish exactly as Proust's grandmother did. But, subject to this obvious and necessary pluralism, there still may be some things to say about the good human life which are not vacuous. Some features of good lives may fall into clusters...

It is a familiar thought that a battery chicken or a caged bird cannot flourish because such lives deny their natures. Part of a good life for a bird is to use its

wings and fly. Are there similar aspects of human nature that set some of the contours of the good human life?...

One possible account of human flourishing would be in terms of our physical and psychological systems performing the functions for which evolution designed them. One worry about such an account is that it seems to ignore the way in which human culture allows us to move away from our biological origins. If reproduction was the original function of sex, can this approach avoid an echo of the bad old days of seeking to "cure" gays and lesbians? Do we really want to say that gays and lesbians have less flourishing lives?

From Towards Humanism in Psychiatry, Tanner Lectures in Human Values, Princeton, 2003, Lecture Two: Identity.

Antisocial Personality Disorder.

GWEN ADSHEAD

As part of a project with the psychiatrist Gwen Adshead, I interviewed some patients in Broadmoor, who had a diagnosis of "Antisocial Personality Disorder". My interest was in how they thought and felt about ethics. These interviews were the topic of part of a discussion with Alan Ryan at the London School of Economics:

TOWARDS HUMANISM IN PSYCHIATRY: INTERPRETATION.

It is not only in psychiatry that we may wonder about the reliability of our interpretations of other people. In Marcel Proust's great novel, the narrator describes his childhood discovery that Francoise, a family servant who he had always believed to be someone who liked him and was fond of him, had said some very hostile things about him. This led him to the thought that other people's mental states are not "a garden we see through a railing, with all

its borders spread before us, but a shadow we can never penetrate, behind which there may burn the flame of hatred or love". There is obviously room for great disagreement about how far other people's inner states are relatively easy to interpret and how far they come closer to Proust's impenetrable shadow. Different people may vary in how hard or easy they are to read. And different people also vary in their general view of how far others are transparent or opaque.

But often there are additional problems for attempts to get a feel for the inner life of people with psychiatric disorders.

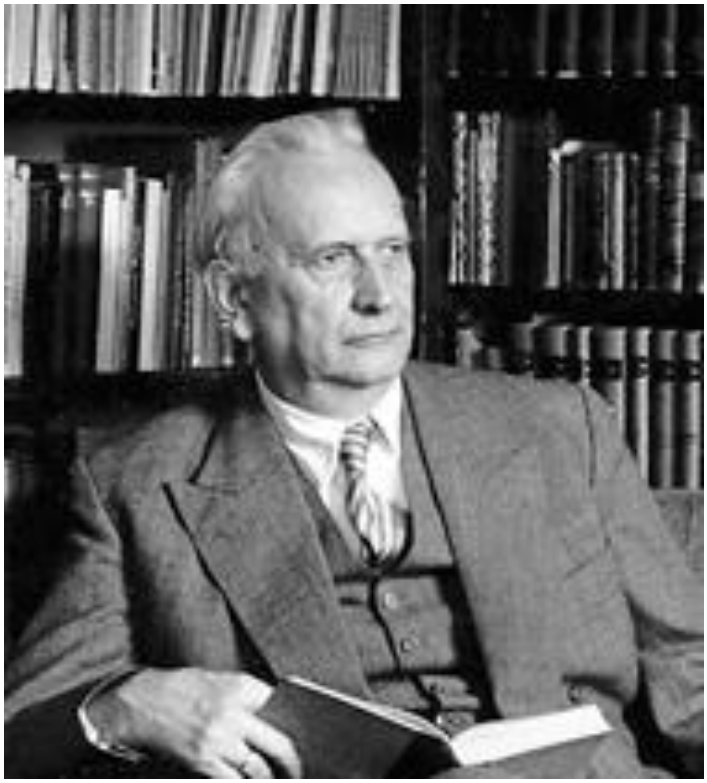
There are questions about how things said and done by people with psychiatric disorders should be interpreted. And, as part of this, there are questions about how people with psychiatric disorders interpret the world...

Some people with psychiatric disorders at times strike others as strange. They may behave in ways that seem unintelligible. They may look strange of have an odd posture or gait. They may laugh at unexpected times, or stare, or say things in ways that make it hard to have a conversation with them. At such times, it is hard to get through to them. They may seem unreachable.

Sometimes this inaccessibility has baffled their families and friends, and also psychiatrists. Eugen Bleuler, the inventor of the word "schizophrenia" said that people with the disorder were stranger to him than the birds in his garden. Karl Jaspers said it was possible to have empathy for those with mood disorders, but not for those with schizophrenia: "We may think we understand those with dispositions furthest from our own, but when faced with such people, we feel a gulf which defies description".

Since those hit by schizophrenia are not birds in the garden but people, their problems may be compounded by our inability to reach them. To psychiatric disprder may be added loneliness and isolation. Understanding them more intuitively, "from the inside", matters independently of any contribution to developing a cure. It is also a serious intellectual challenge to psychiatry, to psychology, and to philosophy. So far, our theories about knowledge of other minds have not much helped us here.

From Towards Humanism in Psychiatry, Tanner Lectures in Human Values, Princeton 2003, Lecture One: Interpretation.



KARL JASPERS

To understand the world we need to move from passively absorbing information to active interrogation and interpretation.

Reason... must approach nature in order to be taught by it. It must not, however, do so in the character of a pupil who listens to everything the teacher chooses to say, but of an appointed judge who compels the witnesses to answer questions which he has himself formulated.

Immanuel Kant: Critique of Pure Reason.

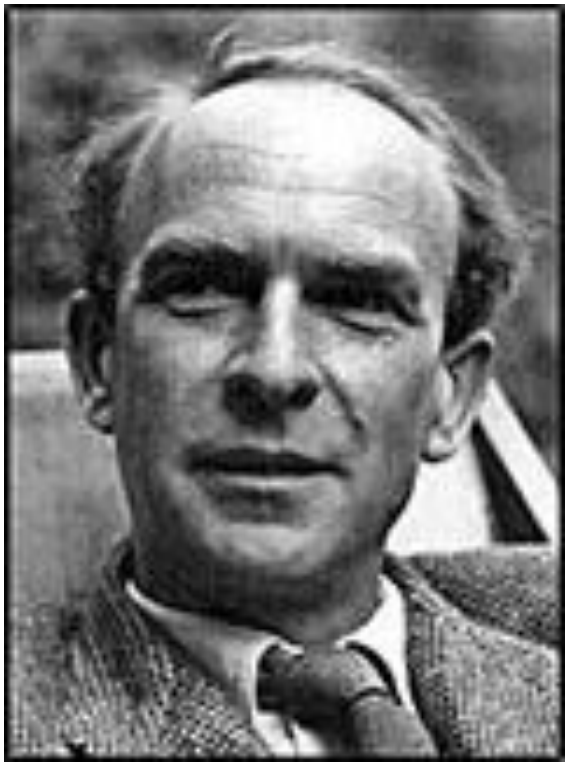
On the pervasiveness of our - often barely conscious - interpretations of people.

Even the simple act which we describe as "seeing someone we know" is, to some extent, an intellectual process. We pack the physical outline of the creature we see with all the ideas we have already formed about him, and in the complete picture of him which we compose in our minds those ideas have certainly the principal place. In the end they come to fill out so completely the curve of his cheeks, to follow so exactly the line of his nose, they blend so harmoniously in the sound of his voice that these seem to be no more than a transparent envelope, so that each time we see the face or hear the voice it is our own ideas of him which we recognise and to which we listen.

Marcel Proust: Swann's Way.

MARCEL PROUST

In defence of the "human" interpretations of people sometimes dismissed as "folk psychology".



PETER STRAWSON.

Still, we have the theoretical idea of the two histories, each complete in its own terms; we might call them the physical history and the personal history... Each story will invoke its own explanatory connections, the one in terms or neurophysiological and anatomical laws, the other in terms of what is sometimes called, with apparently pejorative intent, "folk psychology", i.e. the ordinary explanatory terms employed by diarists, novelists, biographers, historians, journalists, and gossips, when they deliver their accounts of human behaviour and human experience -the terms employed by such simple folk as Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Proust, and Henry James.

P.F. Strawson: Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties.

TOWARDS HUMANISM IN PSYCHIATRY: IDENTITY AND SELF-CREATION.

I AM.

I am -yet what I am, none cares or knows;

My friends foresake me like a memory lost;

I am the self-consumer of my woes-

They rise and vanish in oblivions host,

Like shadows in love frenzied stifled throes

And yet I am, and live -like vapours tost

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,

Into the living sea of waking dreams,

Where there is neither sense of life or joys,

But the vast shipwreck of my lifes esteems;

Even the dearest that I love the best

Are strange -nay, stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man hath never trod

A place where woman never smiled or wept

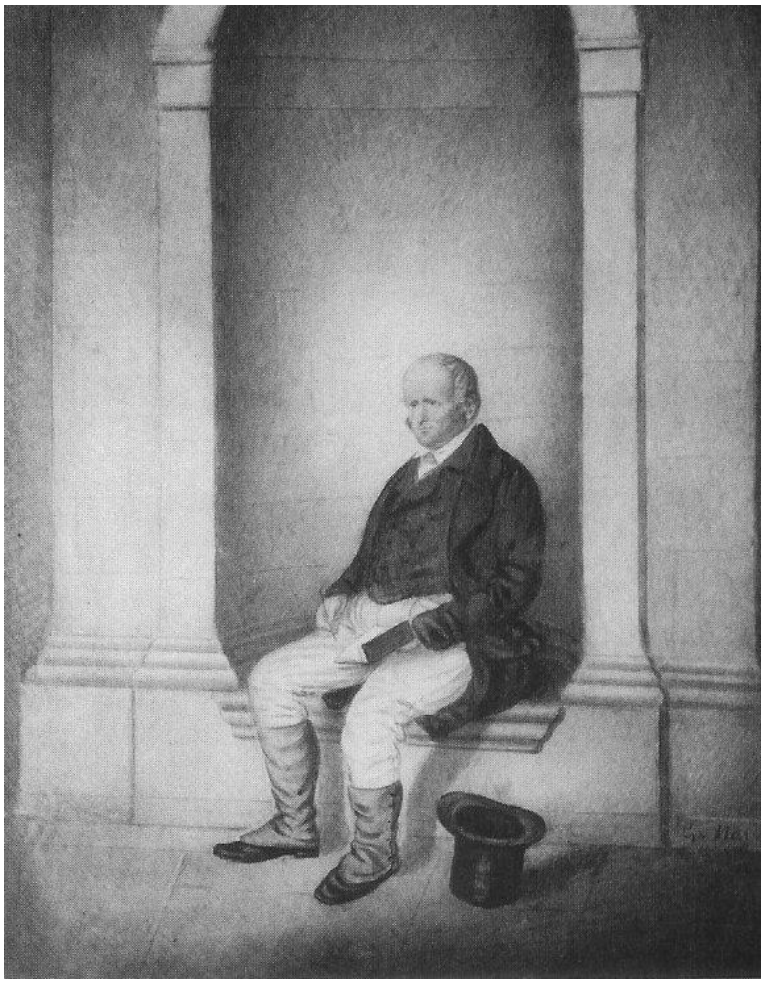
There to abide with my Creator God,

And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,

Untroubling and untroubled where I lie

The grass below, above, the vaulted sky.

JOHN CLARE.



JOHN CLARE.

Psychiatric illness can change people so profoundly that they can feel their central core is under threat. When they behave strangely, others (judges, doctors, social workers, or just family and friends) may ask the question it is so hard to get into focus: "Was that her or did it come from her illness?". Psychiatrists may wonder if the medication is containing the illness or rather changing the underlying person. It may be important to a person with depression to incorporate the dark times as part of his self rather than to see them as alien. Someone taking the medication may find her sense of self changed radically. Sometimes part of the escaping and recovery from illness is a conscious process of self-examination and self-creation. In all these ways, there are complex and elusive links between psychiatric disorder and personal

identity. The necessary process of tracing out these links, a central task of humanist psychiatry, is one we have hardly started on.

When someone has been profoundly changed by psychiatric illness -or through some other cause- it can be very important that the person behind the changes is still recognized.

In the magical children's book *Finn Family Moomontroll* by Tove Jansson, when the children are playing hide and seek, Moomintroll hides in the Hobgoblin's hat and comes out unrecognizably changed:

"You aren't Moomintroll", said the Snork Maiden, scornfully. "He has beautiful little ears, but yours look like kettle-holders!"

Moomintroll felt quite confused and took hold of a pair of enormous crinkly ears. "But I am Moomintroll!" he burst out in despair. "Don't you believe me?"

"Moomintroll has a nice little tail, just about the right size, but yours is like a chimney sweep's brush", said the Snork.

And, oh dear, it was true! Moomintroll felt behind him with a trembling paw.

"Your eyes are like soup-plates", said Sniff. "Moomintroll's are small and kind!"

"Yes, exactly", Snufkin agreed.

"You are an inpostor!" decided the Hemulen.

"Isn't there anyone who believes me?" Moomintroll pleaded. "Look carefully at me, Mother. You must know your own Moomintroll."

Moominmamma looked carefully. She looked into his frightened eyes for a very long time, and then she said quietly: "Yes, you are my Moomintroll."

And at the same moment he began to change. His ears, eyes and tail began to shrink, and his nose and tummy grew, until at last he was his old self again.

"It's all right now, my dear," said Moominmamma. "You see, I shall always know you whatever happens."

Tove Jansson:Finn Family Moomintroll, translated by Elizabeth Portch.

Rainer Maria Rilke's jubilation at emerging from an emotionally dark time includes celebrating the dark times themselves:

How dear you will be to me then, you nights of anguish,
Inconsolable sisters, why didn't I kneel to you, submissive,
And lose myself in your dishevelled hair?

By looking through our bitter times towards their end
We squander our sorrows. But they are a season of us,
Yes, our winter foliage, our dark evergreen. Not only a season,
But also our landscape, settlement and fortress,
Our depths and our home.

Rainer Maria Rilke: Duino Elegies, Tenth Elegy.

KAY REDFIELD JAMISON.

Lithium prevents my seductive but disastrous highs, diminishes my depressions, clears out the wool and webbing from my disordered thinking, slows me down, gentles me out, keeps me from ruining my career and relationships, keeps me out of a hospital, alive, and makes psychotherapy possible. But, ineffably, psychotherapy heals. It makes some sense of the confusion, reins in the terrifying thoughts and feelings, returns some control and hope and possibility of learning from it all. Psychotherapy is a sanctuary; it is a battleground... But, always, it is where I have believed -or have learnt to believe- that I might someday be able to contend with all of this...

Lowering my lithium level had allowed not only a clarity of thinking, but also a vividness and intensity of experience, back into my life; these elements had once formed the core of my normal temperament, and their absence had left gaping hollows in the way in which I could respond to the world. The too rigid structuring of my moods and temperament, which had resulted from a higher dose of lithium, made me less resilient to stress than a lower dose, which, like the building codes in California that are designed to prevent damage from earthquakes, allowed my mind and emotions to sway a bit. Therefore, and rather oddly, there was a new solidness to both my thinking and my emotions.

Kay Redfield Jamison: An Unquiet Mind, a Memoir of Moods and Madness.

In summary, I would like briefly to state my view of the essential aspects of recovery: There is inside of me a self, a spirit, which is gradually becoming more aware of me and others. That self is becoming my guide. It encompasses all that I am. My self includes, but is greater than, my chemicals, my background and my traumas: It is the me I am seeking to become in my relationships, in that moment of creative uncertainty when I make contact with another. From that moment of harmony, when, together, we defy the odds and say "yes", our lives will go on differently, regardless of how we live the following moment. We are all inventing our lives at each moment.

Dan Fisher: Hope, Humanity and Voice in Recovery from Mental Illness, in Phil Barker, Peter Campbell and Ben Davidson: From the Ashes of Experience, Reflections on Madness, Survival, Growth.

In coming to terms with schizophrenia and recovering a healthier concept of self, I have certainly been engaged in a deep communication with myself. It is a communication that has given me the most precious thread, a thread that has linked my evolving sense of self, a thread of self-reclamation, a thread of movement toward a whole and integrated sense of self, away from the early fragmentation and confusion I felt as I first experienced schizophrenia...

I have come to see that you do not simply patch up the self you were before developing schizophrenia, but that you actually have to recreate a concept of who you are that integrates the experience of schizophrenia. Real recovery is far from a simple matter of accepting diagnosis and learning facts about the illness and medication. Instead, it is a deep searching and questioning, a journey through unfamiliar feelings, to embrace new concepts and a wider view of self.

Simon Champ: A Most Precious Thread, in Phil Barker, Peter Campbell and Ben Davidson: From the Ashes of Experience, Reflections on Madness, Survival, Growth.

An indication of the power of medicine to reshape a person's identity is contained in the sentence Tess used when, eight months after first stopping Prozac, she telephoned me to ask whether she might resume the medication. She said, "I am not myself".

Dr. Peter Kramer: Listening to Prozac.

Prior to Prozac, when asked to describe my early history, I would tell a story of depression with roots so far-reaching even my earliest memories came up gray... But having been on Prozac for ten years now, I notice my memory of my early life changing a bit. I still vividly recall the whiteness, the fear, the cold, the cuts. But the lifting of illness, incomplete though it is, has brought other, more colorful glints as well. In altering my present sense of who I am, Prozac has demanded a revisioning of my history, and this revisioning is perhaps the most stunning side effect of all.

Lauren Slater: Prozac Diary.

ROLE MODELS FOR PSYCHOTHERAPISTS: FREUD OR SOCRATES?

Iwas asked by The Journal of Family Therapy to write about a commentary on four papers they published. The commentary indicated the content of the points selected for discussion from the articles, but its central thrust was a consideration of what the aims and methods of family therapy should be. Here is the commentary:

Like the activities of other professions, family therapy is practiced in ways that range from the abysmally bad to the utterly brilliant. Since the service given to families depends on how good therapists are, some reflection is in order on what "good" therapy is. Each of these four papers provides relevant evidence or raises relevant issues. Views on what counts as good family therapy will vary with the answers given to three inter-related questions. Do most of the family problems that therapists are trying to help sort out have a common structure? What should the aims of the therapist be? What strategies should the therapist adopt? Each paper makes a contribution to one or more of these questions.

Do most of the family problems have a common structure?

Family therapists could reasonably sigh when confronted with Tolstoy's famously confident assertion that all happy families are alike, while an unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. Questions can be asked about both claims, but family therapists have a particular stake in challenging the second one. Part of their claim to expertise rests on experience of what has previously been useful in understanding, and helping with, the problems of other families. Total absence of any common patterns would make such experience useless.

The five family therapists interviewed by Ceri Bowen clearly believe there are common patterns. Their comments, in response to a clip of a family episode of blaming, were centred on a few themes. These include relationship problems: strereotyping or having unrealistic expectations of each other, poor communication, intolerance, and vicious circles of mutual interaction. Another theme is negative attitudes: low self-esteem, excessive criticism, and an "unhealthy allocation of responsibility for problems". Another theme is parents' own past family problems, particularly with their own parents.

How persuasive is this? Are we learning about patterns actually present in the families or just about the belief system of therapists? Some scepticism arises about interpretation at a detailed level. One instance cited of "unhealthy allocation of responsibility for problems" is " "illness" as responsible for problems". A therapist expanded on this: "putting all the problems in some sort of externalized thing like Dad's depression or Mum's anxiety. It seems a very helpful thing for them." Perhaps. But equally a family's difficulties really may stem from one of their members getting Alzheimer's, schizophrenia, or depression. Obviously families may sometimes deceive themselves, using mistaken causal accounts to rationalize their problems. But there is a troubling hint of "therapist knows best" when these comments are presented without discussing what evidence is needed to justify over-riding a family's own understanding of their situation.

Although these themes are presented as an "exploratory model", Ceri Bowen et al. say they are "not claiming a causal sequence". Yet there are obvious causal

conjectures. The past family problems might have a causal influence on the stereotypimg, the unrealistic expectations and the poor communication. The vicious circles of interaction might increase the level of mutual criticism and blame. It would be good to have empirical studies at this detailed level of causation. If this account is a model, rather than a mere series of disconnected observations, some causality needs to be postulated, at least as a hypothesis.

The account of a common structure of bad spirals of mutual interaction sounds plausible as a working hypothesis. Given this picture, how should therapists proceed?

What should be the aims of family therapy?

John Stancombe and Sue White give a similar picture of mutual blame: "when families come to therapy, their members... are usually engaged in some kind of mutual recrimination". They say that the therapist is usually seen as moving family members "from unhelpful and morally-loaded positions to ones in which positive change can more readily occur". They raise doubts about whether this needs neutrality between rival narratives of family members, but do not challenge the goal itself.

Families with different problems will generate different aims for therapists: helping the familiy cope with the needy and demanding grandparent who has come to live with them; helping homophobic parents listen to their son who has come out as gay; helping the teenager to talk about previously hidden childhood traumas and helping the parents to listen.

Therapy may take the form of helping families live with conflicts or disagreements that cannot be eliminated. ("Our religion still tells us that homosexuality is sinful, but we see you have to decide about your own life.") It may take the form of helping family members to listen to each other's narratives and to see that no single person's narrative has the whole truth. It may involve helping people escape from bad cycles of interaction, including mutual blame (in Ceri Bowen's phrase "lifting the vision towards more positive possible futures").

At this level of generality these aims inevitably sound platitudinous. The controversial issues concern how to bring them about.

What strategies should family therapists adopt?

How should therapists help families escape bad cycles of mutual interaction, mutual misunderstanding and mutual blame? Katja Kurri and Jahrl Wahlstrom use a therapy session for a couple to illustrate help in escaping these cycles. They also bring out some associated moral problems.

One therapist ivites the husband to consider the possible role in his agitated shouting of his critical thoughts about his wife's "emotionality", and asks him to consider why *she* reacts as she does. The therapist implies that the husband might accept some responsibility for the situation. But later the therapist is said to emphasize the good intentions of both husband and wife: "The therapist's statement emphasizes the reformulation of the transactional pattern as expressing good intentions on both sides. The therapist appears here to deconstruct blame... If the intentions are good but the outcome undesired, then it appears as if something like bad luck or fate is in operation. In that case none of the participants could be held responsible for the course of events. The responsibility is given to the transactional pattern, so to speak."

Perhaps it is inviting scepticism to ascribe responsibility for the relationship going wrong not to human agency but to fate, to bad luck or to "the transactional pattern". Yet there are cases of mutual misunderstanding, despite good intentions on both sides. In such cases, exposing the good intentions may help the couple escape from mutual recrimination. But intentions are not always good. What should happen when one of the couple is open to reasonable criticism for being selfish or insensitive? The authors rightly see it as a problem for the moral neutrality of therapists that there may be no morally neutral way of formulating this issue.

The way the authors set up the problem is to ask whether therapists can be neutral between two "discourses", one of autonomy and one of "relationality". The discourse of autonomy emphasizes each person's right to make his or her own choices and to pursue his or her own interests. The discourse of relationality emphasizes emotional responsiveness to others. If, in a couple, he is strong on his autonomy and on the pursuit of his own self-interest and she feels he is too emotionally insensitive to her, what should the therapist do? The authors suggest, approvingly, that the therapists resolved the conflict between the two discourses by following a "principle of relational autonomy". This "indicates that identity and autonomy are generated from a matrix of relations". The therapists' interventions "produced a situation where the partners' autonomy was necessarily understood as relational".

The principle of relational autonomy seems too platitudinous and too vague to be much of a success in changing behaviour. ("Yes, I agree my identity and autonomy evolved in the context of relationships, but I still don't see why in this case I should put my autonomy second to what I see as my wife's unreasonable feelings.") And is it really true that therapists have to decide between "reinforcing" one or other of the values or else both? It is not for the therapist to decide on priorities for the couple, guided by some principle that somehow melds together the two values. What would be wrong with asking questions

designed to make the conflict of values explicit and asking whether the couple are willing to explore compromises?

Here there seems to be a clash between two models of therapy, which (with some caricature) could be seen as the clash between the therapist as Freud and the therapist as Socrates. The therapist as Freud says, "I have special psychological knowledge -in this case knowledge of how identity is generated from a matrix of relations- and my interventions will be designed to help you understand yourselves as I do." The therapist as Socrates says, "I don't know the answers, but I will ask questions designed to make your values explicit. If you each turn out to have different values, I will ask questions designed to find out if you can still get on with each other. Everything will depend on the answers you decide to give."

An obvious limitation of the model of Socrates for therapists is that his questions explored only beliefs and not emotions. In that way Freud's approach was a clear advance. But his -more debatable- idea of the special psychological knowledge, possessed only by initiates, and the resulting idea of the therapist's privileged interpretation, continues to be highly influential, even if the esoteric knowledge now comes from systems theory more than from psychoanalysis.

The model of the therapist as Freud can lead to a worrying tendency towards being manipulative. This appears in Michelle O'Reilly's discussion of therapists' responses to families' complaints about their treatment by the police or the social services. One question is why the families think the therapist is the person to complain to. It may be ignorance: seeing all the professionals as part of an undifferentiated "them". Alternatively, they may have been persuaded into family therapy by being given misleading expectations of useful advice. Either way, Michelle O'Reilly is right that they need some recognition of their difficulties and guidance in seeking help.

No doubt she is also right that complaints are "not received positively in therapy". The manipulativeness surfaces in her account of "the interactional techniques used to close them down": the replies that do not address the complaints but steer the conversation towards how the person feels. The mother complaining that the social services are victimizing her children may be justifiably dissatisfied with the evasive response "and how does that make you feel?". ("And how does that response make you feel?" -"Patronised.") Instead of the concealed attempt to "close down" the complaint, why not a direct response, a clear, plain statement? ("These sessions are about helping you to cope with your problems. I can't change what the social services do, but the way to make a complaint is...")

A deep ethical issue in family therapy concerns the role of truth. On this issue the Freudian and Socratic models may pull different ways. Does it matter to

what extent each of various family members' conflicting narratives are true? The therapist as Socrates may think this is worth exploring. If one person has paranoid fantasies about others in the family, those others may wnat to "put the record straight" (to whatever extent it is possible to do so). The therapist as Socrates may be open to discussing the evidence, while the therapist as Freud (who perhaps "knows" that the real problem are about systems and boundaries) may try to exclude the issue as unhelpful. Paradoxically, the Socratic approach sometimes may be more helpful, because of the importance people attach to their true history being recognized.

There are parallels to debates about political peacemaking, as between Israelis and Palestinians. Is it better to forget the disputed past and start afresh, or do both sides need acknowledgement of the truths in their respective narratives? And "we accept that your version is true for you, just as theirs is true for them" may not be enough. It may elicit the response that this account isn't just "true for us": we want some recognition that these events actually happened.

In the case of the mutually blaming couple, when the therapist suggests that actually they both had good intentions, is this said because it is true or because it is helpful? Of course, if true, it is likely to be helpful. But supposing it isn't true? Is it still acceptable to suggest it, because it may help the couple to escape the bad cycle if they both believe it? The therapist as Freud might say "yes", on grounds of understanding their problems better than they do. The therapist as Socrates, not claiming a privileged view, lacks this reason for deception.

The therapist as Freud seems to lurk behind John Stancombe and Sue White's very interesting discussion of the "paradoxes of neutrality". The goal of moving towards some shared view allowing the family to escape from the cycle of mutual blame is often assumed to require the therapist's neutrality between the rival versions. Showing empathy with one viewpoint may be seen as taking sides against others. This makes a case for therapists giving only "neutral" responses, neither rejecting nor endorsing the viewpoint expressed by a family member. As Stancombe and White report, this tends to result in the therapist either changing the subject, or else "reformulating" the blame-laden account in a non-blaming version. As they point out, either response may leave the person who expressed the view feeling that the core of his or her version has gone unheard and wanting to express it again. Hence the first "paradox": "neutrality seems to reinforce blaming in the session".

This problem only arises because of some disingenuousness in the practice of the therapist as Freud. The therapist *has* heard the expression of blame, but gives the impression of not having done so because of fear of the consequences of indicating this. Hence the evasive or off-the-point responses that give family members an irritating sense of being manipulated. The therapist as Socrates might feel that all points are worth taking seriously in the discussion. And doing

so might not send a message about taking sides. (What about saying, "Sarah, I understand that you are blaming Henry for causing the problem by getting so angry. Henry, I know you may have a different view, and we will come to that in a minute. But for the moment, let's explore this account."?) This may open up the possibility of eventually moving towards a shared account that does some justice to both views: perhaps Henry's anger did contribute towards the daughter's anorexia, but perhaps Sarah's silent hostility contributed to his anger. The more complex account, brought out by acknowledging rather than evading the partisan points, could even be both helpful and true.

According to Stancombe and White, some such complex account, based on accepting or rejecting particular bits of the partisan versions, is what therapists construct for themselves. They are said to do this "in the backstage" as part of constructing a neutral version that can be "performed in the frontstage without compromising the therapist's "neutrality" ". The second "paradox" is that the neutral version is constructed by using the therapist's own non-neutral version.

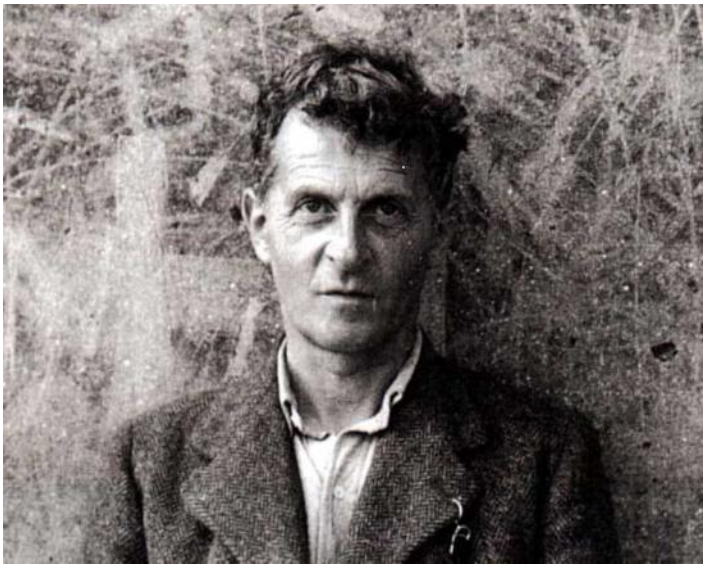
The therapist as Freud is clearly visible here in this contrast between the therapist's backstage account and the frontstage account offered to the family. Why all this make-believe? Why not go for the Socratic version, using sympathetic questioning to coax the family into themselves constructing the complex account? I believe that this is what good therapists already do. Modest therapists are aware how little they can know of a family compared to what the family themselves know, and will expect the family's own complex account to be richer than anything concocted "backstage". Part of the answer to the question of what marks of good from bad therapy is that good therapists, instead of being in the grip of a theory, have the human sensitivity that goes with being a good listener. And then, with Socratic openness in response to what they hear, they will help the family did themselves out of any trap they are in.

Another thing Tolstoy wrote was this: "Levin had often noticed in discussions between the most intelligent people that after enormous efforts, and endless logical subtleties and talk, the disputants finally became aware that what they had been at such pains to prove to one another had long ago, from the beginning of the argument, been known to both, but that they liked different things, and would not define what they liked for fear of its being attacked. He had often had the experience of suddenly in the middle of a discussion grasping what it was the other liked and at once liking it too, and immediately found himself agreeing, and then all arguments fell away useless." Of course this is a long way from the mutual recriminations. But to use gentle questioning -not to move families- but to help them move *themselves* even some of the way towards it, is a wonderful thing for a therapist to do.

7. TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science –i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy- and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person –he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy- this method would be the only strictly correct one.

Ludwig Wittgenstein: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.



This very austere account of how philosophy should be taught reflects a particular view of philosophy itself. All intelligible claims ("what can be said") are statements about facts (here identified with "propositions of natural science"). Philosophical claims go beyond stating facts and so go beyond intelligibility. Because what is distinctively philosophical is unintelligible, teaching philosophy becomes a very negative affair, waiting for someone to say something philosophical and then pointing out the ways in which it fails to make sense. On that view of philosophy, it is hard to see that either teaching or learning it would be very rewarding. But sometimes the teaching encounter can be rewarding even in the context of bleak assumptions about its nature. Here is a sympathetic portrait (based on David Pears, who in real life did not make the bleak assumptions) of someone applying this method:

Dave's pupils adore him, but there is a permanent fight on between him and them. They aspire like sunflowers. They are all natural metaphysicians, or so Dave says in a tone of disgust. This seems to me a wonderful thing to be, but it inspires in Dave a passion of opposition. To Dave's pupils the world is a mystery; a mystery to which it should be reasonably possible to discover a key. The key would be something of the sort that could be contained in a book of

some eight hundred pages. To find the key would not necessarily be a simple matter, but Dave's pupils feel sure that the dedication of between four and ten hours a week, excluding University vacations, should suffice to find it. They do not conceive that the matter should be either more simple or more complex than that. They are prepared within certain limits to alter their views. Many of them arrive as theosophists and depart as Critical Realists or Bradleians. It is remarkable how Dave's criticism seems so often to be purely catalytic in its action. He blazes upon them with the destructive fury of the sun, but instead of shrivelling up their metaphysical pretensions, achieves merely their metamorphosis from one rich stage into another. Occasionally he succeeds in converting some peculiarly receptive youth to his own brand of linguistic analysis; after which as often as not the youth loses interest in philosophy altogether. To watch Dave at work on these young men is like watching someone prune a rose bush. It is all the strongest and most luxuriant shoots which have to come off. Then later perhaps there will be blossoms; but not philosophical ones, Dave trusts. His great aim is to dissuade the young from philosophy. He always warns me off it with particular earnestness.

***Iris Murdoch: Under the Net*.**

Sometimes teaching gives students some of the best of what philosophy has to offer:

Quite by luck, I went to University College London to read philosophy in the early 1960s. Here I was taught by Stuart Hampshire, Richard Wollheim, and Bernard Williams and, later, by Hide Ishiguro, Myles Burnyeat, and Jerry Cohen –such different people, but all with something in common: their love of ideas. I was astonished at the intellectual freedom that seemed to abound here: no longer an assumption that there were things that you must necessarily think, things that were obviously right or wrong. Our luck was to be taught by people who seemed to take any and every idea seriously, to follow it through, and to see where it went.

Margaret Cohen: Sent Before My Time, a Child Psychotherapist's View of Life on a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

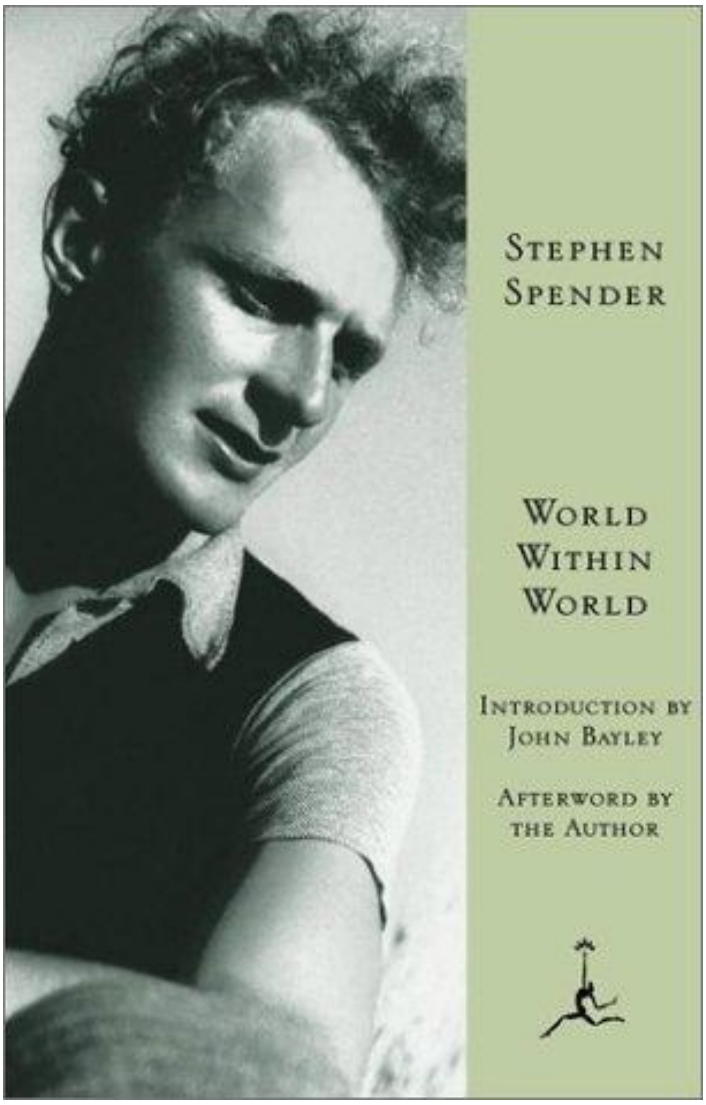
But sometimes things are less inspiring:

I do not know whether it is usual to teach philosophy as I was taught it. In the first lesson we were told that J.S. Mill's Utilitarianism meant the greatest happiness of the greatest number and that, for Mill, happiness was the criterion of moral value. In the next tutorial we were told that Mill was wrong because he had forced himself into the position where, according to his criterion, a very happy pig might be considered morally better than a moderately happy human being. Obviously this was outrageous. Mill himself realized that it was

unthinkable; accordingly he introduced standards of higher and lower kinds of happiness into his philosophy. Here he was caught out, because, if you talk of a higher happiness, your criterion which qualifies happiness is not happiness but something else. Next please. The next philosopher is Locke. We were told what he thought and then why he was wrong. Next please. Hume. Hume was wrong also. Then Kant. Kant was wrong, but he was also so difficult to understand that one could not be so sure of catching him out.

This might be described as the Obstacle Race way of teaching philosophy. The whole field of human thought is set out with logical obstructions and the students watch the philosophers race around it. Some of them get further than others but they all fall sooner or later into the traps which language sets for them. It soon occurred to me that it was useless to enter a field where such distinguished contestants had failed.

Stephen Spender: World within World.



The approach to philosophy teaching experienced by Stephen Spender in the 1930's was often replaced in Britain after the Second World War by a less historical and more technical approach to the subject, emphasizing either the analysis of language or formal logic. But this approach too, even in the hands of its most brilliant practicioners, could be found alienating by students. The novelist who wrote under the name "Veronica Hull" had clearly not warmed to A.J Ayer's classes at University College London in the 1950's:

It's only a game after all," said Mr. Marble the senior lecturer dancing up to the blackboard with a chalk in his hand. "Look -unique instantiation- "a is uniquely instantiated" is equivalent to "it is not impossible to find b,c,d, such that a is a constituent of b, a is a constituent of c, d=bc..."

"Must get it in writing", thought Catherine, scrabbling around in a sort of nosebag.... She found a piece of paper. "£30 to last to December. Buy Christmas presents? Food. Things to cleaners. Remember Friday." She found another piece. "If there is no difference between verifiable results of False or meaningless e.g. King of France is bald -look and see- not only not bald but not there."...

He was well under way now... He had disposed of individuation and the problem of identity which was now chalked up in tiny and indecipherable symbols on the blackboard; and was launching into negation with ten minutes to go.

"What is "failing to find"?" he said again in a bright excited voice. "What is failing to find my cigarette case? Is it finding my paper the books the ashtray ***plus*** *the rider that these are all the things on the table? How do we verify "my cigarette case is not on the table"? Was it this that worried Bradley?"...*

Catherine was sitting by the window. Seminars got her down. And this problem of "failing to find" troubled her. She had failed to find anything. She wasn't sure whether she was Catholic any more; she wasn't at all sure whether logical positivism would be a satisfactory substitute; and on top of it all she had a ridiculous infatuation for the man who distilled doubt as cleverly and profitably as a bootlegger. She found the atmosphere of stale cigarette smoke and flippancy claustrophobic, and opened the window.

"What could Bradley mean by this?" said Mr. Marble, looking at the open window. He liked it stuffy. "What's the man talking about? "All negative judgments affirm that the quality of the real excludes a suggested ideal content, so all are existential." He tipped his chair back precariously, then swung forward on it. "Analytic or synthetic?", he said triumphantly. He leaned back again smiling and fiddling with a box of matches...

"Yes, yes, yes, I think we've got it at last. We'll finish negation off next week. Peter write a paper for me will you? I'm not ***entirely*** *happy about negation yet."*

Veronica Hull: The Monkey Puzzle.

ON GIVING UP PHILOSOPHY.

Ayer also appears in an account by someone else who was not inspired by analytical philosophy:

"Or" was a big thing in Oxford philosophy. The only known published work of Oscar Wood, our philosophy tutor at Christ Church, was an essay in Mind, the philosophers' journal, entitled "Alternative Uses of "Or" ", a work which was every bit as indeterminate as its title. Several years later he published another paper, this time for the Aristotelian Society, entitled "On Being Forced to a Conclusion". Oscar looked like a cherub who had been spoiled by claret. He was simultaneously charming and miserable. To many of his pupils he became a lifelong friend. He and I never quite clicked. My kind of laziness wasn't his. Besides, I found the linguistic brand of philosophy then in vogue as dry and sterile as those who taught it… My breaking point came in a New College lecture room where Professor A.J. Ayer, the legendary seducer and wit, was lecturing on the problems of induction. In his quick, dessicated voice, he invited us to consider an imaginary universe in which time was split up into an infinity of separate instants, none of which had any connection to the next. In such a universe how could we induce anything? It was intolerably stuffy in the room. The leaded windows were all shut, perhaps were already rusted up in Matthew Arnold's day, and flies were buzzing against the panes as desperate to get out as I was. If this was philosophy, I could do without it and it could do without me…

When I switched to modern languages, I thought, or persuaded myself, that those four terms doing PPE had been a complete waste of time. What a farrago of nit-picking and logic-chopping I had been wading through, or most of the time not wading through. The curious thing is that, looking back today, I realise that during that brief period of intermittent attention I picked up, almost unwittingly, half the mental furniture that, scratched and battered no doubt, I still use.

Ferdinand Mount: Cold Cream.

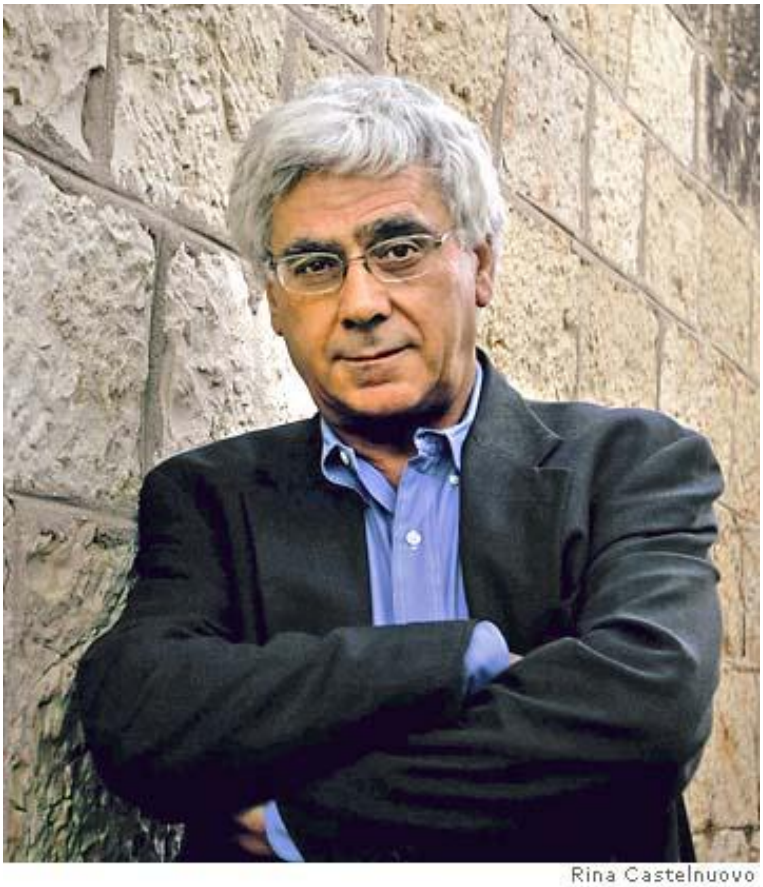
A FOOTNOTE TO VERONICA HULL AND FERDINAND MOUNT ON FREDDIE AYER:

Philosophy is a subject people tend not to find *fairly* interesting. More than most, it elicits love or hate. As an undergraduate, I too went to Freddie Ayer's classes in New College, and found them some of the most open, lively, and stimulating discussions of my life. If this was philosophy, I couldn't do without it, and I hoped the philosophers would not see how easily it could do without me.

A FOOTNOTE TO FERDINAND MOUNT ON OSCAR WOOD.

For two years I was a colleague of Oscar Wood's, teaching philosophy at Christ Church, Oxford. He and I never quite clicked either. He was indeed charming as well as miserable, though his was the very dry charm of Eeyore. I was not on the Governing Body but I heard that there he defended me as someone the College would find worth keeping, when my job was controversial. (I chose to live in London rather than Oxford in order to spend my evenings with Vivette, whose work was in London.) But when we talked together he made it a point of honour to take a very gloomy view of anything I said about philosophy, and by implication of the quality of the thinking behind it. I respected him without ever feeling comfortable with him. Years later I respected him even more when I heard that, in Governing Body, bravely and alone he had opposed some honour for Lord Cherwell, a very senior Christ Church person and an adviser to Churchill, because he was also a major architect of the policy of saturation bombing of German cities.

Someone who learnt more from Oscar Wood:



Rina Castelnuovo

SARI NUSSEIBEH

Unfortunately, serious inroads into philosophy proved exasperatingly elusive. Troubles began with my first tutorials. As if by destiny, the first book I was given to read was Bertrand Russell's Problems of Philosophy. A week later my tutor, to whom I still owe the deepest gratitude, pulled the rug out from underneath me, causing my seemingly incontrovertible world of ideas and facts to come crashing down. I was settled in the leather chair in his office and venturing forth into my commonsense epistemology when he let me have it. And when I tried to offer counterarguments, he finished them off, too. He did so with such remarkable ease that it seemed effortless. Making a cup of tea would have worked up more of a sweat.

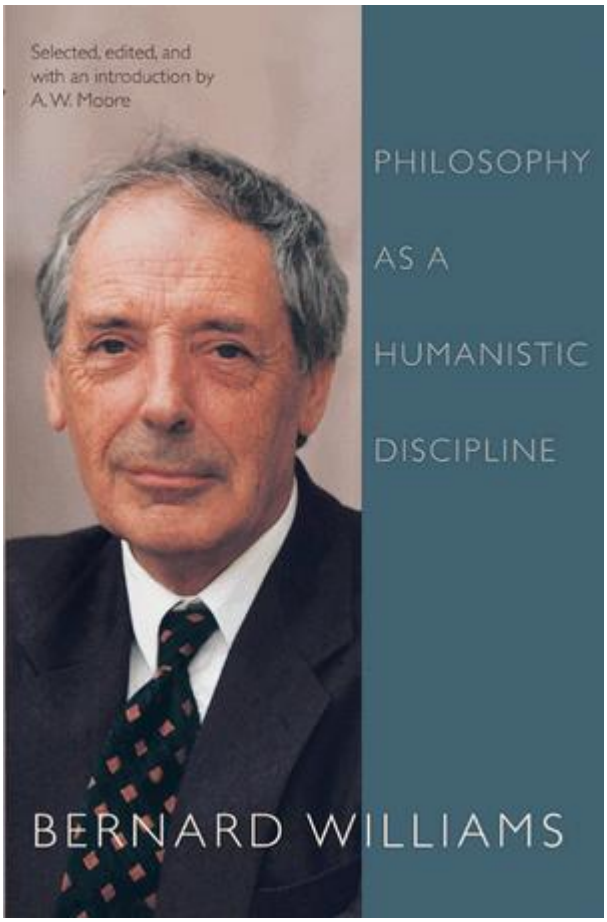
The following week the same thing happened. After one more round of crawling out of his office utterly defeated, I had to admit that whatever certainty I had found over the previous year or two had gone. I was back to my familiar condition of floundering.

This condition was, in truth, considerably worse than the foglike state of my childhood. Now there was no safe harbor into which I could retreat…

I nevertheless kept going back to my tutor, and, as the semester wore on, it began to dawn on me that his ruthless attacks were not nearly as merciless as I

had at first suspected. His was a Socratic method of challenging set beliefs and assumptions, if necessary by tearing away safe moorings and hallowed orthodoxies and legends. He wanted to inculcate in his students enough critical reflection and steeled intellectual discipline to allow them to live and think consciously, to open up doors of the mind previously sealed shut. He went beyond challenging my conscious views; far more disconcertingly, he forced me to question hitherto unquestioned assumptions, and to jettison them if they didn't measure up. During one sitting, he quoted Francis Bacon's belief that the mind has idols in need of being shattered.

Sari Nusseibeh: Once Upon a Country, a Palestinian Life.



There is the question of what impression one gives of the subject in teaching it. Most students have no interest in becoming professional philosophers. They often take away an image of philosophy as a self-contained technical subject, and this can admittedly have its own charm as something complicated which can be well or badly done, and that is not to be despised. It also in some ways makes the subject easier to teach, since it less involves trying to find out how much or how little the students know about anything else. But if we believe that philosophy might play an important part in making people think about what they are doing, then philosophy should acknowledge its connections with other

ways of understanding ourselves, and if it insists on not doing so, it may seem to the student in every sense quite peculiar.

We run the risk, in fact, that the whole humanistic enterprise of trying to understand ourselves is coming to seem peculiar. For various reasons, education is being driven towards an increasing concentration on the technical and the commercial, to a point at which any more reflective enquiry may come to seem unnecessary and archaic, something that at best is preserved as part of the heritage industry. If that is how it is preserved, it will not be the passionate and intelligent activity that it needs to be.

Bernard Williams: Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline.

I taught philosophy for thirty years at New College, Oxford, and for the last twelve or so years have been teaching at the Centre of Medical Law and Ethics at King's College London. I teach on the MA in Medical Ethics and Law and on the MA in Human Values and Contemporary Global Ethics.

After some of these sometimes devastating accounts of philosophy teaching seen through the eyes of those being taught, it is obviously highly risky to include here this DVD of a medical ethics class I taught. It is a group doing the MA in Medical Ethics and Law. The risk is worth taking, as the students are the stars of the class, with their wonderful openness, argumentativeness and seriousness. I include this record of it so that when I say to people how much my life has been enriched over many years by students, I have something to refer people to, so they can see for themselves.

(For the first minute or so of this film patience is needed, as the camera captured me trudging down the long dark passages on the way to the classroom. Eventually I do get there and the class starts. On going down these passages to the uninspiring classroom I try to remind myself of those -including Socrates,

Boethius, Condorcet, Russell, Gramsci and others- who somehow managed to think interestingly about philosophy even in prison.)

PHILOSOPHY TEACHING AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICE RECRUITMENT.

In the mid-1990s, when I was teaching at New College, Oxford, I was called one day at my house in London by someone from the Foreign Office. He said they were concerned that they were not getting such good recruits from Oxford as before, and he would like to talk to me about this. He suggested taking me out to lunch. The quality of entrants to the Foreign Office is not a big concern of mine. But I take any opportunity to be a counterexample to that dismal view economists take about free lunches.

So I booked a table at Odette's, the French restaurant just round the corner from where I live. When the man from the Foreign Office arrived at my house, we had a drink before going to Odette's. No sooner had I poured the drinks than he astonished me. He said he was here under false pretences. Really he was from the Secret Intelligence Service and that they wanted to ask for my help. (I should not have been astonished, as, when I mentioned the phone call, Vivette - who is wiser than I am - said that it would be the Intelligence Services. I - gullible, as Vivette sometimes points out - said, "Oh, no: he was quite explicit about it being about Foreign Office recruitment".)

As we had our drink, he made it clear that he wanted me to recruit New College undergraduates for the Secret Intelligence Service. I gave my first off the cuff reaction. I had mixed views about the activities of the security services. But, most of all, as a teacher my first loyalty here was to my students, and I was not sure I would be doing them a favour by steering them towards the kind of life lived by secret agents. (My picture was shaped by a novel by Graham Greene, and by the spy novels of John Le Carre and their television adaptations.)

He, still hoping to recruit me as recruiter, responded by saying that he had been having an interesting and rewarding life. Over a long lunch he told me a lot about it. He did a good job for the Service in being so personal, and he was a good example of someone who clearly had very much enjoyed his professional life. But I am a different sort of person and so he did not win me over. I said I would think about it and would write to him. But really I already knew my answer would be "no". (The Secret Service should be glad of this, as from their point of view they are much better off without me. I am unbelievably disorganized and inefficient. Worse still, I am a natural gossip: the sort of leaky person any intelligence service should avoid at all costs. The really bizarre thing is that my name should have been suggested to them.)

When I thought more about the proposal, I came to see that the deepest thing wrong with it had to do with the way students in philosophy tutorials trust a tutor enough to discuss their own beliefs. Here is the letter I wrote:

Dear Mr. ------,

I very much enjoyed our recent lunch. As you realised, it was a surprise to me that you came from the Secret Intelligence Service, and so my off the cuff responses to your proposal were not very well thought out. I did appreciate the way that, in response to my unease about whether life in the Secret Intelligence Service would be one in which my students would be happy, you put so much of yourself on the line. I greatly appreciated your openness about your own career and how you have felt about it.

Because you were so open and put so much of yourself into our discussion, I find this letter hard to write. I have thought the matter over and have decided that I cannot be a recruiter for the Service. This is because of reasons which, rather inarticulately, I was groping for in our conversation.

My first reason is that I am not a wholehearted supporter of the activity of secret intelligence gathering. I am dubious about gaining people's trust in order to use them as a source of intelligence. I know that, in saying this to you, I will sound like a pacifist talking to a soldier, and I am aware of the thought that the freedom to be a pacifist depends on armies having defeated Hitler. I have little doubt that intelligence gathering has helped prevent terrorist outrages, by the IRA and others. When the bombs have not been planted lives have been saved, and I wholeheartedly support the intelligence activities which thwart violent terrorism. But I cannot help wondering how much intelligence activity is of this kind. We talked about intelligence activities in Southern Aftica and Latin America. I wonder how often the operations there really contribute to saving lives, rather than to advancing other, less morally urgent, British interests and policies.

I mentioned an anxiety about relations between British intelligence and other intelligence services, such as the CIA or BOSS. I am worried at the idea of information coming from agents in, for instance the ANC, finding its way back to BOSS. I expressed a similar worry about information from British in telligence in Latin America being put at the disposal of the CIA for political projects which I would find questionable. You gave me your assurance that my worries were groundless. But one of the very general problems about intelligence is that virtually no-one involved in it can know with certainty what use is made of the information they provide. If there were a secret deal, for instance with BOSS or the CIA, it might be secret also from those who provided the information. I do nor doubt your good faith in saying the reassuring things you did, but I do not think it unreasonable that my disquiet remains.

Perhaps my strongest reason for thinking that this is not something I can do concerns the students I teach. Because I teach philosophy, a lot of what I do in tutorials has to do with the students' own beliefs. Like a lot of philosophy tutors I use the method discovered by Socrates: ask someone what they believe; then ask them their reasons for thoise beliefs; then get them to argue with you about whether those reasons are any good. The idea is to teach the students to develop and use skills of criticism and argument, and to apply these to what they themselves think. This view of teaching gives me a kind of license to ask questions about beliefs and values which in other contextes might seem intrusive.

Perhaps my students would give a less utopian picture of how tutorials actually go. But my strong impression is that they don't mind about being asked to argue about their own beliefs and values. They virtually always seem willing to talk about their belief or lack of belief in God, their views on free will, on war, on abortion, or on what makes life worth living, or about their Marxism, their Conservatism or their Catholicism. Whether I agree or disagree with their views, my hope -perhaps not always realised- is to respond to what they say with a combination of personal sympathy and intellectual criticism. I think they are willing to put their own beliefs on the line because they know it is part of learning philosophy, because everyone gets treated the same, and because they know that I am not interested in their beliefs for any other purpose.

It is this last point that would be a problem if I became a recruiter for the Intelligence Service. Their beliefs would obviously be relevant. I would inevitably make use of what they told me about them in tutorials. But it is their trust that I am not making mental notes for some other purpose which, I think, lets them talk so freely. I don't want to make use of things they say on that understanding. And, because they are usually so open with me, I don't want in this matter, even slightly, to be different from how I seem to be.

I am sorry to be a disappointment. I respect your very different point of view. Inflicting this long letter on you is partly a matter of feeling a need to respond to the strong and personal case you made. And I really did enjoy meeting you and being given a brief and fascinating glimpse of a world which I would not otherwise come across.

With all good wishes,
Jonathan Glover.

So, I and the Secret Intelligence Service were both saved from disaster by a combination of Graham Greene, John Le Carre and the nature of teaching philosophy.

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8. BOOKS

CAUSING DEATH AND SAVING LIVES (1977)

This book has three central thrusts. The first is an attempt to provide a new model for thinking about the moral wrongness of killing. It sets out to challenge the orthodox account based on the sanctity of life. If life is sacred, can this approach allow for the greater importance we give to life or death decisions about people than to such decisions about chickens or trees? On the proposed new model, the wrongness of killing people is partly based on respecting their autonomy. It is also based on the value to the person of being alive. “Life is only of value as a vehicle of consciousness”, and consciousness is only of value as a condition of a kind of life experienced as worthwhile.

The second thrust challenges another aspect of conventional morality: the huge moral difference assumed to exist between killing someone and either deliberately or intentionally allowing them to die. Sometimes it is judged that it would be a mercy to allow a hospital patient in a desperate condition to die (perhaps by giving no protection against flu). The intention is for the patient to die, and this is the consequence. Is this really so different to administering a lethal injection with the same intention and the same consequence? And should we really be so comfortable with the way we allow so many preventable deaths by doing so little about hunger and disease in the devastatingly poor majority of the world’s people?

The third thrust is to try to provide a way of thinking about life and death decisions more humane than the legalistic rules often associated with the traditional sanctity of life approach. The aim is to move the debate on abortion, capital punishment and war away from abstract rules about the sanctity of embryonic life, retribution or national defence: to shift the focus of the ethics of decisions about war towards the consequences of those decisions for the people affected. The chapter on war started: "It is widely held that killing in war is quite different. It is not, and we need to think about the implications of this." Years later, an article I wrote against the invasion of Iraq, both drew on the book and at the same time was a distillation of its essence.

The key to the spirit of *Causing Death and Saving Lives* is a remark it quotes by Bertrand Russell, a year before a pamphlet he wrote against the First World War resulted in him being sent to prison.

The question of the rights and wrongs of a particular war is generally considered from a juridical or quasi-juridical standpoint: so and so broke such and such a treaty, crossed such and such a frontier, committed such and such

unfriendly acts, and therefore by the rules it is permissible to kill as many of his nation as modern armaments render possible. There is a certain unreality, a certain lack of imaginative grasp about this way of viewing matters. It has the advantage, always dearly prized by lazy men, of substituting a formula, at once ambiguous and easily applied, for the vital realization of the consequences of acts. ***Bertrand Russell: The Ethics of War, International Journal of Ethics, 1915.***

Causing Death and Saving Lives was developed as my contribution to an Oxford class given with Derek Parfit and James Griffin in the years from 1967. Its influence can be seen in the writings a number of those graduates who attended the class and who became leading philosophers, including Peter Singer and John Harris.

In the legal case about Tony Bland, who was in persistent vegetative state after a brain injury, the House of Lords made the landmark ruling allowing the removal of life support when consciousness was lost irrecoverably. Tony Bland's doctor told me that he and the family had used the book in their thinking. One of the legal judgments echoed the book: "life is of value only as a vehicle of consciousness".

"My original motives for writing this book were the interest of the questions involved and my own lack of any clear and defensible answers... One of its aims is to persuade people to change opinions which they already hold. This is because some of the views criticized here cause much unnecessary misery, while others lead to loss of life that could and should be avoided. The conventional view that philosophical discussions are quite remote from having any practical upshot, such as prevention of suffering or loss of life, has very little to be said for it."

CHOOSING CHILDREN: GENES, DISABILITY AND DESIGN

This book, based on the Uehiro Lectures I gave at Oxford, returns more than twenty years later, to the genetic choices discussed in What Sort of People Should There Be?. I had more fun with the earlier book, because it was moving into unmapped territory and I could use my imagination to devise scenarios that would probe the issues about the values that should guide the decisions. But this later book has the advantage of being able to draw on our collective experience of how some of these choices have emerged in practice and the ways different societies have responded to them. One of the big issues is about choices for or against having children with disabilities. Do such choices form part of parental reproductive freedom? Or are decisions not to have a child with a disability worryingly like Nazi eugenics? What about the preference some deaf people have for having a child deaf like themselves? Central to this book are questions about disability and about what we owe to our children. For this discussion, one

enormous advantage over the older book is the fact that so many people with different kinds of disability have given marvellous, detailed first-person accounts of their lives. The rest of us are now able to learn from them about how their lives feel from inside, instead of speculating from outside. The book tries to relate some of this to the ethical debates about disability and genetic choice.

HUMANITY, A MORAL HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (LONDON, 1999 AND NEW HAVEN, 2000)

It is a bit staggering how easily most of us accept the cruelty and killings that fill so much of the news bulletins. *Humanity* started out with the idea that ethics should not carry on as though none of these horrors were relevant. Should not ethics have something to say about how to avoid them? Should not trying to understand why people did these things shape our thinking about ethics? The abstract philosophical battle between fundamental level ethical theories is like eternally inconclusive trench warfare, but there is wide and deep agreement about the moral enormity of the great atrocities. Some progress in ethics may be made if we start from this agreement. Understanding more about the psychology of wars, massacres, genocides and other atrocities may yield a map of some virtues and vices relevant to avoiding their repetition. It may also create some ethical agreement between people with deep disagreements at the level of fundamental theory. These were the hopes behind the book.

The approach was to start from the moral resources we have. What, in everyday life, restrains people from doing horrible things to each other? Obviously part of the answer is social pressures and the threat of legal punishment. But in Nazi Germany or Mao's China, these pressures and threats operated against critics rather than against participants in atrocity. The book outlines some central moral restraints: sympathy, respect for people's dignity, and the sense of one's own moral identity: of not being the sort of person who murders or tortures. The central project of the book is an attempt to answer the questions about what happened to anaesthetize or to over-ride these moral resources when the great twentieth century atrocities took place. For evidence it sticks as closely as possible to things said and written by people who experienced these events. What, humanly, went wrong when the First World War broke out, or when the soldiers trapped in the trenches went on obeying orders to kill each other in such numbers? How could people bring themselves to create the firestorms that destroyed whole German cities, or to drop the atomic bomb? How could people to participate in the massacres of My Lai, Bosnia or Rwanda? How could people participate in the Nazi genocide, or in the huge communist killings under Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot?

"One of this book's aims is to replace the thin, mechanical psychology of the Enlightenmment with something more complex, something closer to reality. A consequence of this is to produce a darker account. But another aim of the book is to defend the Enlightenment hope of a world that is more peaceful and more humane, the hope that by understanding more about ourselves we can do something to create a world with less misery. There are more things, darker things, to understand about ourselves than those who share this hope have generally allowed. Yet, although this book contains much that is exceptionally dark, the nessage is not one of simple pessimism. We need to look hard and clearly at some monsters inside us. But this is part of the project of caging and taming them."

I: THE PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSONAL IDENTITY (1988)

This book relates work in neuroscience, psychology and psychiatry to questions about what a person is and the nature of a person's unity across a lifetime. The neuropsychiatry is now dated. The philosophy has three themes still perhaps of interest. The first is a response to Derek Parfit's powerful and influential work on personal identity, which, like many other people, I discussed with him as he worked it out. I accept his view that there is no ego that "owns" the stream of our experiences, and the unity of a person over time is constructed out of continuities in our mental life. But I argue against Parfit's view that personal unity thereby becomes less deep or less morally important. The second theme is an emphasis on the importance of self-creation and an attempt to work out how far it is possible. The third theme is about the way self-creation is linked to recognition by other people, and the importance of this for understanding the role of tribalism in human life.

"This book is about what it is to be a person, to think of oneself as an "I". It is about the ways people think of themselves, and how they use these ideas in

shaping their own distinctive characteristics. It is about how far we create ourslves."

"When a way of life does not fit with what you think you are really like, you can feel like a plant away from the light, distorted by having to twist and grope towards the sun. This analogy suggests that we might have a genetic programme to unfold, in the way plants do. But no doubt it is too simple to think that "the real me" is genetically laid down. These strong affinities we have for some kinds of life, and the sense of drowning that others give us, are likely to have been created by the interaction of our genetic make-up with thigs we have come across and responded to... We care a bit like trees would be, if they were conscious and could partly choose their direction of growth. Perhaps oaks could not become beeches, and stunted trees could not become giants, but they could influence the angle and direction of their branches. Trees thinking about determinism and free will might find it impossible to assess their own contribution to their final shape."

RESPONSIBILITY (1970)

This book argues that determinism may well be true, and tries to work out an account of freedom and responsibility compatible with determinism and which can accommodate the ways in which psychiatric disorders disrupt freedom of action. It also discusses how pleas about only obeying orders, only being a cog in a machine, etc. are used in attempts to evade responsibility for such things as participation in genocide.

WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE SHOULD THERE BE? (1984)

This was the first philosophical book on the ethics of genetic choices, and (in its second half) the first book on what is now called “neuroethics”: questions about mood-changing drugs, about inhabiting virtual realities, and about the use of brain-scanning techniques to access the contents of people’s minds. It all seemed very futuristic then, and I had to convince readers that the issues might one day become practical. Discussing genetic choices, I had to invent thought experiments rather than, as now, discussing actual cases. It is striking how the genetic issues became real so much faster than the neuroethics issues, which even now for the most part seem a bit ahead of what we can actually do. Perhaps the book was too futuristic for its time. It sold less well than *Causing Death and Saving Lives* and the publisher let it go out of print. One reason for making it available here is that in most years several people ask me how they can get hold of it. I spend time photocopying it and will be happy to give this up. Another is that, although I now think the book’s title sounds arrogant, this does not reflect the contents. I hope the underlying ideas and values, particularly the emphasis on self-creation, are still important for thinking about these issues.

"This book is about some questions to do with the future of mankind. The questions have been selected on two grounds. They arise out of scientific developments whose beginnings we can already see, such as genetic engineering and behaviour control. And they involve fundamental values: these technologies may change the central framework of human life. The book is intended as a contribution, not to prediction, but to a discussion of what sort of future we should try to bring about... The intention is to describe possibilities in ways that separate out different values, and to say, "these values, rather than those, are what matter, aren't they?" Of course, in a way I hope for the answer "yes". But, because people have different outlooks, the answer will quite often be "no". My hope is that those who answer "no" will have been helped to see more clearly what it is they do not believe, and perhaps as a result to work out more fully what they do believe."

SOME OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Fertility and the Family, 1989.

A report to the European Commission by a working party I chaired on assisted reproduction. It discussed donor recruitment and anonymity, the impact on ideas of the family, surrogate motherhood, embryo and fetal research, disability, gene therapy and genetic engineering.

"We have tried to make a coherent set of recommendations wherever possible. But, where disagreements seemed deep, we have preferred to expose them, together with the reasons given on both sides, rather than to patch together some compromise. We think it contributes more to an understanding of the issues sometimes to present reasoned alternatives than to present an agreed position for which the real reason would be the need for unity rather than genuinely compelling arguments… Others will often disagree with our views. We hope that this will at least stimulate them to work out more fully and explicitly what their reasons are."

In 1989 it was more controversial than now to say this about helping lesbian couples to have children:

"It is surely right to be predisposed in favour of anything that removes some of the barriers against homosexuals having a fulfilled family life. Lesbians who want to have children are not different in their needs from heterosexual women. Like many other women, lesbians may care about what adoption does not provide: having a child genetically theirs and to whom they give birth. They may care as much about having their children as an infertile wife, and their lives may be as much enriched by such children as anyone else's."

Philosophy of Mind (edited), Oxford Readings in Philosophy, 1976.

Utilitarianism and its Critics (edited), 1990.

Women, Culture and Development (jointly edited with Martha Nussbaum), WIDER series in Development Economics, Oxford University Press, 1995.


Martha Nussbaum, Leusden, 2005

"When we think about the occupational purdah of women in Bangla Desh and Northern India, our response is to see it as a denial of basic human rights, as an injustice needing remedy. But thinking of the ecology of cultures may make us pause… If the effort to persuade is successful, our culture will again have defeated theirs. There can seem something unfair about the unequal contest, and something sad about the diminished human variety of its outcome.
"Anyone with some anthropological sensitivity is likely to feel sympathy with this case for caution. But, on the other hand, many of us will still feel troubled by accepting the status quo. It is not readers of books on anthropology who pay the price for this cultural variety. It is paid in the Third World by women and their children who have too little to eat. The anthropological case pulls one way, but concern with misery and oppression pulls the other."
(from my article The Research Programme of Development Ethics in this volume.)

9. ARTICLES AND PAPERS

ABU GHRAIB

At the time of Abu Ghraib, I was asked to write an article for the New York Times about it. They decided not to publish it, which I found quite interesting in itself.

We speak of torture and cruelty as kinds of inhumanity. But they are human. They reflect deep parts of our nature. People do terrible things to "enemies" in war, but enmity is not necessary. The psychologist Phillip Zimbardo ran an experiment, where college students were randomly allocated to play the roles either of prison guards or prisoners. The experiment had to be stopped before time because the "guards" were treating the "prisoners" so badly. And many people are excited by the infliction on people of pain and humiliation, as much pornography shows.

There is this dark side of human nature, excited by cruelty. But there is another side. We have moral resources that help restrain our cruelty. We are able to imagine how the victims feel and to sympathize with them. We have respect for the dignity of other people. There is disgust at cruelty. There is also a sense of our own moral identity, for instance not wanting to be the kind of person who tortures or humiliates others. When atrocities like those in Abu Ghraib prison take place, this is partly because people's moral resources have been anaesthetized.

Imagining and being moved by the suffering of others can be a casualty of war. Killing in war may be easier if those on the other side are not felt to be fellow humans. In the Iraq war this may have happened to the American and British planners who killed or wounded more than a thousand civilians by using cluster bombs on populated areas. Sometimes anger destroys sympathy, as in Falluja, when an angry Iraqi crowd killed four Americans and mutilated their bodies, or when American commanders responded by besieging and bombing the town, killing six or seven hundred people. Another sign of this unconcern is the lack of any clear figure for Iraqi civilian casualties during and after the war.

Respect for the dignity of other people is an important barrier against atrocity. It is recognition of their moral status as fellow human beings. Eroding this respect by humiliating people makes atrocities easier. Examples are the Nazi humiliation of Jews, forcing them to scrub pavements on their knees, and the humiliation of "counter-revolutionaries" in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Degrading people dehumanizes them and makes it easier to kill them. Expressions of contempt are a mild version, to a slight degree removing the protection of equal moral status. One version is the cold joke: contemptuous humor at the expense of someone's distress or powerlessness. When Mr.

Rumsfeld was asked about conditions of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, it was a cold joke when he said the camp was not meant to be a country club. Such comments in a small way gradually erode protective dignity.

Obviously those who carried out the atrocities in Abu Ghraib were not restrained by any sense of the dignity of their victims. Humiliation, especially sexual humiliation, was central.

What about moral identity? Did these men and women have no values that might have made them reject becoming sadistic torturers? Moral identity may fail as a restraint when many play a part in atrocity. No-one feels that they are personally responsible. In the Nazi genocide, this happened again and again: "I only arranged the trains", "I only supplied the gas", "I only took the Jews to the station", "I only obeyed someone else's orders". In this way, someone can retain the self image of being a decent person despite participation in terrible things. In Abu Ghraib, the division between military police and intelligence people, and the practice of using outside contractors, may have left no-one feeling that the system in place was their responsibility.

A common way of weakening the restraints of moral identity is to evade recognition of the kind of thing you are doing. Cold, abstract language slurs over the fact that the topic is torture. At Abu Ghraib, the instruction was given that "it is essential that the guard force be actively engaged in setting the conditions for successful exploitation of the internees". When someone gives an instruction like this, the result is another human being having to stand in fear of death, hooded and attached to electrodes. Or the result is another person being deprived of sleep, or having dogs set on him, or having to submit to some public sexual humiliation, as in the nightmare photographs we have all seen. If the person giving the order had to spell all this out, he might see how disgusting a person he must be to command all this. It is more comfortable to stick to phrases about being "actively engaged in setting the conditions".

In these ways, the restraints of sympathy, of respect for dignity and of moral identity can all fail. Does this mean that human nature is so flawed that we can never escape from torture and barbarism? For those of us who hope that the human race may grow out of its barbaric past, the last week has been a dark time. At the very least, even in countries where we flatter ourselves that we are civilized, we have a long way to go.

But there are a few chinks of light. William Kimbo, Master-at-Arms First Class, and US Navy Dog Handler, resisted pressure to participate in improper interrogations. SPC Joseph Darby found evidence of abuse and reported it. First Lt. David Sutton stopped an abuse and reported it. And Major General Antonio Taguba, in a brave report, called for appropriately severe disciplinary action. These good people show that, even in a dark place, it is possible to retain

humanity and integrity. The better side of human nature does not have to be defeated. We need to know more about what makes the difference between those who become sadistic torturers and those who refuse. The hope that mankind may escape from these horrors depends partly on this.

But individual psychology is only part of the story. There is a whole culture that helps or hinders torture and atrocity. This culture depends on those higher up. The shadowy figures in the intelligence community who proposed "setting the conditions" are at least as harmful –and barbaric- as those who complied. Going further up, there are those in government who feared inspection of Guantanamo Bay and tried to block the protocol to the UN Convention on Torture that allows regular inspections of places of detention. This hardly suggests a climate of passionate hostility to torture. The same goes for the indefensible suggestion that US citizens alone should be immune to prosecution for war crimes in the International Criminal Court.

Torture has its origins in human nature. But this does not mean it is invincible. Its defeat requires policies that reflect the revulsion and disgust so many of us feel towards it. A start would be to turn over all places of political detention to the control of international authorities charged with the preservation of human rights. At the very least, bodies like the International Red Cross should have access on demand. And we, the electors in democracies, should judge severely politicians who are evasive on this. If we let torture creep in now, it will corrupt our life for generations.

DIALOGUE IS THE ONLY WAY TO END THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Dialogue is the only way to end the cycle of violence was an article I wrote for the Guardian after the 7/7 London bombings. It suggests a need for a dialogue between Islamic and non-Islamic British citizens, using the method of Socrates to examine our disagreements, and to explore how far we could find agreement and to think about ways of living together in peace despite remaining deep disagreements.

This article provoked floods of emails. Most were supportive, but there was a substantial minority (mainly from the United States and Canada) which were often angrily hostile. Many of the hostile ones, often mentioning Chamberlain, seemed unaware of the differences between Socratic debate with someone and "appeasing" them. Socrates did not try to persuade people by giving in to demands they made. And obviously it is unlikely that, at Munich, Chamberlain put Hitler on the defensive by his challenging questions.

A minority of the critical e-mails made an important point that should be mentioned here. (Some made it helpfully in the spirit of warning me about a

probable mistake. Others made the point with the anger that is sadly common to supporters of one side or the other in a conflict.)

In my article I wrote about how, in conflicts between groups, an act of violence on one side is often followed by one on the other side, and about how each side will later have a much clearer memory of the horrible act on the other side than the one on its own side. I gave as an illustration the case of a crouching Palestinian boy shot by Israeli soldiers, followed days later by an Israeli soldier being torn to death by a Palestinian crowd. Some critical correspondents made the point (which I had not known when I wrote the article) that an investigation by an Austrian television company had concluded that the shooting of the boy was not by the Israeli soldiers. I had simply adopted what at the time was the conventional view, as presented in television news all over the world. I am not in a position to adjudicate the issue of what happened. But, if I had known that the investigation had either refuted the conventional view, or at least had cast serious doubt on it, I would not have taken this pair of events as an example. Sadly, in many conflicts, including the one between Israelis and Palestinians, there are only too many alternative examples of a horror perpetrated by one side soon followed by one on the other side. In order not to whitewash my article retrospectively I leave it here in its original form, but flag up here what a bad choice of example this one proved to be. The general point it was supposed to illustrate still stands.

One message came from an Imam of a London mosque, taking up the offer of dialogue. We had a public dialogue at King's College, entitled "After the Bombs" (referring both to the bombs dropped on Iraq and to the bombs used against the transport system here).

The occasion showed that friendly discussion is possible across huge ideological divisions and we shared a preference for that over violence. But it also showed how hard it would be for us to move toward any diminishing of our disagreements.

The London bombings pose a dilemma. It is hard to believe that the right response to terrorism is to make concessions. But the terrorism also seems part of a cycle of violence in which we too are involved, a cycle of potential war between Islam and the West that threatens to spin out of control. Should we do nothing, leaving the violence to accelerate? Or should we make concessions that may encourage terrorism?

Political violence is often a resentful backlash to a group's sense of being insulted or humiliated. The rhetoric of 1990s nationalism in former Yugoslavia was filled with remembered defeats and humiliations by rival groups. The anger that blazes through Mein Kampf was a resentful backlash against the humiliations of the 1918 defeat and subsequent peace. Al Qaeda rhetoric before

9-11 has the same tone: “the people of Islam have suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustices… Muslims’ blood has become the cheapest in the eyes of the world”. 9-11 was fuelled by this resentment, as the horrifying pictures of cheering Palestinians showed.

The terrorist attacks appall us because of the loss of life, but even more because the killing is deliberate. In London traffic kills far more people than bombs. But we are outraged by what the bombings express. The bombers want us –any of us- dead, or at least are prepared to kill us to make a political point. It is this that arouses the resentful backlash. In the climate after 9-11, and with 3,000 murdered in the symbolic heart of America, any President might have found retaliation imperative. Some of the bombs dropped on Afghanistan carried the initials of the New York Police Department. But the 20,000 killed in Afghanistan fed Islamic resentment in turn. So too did the attack on Iraq. (Some rightly say Iraq was not *the* cause of the London bombings. But surely it was *a* cause?)

The Al Qaeda response to Iraq, in Madrid and now in London, propels the war on terror. And so it all goes on. We have seen these cycles before. The Israeli and Palestinian responses to each others’ violence are a pilot study in entrapment. Each killing is defended as retaliation for the last. Now the West and the Islamic world may repeat the same cycle on a huge scale. There is a dangerous gulf here. It is heartening that, according to a YouGov poll a few days ago, 88% of British Muslims condemn the bombings. But we should be very worried by the 32% who think “Western society is decadent and immoral and that Muslims should seek to bring it to an end”. 32% is over half a million people.

As the assassination at Sarajevo and the response to it triggered the twentieth century World Wars, so 9-11 and the response to it could ruin our century. So much depends on whether we can break out of the cycle of violence. This requires a serious dialogue between the overlapping worlds of the West and Islam before irreversible mutual hatred sets in. We need such dialogue internationally, between Western and Islamic leaders. We also need it in this country, between those who are not Islamic and those who are –especially the half million who live here and think our society should be brought to an end.

“Dialogue” may sound vacuous, but that is misleading. In our own country we need not just any old talk, but some quite deep and sustained discussion of particular issues. It could be one of the great projects of mutual education of our time. Two topics would be central. One would be the different systems of belief on each side. The other would be our different narratives of recent history.

What would dialogue about beliefs be like? It would be a very un-technical form of philosophy. Different systems of belief, especially over religion, are

often thought impossible to discuss. But the history of philosophy has been a sustained investigation into the difference between good and bad reasons for holding beliefs.

Teaching philosophy involves questioning people together. “You think this while she thinks that. Do either of you have reasons that should convince me that your view is the right one?” Notoriously, philosophers disagree, so there is no set of “right” answers to learn from the teacher. Students end up with different beliefs. But, if things go well, they hold their final beliefs more tentatively, aware of how precarious the foundations of any beliefs are. In religious and ideological conflicts, this sense of precariousness is the antidote to fanaticism.

The other topic of the dialogue should be narratives of recent history. This is because of their role in conflict. Several years ago, there were two episodes between Israelis and Palestinians. Pictures went round the world showing a Palestinian boy of about nine or ten, crouching behind his father trying to avoid the Israeli bullets that killed him. A week or two later two young Israeli men crossed a boundary into Palestinian territory. They were killed, torn apart by an angry crowd. We feel the horror and the tragedy of these events. But the tragedy has an extra dimension. The Palestinian narrative will remember the first episode and the Israeli one the second. The stories reinforce the stereotypes that maintain the conflict. (“They deliberately kill our children.” “They are savages.”) Tackling the deep psychology of conflict involves persuading groups to listen to each other’s stories and to look for the possibility of a narrative that does justice to the truths in both. Sometimes this happens after conflicts, with Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. The urgent need is for it to happen before further conflict between the Islamic and “Western” views in Britain.

What is needed is not a one-sided dialogue, in which “we” undermine “their” fanaticism. There are indeed questions to ask about settling political issues by murder or about settling moral issues by appeals to the supposed authority of texts claimed to be the word of God. But there are also questions about “our” morality. We allowed Falluja to be destroyed like Guernica.

And there are questions about the supposed moral difference between bombs in the underground and cluster bombing civilians in an illegal war. In genuine dialogue, both sides have positions at risk. Paradoxically, this can start a virtuous circle. One side admitting intellectual vulnerability may make the other side less defensive too.

We should not reward terrorists by capitulating to their demands. We do not know exactly what they want. And some possible demands are unacceptable: forcing Israelis or Spaniards to live in some totally Islamic Caliphate. But the alternative is not passivity. It is talk. “Never talk to terrorists” is a bad slogan.

Talk will not stop the killing tomorrow. But we need long term thinking too. The right kind of talk opens chinks that let in doubts. And in religion and politics doubts about beliefs save lives.

DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO KILL THE CHILDREN OF IRAQ?

This was an article I wrote in the Guardian just before the outbreak of the Iraq war. It links the issues with the medical ethics teaching I do.

The approach of the Guardian article draws on ideas I worked out in a 1977 book, Causing Death and Saving Lives.

Ihave spent the last few years discussing medical ethics with students who are often doctors or nurses. Their work often involves them in life and death decisions. Our discussions have reminded me of what many of us experience when we are close to someone in acute medical crisis. When a parent is dying slowly in distress or indignity, or when a baby is born with such severe disabilities that life may be a burden, the family and the medical team agonize over whether to continue life support. No-one finds such a decision easy or reaches it lightly. What is at stake is too serious for anyone to rush the discussion.

It is hard not to be struck by the contrast between these thoughtful and painful deliberations and the hasty way people think about a war in which thousands of people will be killed. The people killed in an attack on Iraq will be people not so different from those in hospital whose lives we treat so seriously. Some of them will be old men or old women. Many babies and children will be killed. To think of just one five year old Iraqi girl who may die in this war as we would think of that same girl in a medical crisis is to see the enormous burden of proof on those who would justify killing her. Decisions for war seem less agonizing than the decision to let a girl in hospital die. But only because anonymity and distance numb the moral imagination.

Questions about war are not so different from other life and death decisions. War kills many people, but each has a life no more to be lightly destroyed than that of a child in hospital. This moral seriousness of killing is reflected in the ethics of war. If a war is to be justified, at least two conditions have to be met. The war has to prevent horrors worse than it will cause. And, as a means of prevention, it has to be the last resort. Killing people should not be considered until all alternative means have been tried and have failed.

Those supporting the proposed war on Iraq have claimed that it will avert the greater horror of terrorist use of biological or nuclear weapons. But this raises questions not properly answered. It is not yet clear whether Iraq even has these weapons, or whether their having them would be more of a threat than

possession by other countries with equally horrible regimes like North Korea. No good evidence has been produced of any link to terrorist groups. Above all, there is no evidence of any serious exploration by the American or British governments of any means less terrible than war. Is it impossible to devise some combination of diplomacy and continuing inspection to deal with any possible threat? Is killing Iraqis really the only means left to us?

The weak answers given to these questions by the two governments proposing war explain why they have persuaded so few people in the rest of Europe or even in this country. It is heartening how few are persuaded by claims about intelligence too secret to reveal, or by the attempts to hurry us into war by leaders who say their patience is exhausted. We would never agree to removing the baby's life support on the basis of medical information too confidential for the doctor to tell us. Still less would we accept this because the doctor's patience has run out. It really does seem that this time many of us are thinking about war with something like the same seriousness.

There is an extra dimension to the decision about this particular war. The choice made this time may be one of the most important decisions about war ever made.

This is partly because of the great risks of even a "successful" war. The defeat even of Saddam Hussein's cruel dictatorship may contribute to long term enmity and conflict between the West and the Islamic world. In what is widely thought in the Islamic world to be both an unjustified war and an attack on Islam, an American victory may be seen as an Islamic humiliation to be revenged. This war may do for our century what 1914 did for the twentieth century. And there is an ominous sense of our leaders, as in 1914, dwarfed by the scale of events and sleepwalking into decisions with implications far more serious than they understand.

The other reason for the special seriousness of the decision about this war has to do with the dangerous world September 11th has made us see that we live in. That day showed how much damage even a low-tech terrorist attack can do. The most heavily armed country was like a bull, able to defeat any other bull it locked horns with, but suddenly unable to defend itself against a swarm of bees. All countries are vulnerable to such low-tech attacks. Combining this thought with the proliferation of biological weapons, and possibly of portable nuclear weapons, suggests a very frightening world.

This dangerous world is often seen as part of the argument in support of the war. If we don't act now, won't the problem, as Tony Blair said, "come back to haunt future generations"? But further thought may raise doubts about whether the dangerous world of terrorism and proliferation really counts for the war rather than against it.

The frightening world we live in is like the “state of nature” described by Thomas Hobbes. What made life in the state of nature “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” was the strength of the reasons people had to fight each other. There was no ruler to keep the peace. So everyone knew the strong would attack the weak for their possessions. But the instability was worse than this. My fear of attack by you gives me a reason for a pre-emptive strike against you before you get strong enough to start. But my reason for a pre-emptive strike against you in turn gives you a reason for a pre-emptive strike against me. And so the spiral of fear and violence goes on. Hobbes thought the only solution was the creation of Leviathan, a ruler with absolute power. Such a ruler could impose a peace otherwise unobtainable. The dangers of tyranny and injustice are outweighed by the dangers of a world where no-one has power to impose peace.

Our present international world seems alarmingly like the Hobbesian state of nature. Nations (and perhaps at least as frighteningly, small groups like Al Quaida) have many motives for attack and our protection is flimsy. The pure Hobbesian solution to this would be a social contract between all such states and groups giving all power to one to act as absolute ruler. This is unlikely to happen. But there is a naturally evolving equivalent. Sometimes one dominant power emerges, and imposes Pax Romana or Pax Britannica or in our time Pax Americana. The Hobbesian suggestion is that, as the way out of the law of the jungle, we should welcome the emergence of a superpower that dominates the world.

In his book Perpetual Peace, Immanuel Kant saw that the Hobbesian solution was not the best possible. The Hobbesian ruler has no moral authority. His only claim to impose peace is his strength. Conflict is not eliminated, but suppressed by sheer strength. If the ruler grows weak, the conflict will surface again.

This applies to the international world. A superpower with an empire may suppress conflict. But, as Pax Romana and Pax Britannica remind us, empires fall as well as rise. Such a peace is unlikely to last for ever. And empires act at least partly out of self-interest, so the imposed arrangements may not be just. Palestinians, for instance, may be unhappy to entrust their future to Pax Americana. But absolutely central is the lack of moral authority of anything imposed by force. To put it crudely, no-one appointed the United States, or the United States and Britain, or NATO, to be world policeman.

Kant’s solution was a world federation of nation-states. They would agree to give the federation a monopoly of the use of force. This use of force would have a moral authority derived from its impartiality and from its being set up by agreement. In the present world, the Kantian solution might be a proper UN police force, with adequate access to funds and to force of overwhelming strength. There would have to be agreed criteria for its intervention, together with a court to interpret those criteria and to authorize intervention. There are

many problems with this solution. But something like it is the only way of policing the global village with impartiality and authority. It is the only hope of permanently bringing to an end the cycle of violence.

A central decision of our time is between these two ways of trying to keep the peace in the global village. In a Hobbesian village, violence is quelled by a posse rounded up from the strongest villagers. It is a Texas cowboy village, or a Sicilian village with Mafia gangs. In a Kantian village, there is a strong police force, backed up by the authority of law and the courts. The Kantian village may seem utopian. But there are reasons for thinking it is not impossible. In the first half of the twentieth century, Europe gave the world colonialism, genocide and two world wars. Then it would have seemed utopian to think of the present European Union. Through pressure of experiencing the alternative, a federation did come about. With luck, Kant's proposal may come about because we see the importance of not experiencing what is likely to be a really terrible alternative.

For all its inadequacies, the UN is the embryonic form of the rule of law in the world. This is another reason why the proposed war could be so disastrous. Every time Mr. Bush or Mr. Blair say they will not be bound by a Security Council veto, without knowing it they are Hobbesians. Never mind moral authority. We, the powerful, will decide what happens. If we want to make a pre-emptive strike, we will do so. And we will listen to the UN provided it says what we tell it to say.

Some of us fear the instability of a world of unauthorized pre-emptive strikes. We hope our precarious situation may nudge world leaders further towards the rule of law, towards giving more authority and power to the UN. The alternative is terrifying. This gives an extra dimension of menace to the attitude of the American and British governments to this crisis. The erosion of the world’s attempt at international authority is something to add to the cruelty and killing of this lawless war we are being asked to support.

MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH - THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

In August 1982, Hector and Rosalie Jean Zevallos, the owners of a clinic that carried out abortions in Granite City, Illinois, were abducted. They were threatened with death unless they closed down their clinic, and were held for eight days before being released. Connie Paige describes this early episode in the wave of antiabortion violence in her book. She also tells of the partial burning down of a Planned Parenthood clinic, in St. Paul, Minnesota. One director of the clinic needed constant police protection, while others were threatened with the kidnaping or death of their children. A year after the fire, a bomb was thrown through the window of the clinic. And after a similar firebombing of a clinic in Omaha, a letter sent to a local newspaper is said to have ended: "You'd bomb a concentration camp—why not an abortion clinic?"

By comparison, the harassment of Geraldine Ferraro over her views on abortion in last year's election campaign seems almost civilized.

It is not surprising that abortion arouses such passion. The debate raises issues about feminism, about the relations between religion, morality, and law, and about the social control of medical technology. Underlying all this are questions about what it is to be a parent and about the right to life. With these matters at stake, how could abortion not cause deep and conflicting emotions? Yet it is hard not to be struck by the contrast between the complexity of the issues and the simplicity of the emotional responses.

Emotionalism and simplification lead to implausible claims on both sides. Some take it to be an obvious fact that an abortion is just something done to a woman's body, comparable to the removal of an appendix. Others take it to be an obvious fact that a newly fertilized egg is as much a person as any teen-ager or adult. Opponents on either side are accused of supporting either the oppression of women or murder. It is sad that the debate is like this, since its outcome will affect even larger issues than the ones now seen to be at stake.

The distinctively modern voice in the abortion argument is the feminist one. For too many centuries the discussion, conducted by male theologians and philosophers, centered entirely on the fetus. The issue has been transformed by those prepared to say, as Beverly Wildung Harrison does in her book, that "the controversy over abortion is but one dimension of that far broader world historical struggle to enable us to 'become the subjects of our lives.'" She argues persuasively that procreation is so central to women that having a choice over it is a condition of their having proper control over their lives. Her case for the right to choose is partly utilitarian, based on the unhappiness of those forced to bear unwanted children. She also deplores the injustice of denying women the ability to make decisions that will deeply affect their lives.

One benefit of the change in consciousness brought about by the current wave of feminism is that it is now unthinkable to ignore the issue of women's choice. And most of us now see that if men could get pregnant the right to choose would have had a central place in the debate long ago. All the same, there is something inadequate about the feminist case as it is often made. It is often presented as a matter of women controlling their own bodies, as if what happens during the period of being pregnant were the main issue. Yet the awfulness of an unwanted pregnancy is not primarily a matter of nine months' invasion of the body. A far greater disaster is a lifetime of unwanted parenthood. To some of us, avoiding this disaster is a sufficient justification for abortion. There is the solution of giving the baby at birth to be brought up by one of the many couples who desperately want children and who are unable to have them. This possibility is not something just to dismiss, yet I doubt whether the satisfaction of this real need justifies forcing women to bear children they do not want and

then go through the trauma of giving them away. Respect for the autonomy of women is hardly compatible with making surrogate motherhood compulsory.

But to justify abortion by appealing either to the disaster of unwanted parenthood or to respect for women's autonomy presupposes that killing a fetus has a special status that marks it off from killing, say, a five-year-old child. No feminist would defend child murder as being justified by the greater control it would give women over their lives. To say this is not to suggest a reductio ad absurdum, implying that consistent feminists would have to accept child murder. It is to argue that personal autonomy does not have obvious priority over the right to life. For all its power, the feminist case is incomplete without an answer to the claim that the unborn child is a person with that right.

When we consider the status of the fetus, the antiabortion position has obvious strengths. Fetal development is more like a smooth curve than a series of sudden jumps to more and more advanced states; so there is some force to the argument that a line cannot be drawn specifying just when a "person" comes into being. If we do not draw the line at conception, there seems no sharp and stable boundary until birth. One way of drawing a line has been to say that a fetus is not a person until it is "viable"—when it can live outside the womb. But "viability" is not a stable boundary, since it changes with medical technology. To draw the line at viability is to give up the idea that characteristics of the fetus itself determine whether or not it is a person. Two fetuses at the same stage of development may be in hospitals differing in the level of their technology, so that one will survive outside the womb and one will not. In such a case it seems paradoxical to say that one is not a person and may be aborted, while the other is a person with a right to life.

The difficulty of drawing any line during pregnancy that is sharp and reflects a cogent moral view may suggest to some that the moral frontier should be at birth. Conception and birth, unlike the fetal states between them, seem to be clear and important boundaries. But if facts about what the fetus or baby is like should determine whether it is a person, birth is not an easy line to defend. Is the newborn baby so very different from how it was yesterday in the womb? We make great efforts to keep premature babies alive. Why should a baby at the same stage of development have no claim on us just because it is still in the womb?

The bold course for the supporter of abortion, who sees that even birth may not be a clear and defensible line, is to deny that newborn babies are persons with a right to life. And a traditional philosophical view lends some support to this denial. It has often been argued that being a person is bound up with a minimal level of self-consciousness, an awareness of a frontier between yourself and the rest of the world and awareness of yourself as having continuous existence over time. It is far from clear that newborn babies have any of this self-

consciousness. Perhaps they have to discover where they end and the rest of the world begins. And it would be a very confident developmental psychologist who claimed to know that babies have the concept of their own existence over time.

But if the supporter of abortion takes the bold course of denying, on these grounds, that babies have a right to life, the prolife party may feel that they can rest their case. For making the right to life depend on a degree of self-consciousness that babies do not have seems like accepting a reductio ad absurdum. The boundary of the right to life becomes intolerably vague. When does self-consciousness begin? At three months? At three years? How can we tell? And the position also seems repulsive. The prolifers have always said that even early abortion is morally like killing babies. The reply that they are indeed the same, and that both are acceptable, is not an attractive one.

We are right to be appalled by the conclusions that appear to lie in wait if we deny the right to life on such grounds. This is not to say that infanticide can never be justified. In cases of babies born with terrible abnormalities, there are reasons that perhaps justify overriding our normal respect for the life of a baby. But the extreme cases that may justify infanticide need not count against the view that killing a healthy baby is unthinkable.

While we are right to recoil from any position that removes moral protection from the lives of babies, this does not show that it is wrong to link being a person with being self-conscious. Perhaps there is not enough agreement about the use of the word "person" for it to be clear that any of the rival views on this issue of definition are simply mistaken. An alternate diagnosis of the general wrongness of infanticide is compatible with the view that one becomes a person at a later stage than birth. We have to take into account how babies are accepted into the human community. It does not need saying that, for many of us, the birth of a child is one of the deepest experiences in life. And our developing relationship with a baby starts from the moment it is born. The emotions of childbirth and of the early days and weeks of parenthood are utterly incompatible with regarding babies as disposable living material. Most of us are incapable of adopting such an attitude. And even if we could adopt it, the world would be a worse place if we did so. In other words, even if babies do not have whatever properties are required for being persons with a right to life, there are reasons having to do with our own moral feelings, and our relations with our children, which are more than adequate to justify extending moral protection to them. The same reasons may not apply to the unborn fetus.

The impasse in the abortion debate partly results from all parties treating it as an issue with only one dimension. The prochoice party often wrongly supposes that the woman's claim to control her own life is enough to justify abortion, no matter what rights a fetus may have. And the prolife party often assumes that

the only objection to killing someone is that he or she is a person with a right to life. Once this assumption is conceded, it is indeed hard to resist the antiabortion case. On this assumption, if it is wrong to kill babies, they must qualify as persons. And since it is difficult to draw sharp boundaries between conception and infancy, the prolife case can seem overwhelming. But the assumption should be denied. The effects of certain kinds of acts, not on those they are done to, but on those who do them, can be of overriding importance. Take the case of research on embryos. The practice of in vitro fertilization, which has helped many infertile couples, is most effective if more embryos are produced than will finally be allowed to develop into babies. Research on these "spare" embryos may help us to understand why some people are not fertile and why some forms of congenital defects occur.

Research may lead eventually to ways of avoiding these problems, and perhaps also to the development of better contraceptive techniques. But there are obvious worries about how far such research is permissible. Since the embryos are never going to develop, claims about damaging their potential do not arise. And before the nervous system starts to develop, they may not have any morally relevant properties that would distinguish them, so far as rights are concerned, from, say, an oyster. One plausible view is that the embryos may be used for research, but only before the nervous system starts to develop. This recognizes the claim any conscious being has on us that we not cause it pain, and draws the line well short of where that could happen.

But there is a disturbing possible extension of the research program. There is some evidence that Parkinson's disease could most effectively be treated by transplanting material from the embryonic nervous system. To provide these transplants, the "spare" embryos would have to be allowed to develop well beyond the proposed limit. We might well be dealing with embryos with some degree of consciousness, including the capacity to feel pain. In reply to this, a supporter of the program might cite the great potential benefits to sufferers from Parkinson's disease, and suggest the use of anesthetics to avoid fetal pain.

Some of us will feel very disturbed by this reply. We shudder at this idea in rather the same way we do at the thought of using anesthetized babies for research. Moreover, a problem arises for those of us who accept the objection made by the animal rights movement to "speciesism"—discrimination against a conscious being merely on grounds of its belonging to a different species. Apart from what they have the potential to become, fetuses and babies do not seem to have any of the intrinsic properties of persons with a right to life that would give them stronger moral claims than the monkeys used for research. And "spare" embryos will not develop any potential they have. Yet it is hard to believe that our revulsion against research on this late stage, or against research on anesthetized babies, is merely a prejudice to be eliminated.

The most powerful objection to using anesthetized fetuses for research is what this would do to us, as researchers or as members of a society where such research went on. We remember the experiments Nazi doctors were prepared to do on human beings, and wonder about the strength of the barriers that prevent us from performing atrocities. These barriers must be at least as much emotional as intellectual. We respond to people, whether babies, children, or adults, in ways that make it unthinkable, for most of us, to treat them in the fashion of Nazi doctors. Fetuses, as they develop, start to seem more like babies. Can we be sure that fetal research could be kept in a separate emotional compartment? Or do we risk an erosion of the responses that prevent some of the worst horrors that human beings have shown themselves capable of? Perhaps the risk that these barriers will be weakened is a small one, but even a small risk of a great disaster should not readily be dismissed.

If this line of thought is accepted, the moral claims of late fetuses and of babies are not exhausted by any rights depending on their qualifying as persons. Perhaps they are not persons, and have less of the required self-consciousness than some nonhuman animals. But we have reasons, to do with ourselves rather than them, for not treating them as merely disposable.

The prolife case, then, seems simplistic when we examine the way our moral responses are linked to values more complex than is suggested by single-minded fixation on the "right to life" of "persons." That case becomes more vulnerable when we question the dubious assumption that becoming a person must be a sharp, all-or-none affair. It is the absence of sharp boundaries defining a person that gives plausibility to the claim that to abandon conception as the moral frontier is to start on a slippery slope toward abolishing the distinction between the fetus and the newborn child. But why should becoming a person not be a gradual affair, like becoming middle-aged? Of course any abortion law will need sharp boundaries. But this by itself proves nothing. Speed limits have to be precise rather than blurred, but this does not prove that danger starts at precisely 55 mph. The view that being a person is something that starts abruptly is typically assumed rather than argued. Yet the alternative only has to be stated for the need for argument to be apparent.

A different version of the prolife case claims not that the fetus is a person, but that the fetus is a human being. (President Reagan, in his State of the Union message this year, expressed the thought that science is proving this true.) But it is hard to see what this claim comes to. Obviously the fetus is a being, and it is human rather than belonging to any other species. There is also no doubt that it is living. The problem is that these points could all be made about the living human sperm cell, yet few would think that "human beings" of that kind had rights. The argument exploits the fact that the "human beings" we are most aware of are also persons. There is a sense in which the newly fertilized egg is a

human being, but it isn't the kind of human being you can share a joke with or have as a friend.

Another prolife argument, with great intuitive appeal, asks: "If you were glad you were not aborted yourself, how can you justify aborting someone else?" But again things are more complicated than the simple intuitive response suggests. The premise of the argument is quite correct. I am glad I was not aborted, since I should not be here if I had been. But for the same reason, I am glad my parents did not use a contraceptive, or practice chastity. Unless we accept that we ought to produce as many children as possible, the argument seems to prove too much.

The problem of distinguishing between infanticide and abortion still remains, and it can only be dealt with by examining the moral justifications for taking life. There seem three central objections to an act of killing someone. It is a violation of that person's autonomy, perhaps the most extreme violation possible. It is objectionable because of the loss of the years of life that person would otherwise have enjoyed. And it is objectionable because of the effects on other persons than the one killed. The first objection, about autonomy, is in the Kantian tradition, while the other two objections are broadly utilitarian. How does each apply to infanticide and abortion?

The Kantian appeal to autonomy is linked to the question of being a person. I do not violate someone's autonomy unless I override a decision they have made or a desire they have. (And satisfying this condition may be insufficient, at least to constitute a morally objectionable violation of your autonomy. Your decision or desire may be to harm someone else. But this qualification can be ignored here.) If being a person requires some minimal level of self-consciousness, it seems that only persons will have the desire to go on living that would make killing them a violation of their autonomy.

The problem with trying to settle the abortion question by an appeal to autonomy, or by related claims about person-hood, is that it is highly doubtful that infants have the self-consciousness required, either for being persons, or for killing them to be a violation of autonomy. The Kantian argument leaves infanticide no more objectionable than the morning-after pill.

On the other hand, the first utilitarian argument, about the years of life that are lost, is like the "you-are-glad-you-were-not-aborted" argument. It proves too much. It makes the morning-after pill, and contraception, as bad as infanticide. All eliminate a lifetime that would otherwise have been enjoyed. This is the weakness of all arguments that appeal not to what the fetus is now, but to the potential it has to become a developed person. On these views, abortion is wrong because it prevents the existence of a particular person, the one the aborted fetus would have become. But you are a particular person, and contraception, as well as abortion, could have prevented your existence.

The escape from this might be to interpret potentiality differently. Perhaps the destruction of the potential is not just a matter of the loss of a future developed person, but also the loss of something that started on the way there: the program for producing a person already exists, since all the genes are present. But this leaves open many questions. If the properties the fetus now has do not confer a right to life, and the argument about one fewer future person does not either, why should combining these two considerations suddenly give the desired result? Of course a compound can have properties not possessed by its individual ingredients. But here it would be more convincing to be told something about the moral chemistry involved. And it is hardly to be supposed that the explanation could have the plain obviousness the right-to-lifers claim for their view of abortion.

Since, in their different ways, the Kantian and the first utilitarian objections to killing equate contraception and infanticide, they are of little help in drawing the required moral boundary between infanticide and abortion. In a way that will strike some as disconcerting, the other utilitarian objection, citing the effects of an act of killing on other people, turns out to be centrally relevant. The effects on our attitudes to babies and children become decisive. If the worries I have raised about the dehumanizing effects of late fetal research have any substance, there are parallel worries about late abortion. And, once the child has left the womb, the effect on us of an act of killing obviously becomes much greater.

There is room for reasonable disagreement among those who accept this line of thought. The case against abortion grows more powerful as the pregnancy nears termination, and the case against infanticide is much stronger still. But there is a countervailing case for abortions, even late ones. A powerful argument can be made in favor of bringing to birth only wanted children, and for extending the control of women over their lives. People may legitimately give different weight to the considerations for and against late abortion. And, even with the far more powerful presumption against infanticide, some of us hold that in the case of certain disastrous handicaps at birth the avoidance of a great deal of misery can tip the decision against preserving life. But central to the whole issue is the conflict between such claims and the defense of our emotional responses to babies.

Underlying the prolife view is sometimes an inarticulate feeling for this point. Supporters of that view often have an intuitive sense that the standard arguments in favor of the right to choose abortion justify too much, perhaps including an erosion of our responses to babies. The prolife position is not motivated only by an awareness of this threat, but is often an expression of the threatened responses themselves. The simplifying and questionable prolife assumptions can be exposed, but these underlying emotional responses should

not be dismissed. On the contrary, sensitivity to them is necessary for an adequate defense of the prochoice view.

The stridency that characterizes the abortion argument may partly result from its underlying complexity. It is a major public issue and, for many, a major private decision. Yet a central part of the problem, the status of the fetus, has a troubling ambiguity. The fetus just before birth is very like a baby; the newly fertilized egg is not. As psychologists know, we sometimes find ambiguity hard to tolerate in things that matter. Here, faced with the ambiguous figure, we vehemently assert that it is a duck and denounce the blindness of those who claim to see a rabbit.

But the passion is also linked to the way abortion is the scene of a conflict between larger views of the world. Connie Paige, whose account of the exploitation of the abortion issue by far-right politicians is in the useful tradition of muckraking journalism, suggests that conservatives can see in abortion "a quick and easy symbol for sexual permissiveness and feminism." She describes one of the leaders of the movement, who believes that the issue of abortion will, for conservatives, become what opposition to the war in Vietnam had been for liberals: "a hook to acquaint them with a whole new world view." Organizations such as the one called "Stop the Babykillers" made a notable contribution in 1980 to the replacement of liberal senators like McGovern by more conservative politicians. And no doubt the issue of abortion can also work the other way, drawing people who support it into seeing other issues from the perspective of the women's movement.

On each side, the views held cannot simply be the result of pressure-group leaders manipulating the emotional responses of their followers. Distinctive views on abortion come naturally to different kinds of people with different general systems of belief. Kristin Luker, in her sensitive and illuminating study of activists in the rival pressure groups, gives a portrait of the different worlds they inhabit.

Ms. Luker interviewed at length a sample of 212 California participants in the abortion debate. "Activists" on the prolife side were defined as those spending ten or more hours a week on the issue, and prochoice "activists" were those spending five or more hours a week. (The prolife campaigners were devoting more time to the issue. Applying the same cutoff point to the two groups at the start of the study would have yielded no activists on the prochoice side.) A weakness of the study is that it is not quite clear what the ratio of men to women was in the sample, but it appears that more than 80 percent were women. Kristin Luker found that, while male activists on both sides were very similar in education, occupation, income, and family position, this was far from true of the women involved. The prolife women activists, by comparison with the prochoice ones, tend to have had less education, are more likely to have

married, and tend to have had more children. The prochoice women activists have a lot more money, and are much more likely to be in paid employment. Of the prochoice women, 94 percent had jobs, as against 37 percent of the prolife women activists. There were predictably large differences in religious affiliation as well. Eighty percent of the prolife women activists were Catholic and only 5 percent had no religion, while 63 percent of the prochoice women activists had no religion.

The prolife women activists tend to believe that traditional sex roles reflect deep natural differences between men and women, that sex is primarily for procreation, and that parenthood is a natural function rather than a social choice. They are dubious about sex education, hostile to premarital sex, and hostile to the availability of contraception and abortion to teen-agers without parental consent. The prochoice women activists tend to think that men and women are very similar by nature, and lay less emphasis on the importance of the family in women's lives. They do not think that sex should be tied to procreation, and believe in sexual freedom. They accept teen-age sex but not teen-age parenthood. And they think that the availability of abortion improves the quality of parenthood, by making it a matter of choice.

If the members of the two groups read Kristin Luker's book, they may find to their surprise that they are able to sympathize with some aspects of each other's viewpoint. The most militant prolife advocate might find it hard to denounce as morally irresponsible the members of the prochoice group, in view of their earnest concern that children should have a better upbringing than reluctant teen-age mothers are likely to give them. And, as one who supports the availability of contraception and abortion to teen-agers, if necessary without parental consent, I am impressed by the decency of the reasons the prolife women gave for taking the opposite view. They worry about cutting off parental support and resources when children need them most. They fear that teen-agers may make hasty decisions alone, through underestimating how understanding and helpful parents will be.

Although Kristin Luker's book should help people to see that their opponents are not moral monsters, it will not encourage a tendency to compromise. For, as she emphasizes, the differences about abortion, teen-age sex, and so on are bound up with deeper and more general moral differences. Most notable is the difference between a morality of absolute commands and prohibitions, set in a scheme of religious belief, and the more secular approach of the prochoice activists, who are motivated by the bad consequences of denying abortion both for women and for the quality of parenthood. And this underlying issue is not one where some plausible compromise is in sight. We are deeply divided between religious and secular world views, and also between absolutist and consequentialist moralities.

In the absence of a satisfactory defense of the fetal right to life, however, those of us who support the right to abortion can feel our case is a powerful one. The policy of forcing women to bear and rear unwanted children involves a degree of misery and servitude that is an obvious moral evil. It could only be justified by showing that it averts a greater evil. There is room for disagreement whether the effects on us of late abortions could count as a greater evil. But the prolife arguments do not come near to establishing that abortion in general is such an evil.

The disastrous consequences of restrictive attitudes toward abortion become greater as reproductive technology advances. With the development of tests for fetal abnormality, it is possible to reduce the risks of having a severely handicapped child. The agonizing dilemma of having to decide for or against treatment, which now faces the parents of a spina bifida baby, can be eliminated by detecting the abnormality between the sixteenth and eighteenth week of pregnancy. But if abortion is banned, this test and others become pointless, and appalling disorders will continue to blight people's lives.

The effects of the prolife campaign in the United States, moreover, are being felt in other countries. With one eye on the election-year influence of the prolife movement, the Reagan administration last year cut off funds to those non-government organizations working in the third world that are prepared to support abortion as a means of population control.

The World Bank estimates that the world's population will almost double to nearly ten billion in the next seventy years. The evidence is that third world families, like those anywhere else, seize the choice that contraceptives offer. Their availability owes a lot to organizations like the International Planned Parenthood Federation. The IPPF does not advocate abortion as a form of birth control, but, like the prochoice movement in the United States, thinks abortion should be available where contraception has failed. For this crime, the quarter of its funds that comes from the United States has been cut off. Apart from the probable effect of increasing abortions by reducing the availability of contraceptives, the combined effects of a greater population explosion, and of reduced procreative choice, on people in the poorest countries of the world should need no emphasis. The influence of the prolife movement will be felt further away than Granite City, Illinois, and St. Paul, Minnesota

PSYCHIATRIC DISORDER AND THE REACTIVE ATTITUDES

There are some notoriously difficult questions about when, and how far, people with psychiatric disorders are responsible for their actions. One reason for these questions being so difficult is our limited understanding of these disorders.

Another is that some conditions, such as compulsions and addictions, have blurred boundaries. So such questions as “was he responsible?” and “could she help doing it?” do not always admit of “yes” or “no” answers. These complications make matters difficult enough. But there is a further set of problems, to be the focus of attention here, raised by the fact that some psychiatric and neurological conditions cause long term changes in character and personality. How should the legal system respond to antisocial actions flowing from these changes? And, at least as important, how should those who know such people respond to these deep changes in them?

1. Excuses as a defence of character.

It is worth for a moment leaving aside psychiatric disorder, and looking at responsibility and excuses in general. It is widely agreed that Aristotle was right in seeing ignorance and compulsion as the two central classes of excuses. That ignorance and compulsion have this dominant position reflects the way our judgements of responsibility are guided by an interest in the person’s motives, values and character. If a man knowingly steals money, this reflects on his honesty in a way that being oblivious of a banknote among a loose pile of papers he is picking up does not. If a woman hands over the key to the safe because the robber is armed and dangerous, this reflects fear rather than any desire to help with the robbery. What matters is the motivation behind the action, and understanding the motivation contributes to our picture of the person’s values and character. Pleas of ignorance (“He did not notice the banknote”) and of compulsion (“She was forced to hand over the key”) defend a person’s character. If accepted, they defeat the claim that he is a thief or that she was complicit with the robber.

When mental disorder counts as an excuse, it is often because it supports a claim of ignorance or compulsion. Often the psychiatric versions of these two pleas raise special problems of their own. Someone may be ignorant of what he is doing because of his deluded state, but there are often difficulties for an observer, whether a psychiatrist or anyone else, in deciding how far he was in fact deluded. And the particular cognitive distortions that are characteristic of delusions often seem strange enough to raise difficult questions of interpretation. Psychiatric states may involve a degree of compulsion, but again the “inner” compulsion of addiction or of obsessive-compulsive disorder is often much harder to establish than the external and visible compulsion when the robber brandishes a gun.

There are well-known philosophical models for thinking about cases of conflict, such as unwilling addiction. One is Harry Frankfurt’s use of second-order desires. (1.) His “wanton” is someone with only first-order desires: someone who only wants to have things, do things, etc., but does not have any preference for having some desires over others or about which desires win out over others.

Most of us are not wantons, but have second-order desires and preferences, being glad not to have the desires of a paedophile, or wishing our desire to exercise was stronger than our desire to sit talking over coffee. The unwilling addict is characterized by having a second-order desire to escape the dependence, which conflicts with a first-order desire to take the drug. Where the first-order desire wins out, the addict is unfree, because the real self, identified with the higher-order desire, is defeated.

One problem for this view is why a person's real self should be identified with higher-order desires rather than with first-order desires. This has led to an alternative strategy. One version is Frankfurt's own: sometimes a person just does "decisively identify" with one set of desires rather than another. Another version is shared by Gary Watson and Charles Taylor: what matters is not different orders of desires, but the contrast between desires and values. I am free when the desires that win out are in harmony with my deepest values, and I am unfree when dominant desires and deepest values are in conflict. There is considerable plausibility to this approach, although it leaves open difficult questions about how the distinction between desires and values is to be drawn and about how, when values are in conflict, we are to decide which are deepest.

2. "It wasn't the real me": character-distorting conditions.

In these cases of conflict, a "psychiatric" condition seems to have taken over part of a person. Even more difficult are the issues raised when a psychiatric disorder seems to take over and distort someone's whole personality and character. How should we think about such cases?

On the one hand, accepting or rejecting an excuse is largely about how far an apparently bad action does or does not reflect the person's character. Excuses protect character by disconnecting it from objectionable actions. So it seems strange to allow as an excuse the claim that psychiatric disorder has changed a person's character for the worse. Does not such a plea mean that the person's present character is open to precisely the sort of criticism that the objectionable action suggests?

On the other hand, where a medical condition brings about a radical transformation of character, we are inclined to say that "it is not him but his illness". The easygoing, friendly man we all knew for many years becomes unrecognizably difficult, stubborn, and bad-tempered as his dementia progresses. Or a woman's whole personality is changed for the worse when she gets a brain tumour. We may feel that blaming them for what they now do shows a lack of understanding. The behaviour is surely down to changes in the brain over which they have no control. The same psychological changes may lie in wait for any of us, if our brains start to go the same way.

Those close to people who seem greatly changed by dementia sometimes say such things as “He isn’t the man I married”, or “She is a different person now”. At one level we all understand what such comments mean. But at another level they raise philosophical problems about the boundaries of personal identity.

Those who make the comments may not be clear how literally they mean them. If they are meant literally, some philosophers will accept them and others will reject them. Those who see personal identity as a matter of physical continuity will think in terms of the same person having a changed psychology. Those who take a more psychological view of personal identity will be more willing to see discontinuities of memory or of personality as raising doubts about the person being the same. Others will say that the earlier person may survive to some degree. Here these issues will be sidestepped. I will talk in terms of the same person having a changed character and personality, but the discussion could be translated without loss into the language of the old and the new person, or into the language of earlier and later selves.

A. Aristotelian Common Sense.

How does the thought that this person has changed so radically bear on his or her responsibility for the actions shaped by the new personality?

One possible answer is that it makes no difference at all. In other contexts, people often change radically. People have religious conversions. They change partners and jobs and they emigrate. They take up drugs or enter convents. Any of these upheavals may change character and personality sharply. But the immigrant or the nun are still held responsible for what they do. The new actions flow from the new personality, and it is still appropriate to evaluate the person on the basis of them. The novice nun’s piety (or the new immigrant’s patriotism) is not less relevant to our picture of them because they are newly acquired. So why should the aggression of the person with dementia or a brain tumour be different?

A reply to this question could appeal to the way in which, as Nietzsche saw, we at least partly create ourselves. Nietzsche’s version of self-creation was a highly self-conscious one, making people like architects or landscape gardeners of their own character and personality. He was right that many of us do care about the sort of person we are, and do to some extent try to grow in one direction rather than another. But for most people self-creation is less dramatic than in Nietzsche’s picture: more a matter of trying to be the sort of person who answers letters, or who gives up a job in public relations because you don’t want to be the kind of person you see you are becoming. And less dramatic still is the often completely unconscious self-creation that comes about when repeated actions become character-shaping habits.

Aristotle took the view that our character is something we are responsible for, because it results from our own freely chosen actions. Pointing out that we punish people who, through carelessness, are ignorant of things they should know, he says that we assume that they have the power to take care. He then considers the objection that someone may be a careless kind of person. He replies that becoming such a person is their own fault: "they are themselves by their slack lives responsible for becoming men of that kind, and men make themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in the one case by cheating and in the other by spending their time in drinking-bouts and the like; for it is activities exercised on particular objects that make the corresponding character." He accepts that, once we have a certain character, we may be unable to change it at will, but says that it was still pour own fault that we acquired it.

This robustly "common sense" Aristotelian view is broadly presupposed by most legal systems and by the everyday morality of praise and blame. There is the presumption that actions are voluntary unless there is some special reason to think that they are not, together with the view that our character is also our responsibility because it is the residue left by past actions. This also applies to the character changes resulting from some voluntarily chosen major upheaval in life. The nun's new piety and the immigrant's new patriotism both stem from free choices they have made.

But the stubbornness of the person with dementia contrasts sharply with this. We do not do things that predictably bring on dementia. This disaster, despite being inside the body, comes on us "from outside" in the sense that it is not under our present, or even past, control. The response that the new personality is not the real person but a product of the illness seems justified.

This response also fits with our concern about being one sort of person rather than another. There has been a good deal of debate about living wills and euthanasia, in which those who think it right to respect someone's advance directive not to be kept alive in certain states appeal to the interest people have in the pattern of their lives. The demented person I become in twenty years' time may seem quite content and show no wish to die. But if I now hope to die earlier rather than include a few extra vacant years of dementia in the pattern of my life, this seems something to take into account. Leaving aside whether it is enough to justify acting on the advance directive, this interest in the kind of person I am over a lifetime gives me reason to hope that people will see the grumpy surliness as reflecting the dementia rather than reflecting me.

B. The Case of Schizophrenia.

Dementia mainly (though not always) comes on at a relatively late stage of life. This makes it easier to see the demented period as a coda: something after the main part of the person's life rather than part of it. But this option is less readily

available in some other character-distorting conditions. Schizophrenia, for instance, usually comes on relatively young and also often brings about radical changes of character and personality.

A person with schizophrenia may go through periods of crisis, where it is hard to see any coherent personality at all. There may be a torrent of words that do not make much sense, or which reflect some delusional state. Moods may oscillate between shallow, excited optimism and a sunken, withdrawn despair. Attitudes to people he or she knows may move, apparently randomly, from warmth and love to suspicious hostility expressed by a menacing stare.

But, as a result of medication or as a new phase of the condition, there can be long periods of stability. In these periods, the person may seem much as before the illness. But often there is a transformation of personality. Someone friendly, alert and with wide interests may have moved into a negative, strangely unreachable phase: slow, sullen, perhaps aggressive, usually uninterested in others, saying little and doing little beyond half-watching television. In these periods, friends and family may say, "it is like talking to a different person".

For some people, the oscillation between periods of crisis and these negative phases may last a lifetime. Friends and family may have conflicting responses to the aggression they are sometimes shown. Should they react with exasperation or with detachment? Is it him or is it his illness?

There is a case for refusing to see the schizophrenic personality as the person's real self. There is usually little doubt that the strangeness and the narrowing passivity are products of the illness. As a thought experiment, imagine that a treatment is developed that can restore permanently someone from this negative state to their original state before the onset of the illness. In the absence of other residual problems, this would be a cure for schizophrenia. It would then be natural to see the second personality as a product of the illness, and not as what the person is really like. This would be supported by the fact that many aspects of the second personality appear on lists of the "negative symptoms of schizophrenia". In retrospect, difficulties in answering the question, "is it him or is it his illness?" would largely disappear. The decision to withhold the more critical reactive responses would seem to have been right. The person's self-creative project would have been temporarily disrupted by an illness. The hostility or aggression they displayed should be put aside as not reflecting their real self.

Now imagine a scenario, more like the actual one for many people with schizophrenia, in which the original personality is not restored. Should we treat the current, schizophrenic, personality as not reflecting the person's real self, but as merely the product of the illness? The case for this approach is that it is the one we would adopt if there were a cure. It seems puzzling that the

schizophrenic personality should have a completely different status depending on whether we are making the decision before or after scientists have developed a cure.

On the other hand, where there is no cure, there is a case for accepting the schizophrenic personality as now being the person's real self. This is not some brief coda at the end of life. His real self, if not reflected in the schizophrenic personality, is something hidden for decades. Can the real self of the forty year-old man really be that of the teenage boy before the onset of schizophrenia, a real self unlikely ever to be seen again? Would it not be more realistic to accept how he is now as his real self?

People confronted with this issue tend to be pulled both ways. The phrase "the real self" is of course vague and indeterminate, which makes it unlikely that the issue is one where the "right" answer can simply be read off from the evidence about the condition. Any answer seems at least as much a matter of decision as of discovery. And the reasons point in conflicting directions.

There is the desire not to give up on the possibility of a cure, a kind of keeping faith with the original person. This is given a degree of support by some of the cases in Oliver Sacks's book *Awakenings*, in which he describes how people who had suffered from a severely Parkinsonian condition since the 1920s responded in the 1960s to L-Dopa. In some cases there was an extraordinary restoration of the original personality, which had been totally submerged for decades. It was not always possible to maintain the revived personality, but the fact that it could be revived at all supports the idea that, in these long-term conditions that distort character and personality, the original version of the person may not be totally lost. On the analogy of a television where the picture has been replace by visual chaos, there is the hope that if only could get the neurological or neurochemical tuning right the original picture might be restored.

There is also the thought that, as with dementia, the new personality is obviously caused by the disorder, and that it was not the product of the person's own previous decisions or self-creative project. It seems unfair that their personality has been distorted by something outside their control, and refusal to see the new personality as really them is a kind of recognition of this.

On the other hand, the refusal to recognize the new personality as reflecting anything other than illness seems to leave the person as they are now in a kind of limbo, possibly for the rest of their lives. It is possible to have a character and personality shaped by a medical condition and still to identify with it. One autistic person protested against parents who wished his autism could be cured, by saying that their real wish was that he had not been born and that they had had a different child instead. The arguments pull both ways.

THE MISSHAPEN REAL SELF.

Schizophrenia typically comes on at a much earlier stage in life than dementia. But even schizophrenia's onset comes on after there has been time for quite a bit of development of the person's "original" character and personality. Because of this, we can contrast the person and the illness, and may see the latter as eroding or distorting the person's previous character, But there are conditions with a comparable influence on character and personality that are present at a much earlier developmental stage, in some cases possibly from birth. This category includes the cluster of conditions known as "personality disorders". Because there is no previously developed alternative personality, it is much harder to get any grip on the contrast implied by the question, "Is it her or is it her psychiatric condition?"

A. The Personality Disorders.

"Personality disorders" are typically said to be "deeply ingrained maladaptive patterns of behaviour". The personality is "abnormal either in the balance of its components, their quality and expression or in its total aspect. As a result either the patient or society suffers or both." There are obvious questions about such an account. The word "maladaptive", with its evolutionary overtones, may disguise a residue of the bad old tendency to medicalize behaviour that deviates from socially accepted norms: the approach that once allowed being gay to count as a psychiatric problem. Or, if a really Darwinian interpretation of the word is intended, so that behaviour is "maladaptive" when it reduces the chances of survival, other problems arise. Did Socrates have a personality disorder? His deeply ingrained pattern of behaviour, his persistent asking of awkward questions, certainly seems to have shortened his life.

But objections to the general definition are too easy. It is worth mentioning some particular "personality disorders". Although textbook lists vary, several appear on most lists. "Paranoid", "hysterical" and "narcissistic" personality disorders involve having the kind of personality the names suggest. Another is "Schizoid personality disorder". Typically it is said to be characterized by a defective capacity for close relationships, by lack of empathy, by withdrawal, solitariness and detachment. There is also "Obsessional personality disorder". People in this category are characterized by perfectionism and rigidity. They are mean with money and obsessed with cleanliness and tidiness.

Lists of personality disorder invite an obvious party game, seeing in which categories ourselves and our friends fit. And there is an equally obvious danger, that people whose personalities are unappealing to others will find themselves diagnosed as having a psychiatric disorder. That there is some subjectivity here is clear. The person diagnosed as having obsessional personality disorder on the basis of perfectionism, rigidity, being mean with money, and being obsessed

with cleanliness may turn round and say that the psychiatrist who diagnosed her is a slapdash, unprincipled spendthrift who needs to take a shower more often.

Personality disorders are thought of in terms of two different models. There is the model based on the thought that some personalities dispose people to particular psychiatric illnesses, so that "schizoid personality disorder" might be thought of as a kind of incipient version of schizophrenia. The alternative model is based on the idea that there are dimensions of personality, with personality disorder being at an extreme of a continuum. Each of these models has its difficulties. The link between personality disorders and psychiatric illnesses such as schizophrenia is not clear. And it is hard to see why a personality at the extreme of some dimension should count as disordered. This is the part of psychiatry where scepticism about the "medical model" is most powerful. It is hard to make a case for treating "personality disorder" as a kind of illness.

One alternative to the medical model is to think of personality disorders in an Aristotelian way, invoking a species-specific idea of the good life for human beings. In the same way that caging a bird is cruel because the good life for birds includes freedom to fly, solitary confinement for people is cruel because the good life for human beings includes the ability to mix with other people and to make friends. If some such account can be given, it may be possible to apply it in explaining some of the personality disorders. The defective capacity for close relationships said to characterize "schizoid personality disorder" can be seen as deprivation of the means of realizing one aspect of the good human life.

On this model, psychiatrists need not necessarily confine themselves to treating psychiatric illnesses. The techniques psychiatrists have developed, whether using psychotherapy or pharmacology, might benefit people who seek help in freeing themselves from the constraints of a life-diminishing personality. Some thoughtful psychiatrists notice a tendency in themselves to prescribe Prozac at first to treat clinical depression but then to continue prescribing it, not to cure an illness but because of its enhancing effects on some patients' personalities. They are right to be concerned about the boundaries of psychiatric intervention, but the Aristotelian model could provide a justification for their crossing the "medical" boundary. Of course, those they treat must be presented with a proposal that makes clear the non-medical "enhancement", as well as any risks involved, and they must give their reflective and voluntary consent to it. Under these conditions, psychiatric intervention directed at enriching lives rather than at curing illness sometimes may be justified.

There are some dangers in this Aristotelian psychiatry. A lot of work needs to be done on the basis of the account of the good human life. And there is the danger of an Aristotelianism that underwrites prejudice. It is all too easy to think of a crude version that would again encourage interventions against the sexuality of gays and lesbians. At the very least, Aristotle needs to be combined

with John Stuart Mill. Awareness of the open-endedness of our conception of the good life and the value of "experiments in living" is a necessary corrective here. But, despite these dangers, the Aristotelian alternative to the medical model may rescue something of value from the debatable diagnosis of personality disorder.

"Antisocial Personality Disorder".

One of the most problematic and intriguing psychiatric diagnoses is that of "Antisocial personality disorder". Those with this diagnosis have the broad psychological tendencies of psychopaths. It includes psychopaths, together with others less extreme. Using the popular tool, the "Hare Psychopathy Checklist", not all those diagnosed with "Antisocial personality disorder" would score high enough to count as psychopaths.

People with this diagnosis are often said to "lack a conscience". This claim raises more questions than it answers. There are so many different things, some or all of which might be missing. They might lack empathy (the ability to imagine how others feel). Or they might sometimes harm people, out of a lack, not of empathy but of sympathy: they can imagine how their victim feels but do not care about it. Or they might lack feelings of guilt. Or they might lack certain moral concepts, such as cruelty or selfishness. Or they might lack a conception of the sort of person they are, or lack values that would shape a conception of the sort of person they want to be.

Because I am intrigued by these issues, I am taking part in a team project looking at the "lack of conscience" in two groups of people. One group, in a secure hospital, is made up of people having the diagnosis of Antisocial personality disorder. The other group is made up of neurological patients with the diagnosis of Fronto-temporal dementia, a group who at some stage in the development of their dementia may exhibit antisocial behaviour. My part of the study involves interviewing members of these two groups about their moral outlook, trying to find out what sort of conscience they do or do not have.

The study is not finished, so there are as yet no results that have any kind of scientific status. But, speaking unscientifically, in the interviews with the "Antisocial personality disorder" group, I am overwhelmingly struck by the terrible childhoods so many of them seem to have had. The stories are of rejection, denial of love, humiliation and denigration, violence or sexual abuse. Some of these horrendous childhood experiences took place in the family. Others took place in the public institutions into which, in Britain, children are (in the euphemistic phrase) "taken into care". Of course, perhaps not all these stories are true. Those with Antisocial personality disorder have a reputation for being skilful deceivers. But the psychiatrists in the hospital think that perhaps eighty per cent of the patients had terrible childhoods.

I will not quote any of the patients I have interviewed. To discuss the issues raised, I will take the case of someone who, while never actually given a diagnosis of psychopathy or of Antisocial personality disorder, would fit one of these categories. This is a real case, and the person in question had a childhood not unlike that of many of my interviewees.

The Case of Mr. H.

Mr. H had an unhappy childhood. His father was strict and had a terrible temper. He was a "demon" about punctuality. He insisted on silence in the family. The children never dared speak in his presence unless spoken to, and were not allowed to call him anything less formal than "Father". When he wanted his son, he never called him by name, but always whistled for him in the same way he called for the dog. The father often beat the dog, his wife, and each of his children. As a child, Mr. H was once given 230 strokes of the cane by his father. In later life, he said he remembered seeing his drunk father rape his mother.

Mr. H grew up with a very rigid personality. As an adult, he was obsessed with cleanliness, passionately hating any untidiness or dirt. He was also obsessed with wolves, sometimes thinking of himself as a wolf, and calling his Alsatian dog "Wolf". He took the dog for exactly the same walk every day, throwing a stick for it at exactly the same place. Any suggestion of varying such routines made him agitated and angry. He hated being left alone at night, and hated the moon because he thought it was dead. He was obsessed with his own possible death from cancer, which his mother had died from.

Mr. H had difficulties in his love life. As a boy he had been terrified of being kissed. His first love affair came when he was 37. It was with a teenage girl, who tried to kill herself after he abruptly broke off the relationship. He then fell in love with his niece, who did not reciprocate his feelings. She killed herself with his pistol. At the age of 41, he had another affair, this time with an 18 year old girl, who made an unsuccessful suicide attempt early in their relationship. Mr. H seems to have been disgusted by normal sexual intercourse, saying he did not want it because he would become infected. His niece said that his main sexual pleasure was in getting her to urinate on his face.

Much of his emotional life seems to have been diverted to patriotism and politics. He fought in a war, with great patriotic enthusiasm. He was temporarily blinded during a gas attack, which seems to have left him with great resentment against those who did not fight in the war. He took up extreme right wing politics and was passionately anti-Semitic. He was highly successful at appealing to the public. He became leader of his country. He started a world war. He ordered the systematic murder of millions of his fellow-citizens. He killed himself when his country lost the war.

Now that Mr. H's identity has emerged, there are questions about how, if at all, his childhood and character and personality are relevant to our reaction to him and to what he did.

Nothing in Mr. H's story does much to suggest that he was ill. Rigidity, sexual problems, racism, anger and resentment, obsessions about dogs and the moon – they are all things people are better off without, but they are not obvious symptoms of illness. Nor is there much mileage in the idea that they do not reflect the real Mr. H, whose real but unexpressed personality was quite different. The anger and the anti-Semitism were characteristics as genuinely his as it was possible to find.

Mr. H raises in acute form the problem of personality disorder. It is not an illness. The excuses that defend someone's character from criticism all fail. There is no conflict in which a set of higher-order desires or deeper values are defeated. There is no alternative "real" self obscured or distorted by a medical condition. We are confronted by someone whose real self, or character, is itself misshapen. If blame is a negative evaluation of character on the basis of actions, it is hard to see how Mr. H can escape it.

And yet, as with my interviewees, this seems not to be quite the whole story. When interviewing patients, I deliberately do not know what offences they have committed, although sometimes they tell me and afterwards I find out. As I hear in the interview about their childhood of pain, rejection and humiliation, it is natural to see them as themselves victims, to glimpse their life from the inside and to feel sympathy. Sometimes, going back from the hospital after hearing about the terrible things they have done, I struggle to get the two perspectives into one coherent picture. It is hard to reconcile the emotional response to what they have suffered with the emotional response to what they have done.

With some of the interviewees, as with Mr. H, part of the complex emotional response is linked to some secular version of the thought that, there but for the grace of God go I. This is not to endorse some form of environmental determinism. Many people have had childhoods comparable to those of the interviewees without committing crimes on their scale. Many people had childhoods comparable to that of Mr. H without committing genocide or starting world wars. The causal story must also involve things other than child abuse. But, because we do not know exactly what other factors –genetic, environmental or other- play a role, we cannot be confident that we would have responded to that kind of upbringing differently from the interviewees or differently from Mr. H. Of course we all hope that, given that terrible childhood, we would still not have been like Hitler. And no doubt many of us would not. But certainty here is over-confidence. And this adds a disquieting perspective to our attitudes to Hitler and to other psychopaths.

The reactive attitudes.

So far, blame has been discussed as a matter of an objectionable action giving grounds for making a negative judgement about the character of the person responsible for it. The standard excuses, ignorance and compulsion, sever the link between action and character and so prevent criticisms of the one carrying over to the other.

The standard excuses apply, with complications, in many psychiatric cases. But in cases of the "misshapen real self", such as many cases of personality disorders, the objectionable actions often do flow from the person's character and the standard excuses fail. Someone with a misshapen real self has precisely the kind of character to which the negative judgements apply.

This version of blame, the making of negative judgements about someone's character, may be a very detached, unemotional affair, in the manner of the recording angel. But there is an alternative to the recording angel approach. The alternative locates blame among people's relationships and attitudes, which may be much less detached.

In his classic paper on *Freedom and Resentment*, P.F. Strawson argued that those who think that determinism is a threat to the survival of blame overlook the way blame is embedded in a complex network of "interpersonal reactive attitudes" such as gratitude and resentment. He argued that it cannot be separated from these other attitudes: that they stand or fall together. And, he argued, determinism could not be a sufficient reason for giving up this whole network of attitudes. For one thing, it would be psychologically impossible for us to give them up. For another, even if it were possible, it would not be rational to do so. These attitudes are at the core of human relationships and to give them up would greatly impoverish us. It would replace our present emotionally involved reactions to each other by the detached, objective attitude perhaps often appropriate in a psychiatrist responding to a patient or a social worker responding to a client.

One merit of this approach is that it makes issues about blame less abstract. Instead of asking which judgements about someone's character are justified, it shifts the focus to our reactions to that person. But it is perhaps too hasty to see the reactive attitudes as an indivisible web, such that undermining blame turns all relationships into ones where the temperature never rises above clinical or professional detachment. Some attitudes are more easily dispensed with than others.

Attitude Spirals as Part of the Core of Human Relationships

Relationships are shaped, and sometimes constituted, by the attitudes people have to each other. Some attitudes pervade a whole relationship: liking and

disliking, love and hatred, friendship and enmity. Although these attitudes are often responses to what the other person does, they may not be. I may deserve neither the dislike of one person nor the love of another, and yet have both.

Not all attitudes are so free-floating. Some are based on evaluation. Respect, admiration or contempt at least purport to reflect someone's good or bad qualities. Other attitudes are responses to people's good or bad fortune. If I break a leg while vainly trying to windsurf, I let myself in for your sympathy, amusement or schadenfreude. Other attitudes are reflexive: Jealousy, envy and condescension all compare the other person's qualities or situation with one's own.

All the attitudes mentioned so far are, in a minimal way, "interpersonal reactive attitudes". Each of them may be, and some of them have to be, a reaction to what other people are like. But, without the addition of a certain complication, they are limited.

At the core of relationships is the interplay between attitudes to each other. We have attitude spirals. I have attitudes to your attitude to me, and you have attitudes to my attitudes to your attitudes, and so on. Lovers or friends may have responses to each other's attractiveness or wit, but the relationship is only a surface one unless they have reactions to each other's love or trust. As enemies, you and I may dislike each other's faces or voices, but the enmity hardly goes deep if I have no attitude to your visible contempt, or you are indifferent to my gloating when you lose your job.

Relationships become less shallow as we develop attitude spirals. Some attitudes are centrally response to the attitudes of others. At this level are gratitude, resentment, indignation, vengefulness, blame and forgiveness. These attitudes need not be in response to attitudes to ourselves: we may be indignant on someone else's behalf, or blame a person for malevolence towards other people in general.

The emphasis on attitudes, rather than actions, as the objects of blame, gratitude and so on may be thought exaggerated. Perhaps I may be grateful to someone, not for their attitude, but for their help or for their gift? It is true that sometimes these responses seem to be more to actions than to attitudes. Your neighbour burns your house down. Your resentment may persist even after you find out that, instead of malice towards you, he had a schizophrenic delusion and thought he was burning all the evil out of the world. But this is hardly a central case of resentment, and perhaps not a clear case of it at all. For the most part, what in actions makes us grateful or resentful is the attitude that shines through them. These attitudes to attitudes are part of the core of human relationships, and to exclude someone from these responses is to exclude them from part of that core.

Personality Disorders and the Reactive Attitudes.

Schizophrenia and dementia often involve distortions of personality and character that had developed before the onset of these disorders. So there is scope for the contrast between the real person and the distorting effects of the illness. Personality disorders characteristically emerge early. Whether they result from treatment in early childhood, of from genes, or from things that happened in the womb or at birth, or from some combination of these, personality disorders emerge too early to allow the development of an alternative personality. There is no alternative "real" person, remembered by friends and family but now submerged by the disorder. The person's real personality is the misshapen one. The lack of concern for others, or the malevolence and hostility, are the real attitudes of the person.

Does this mean that the reactive attitudes are in order as responses to people with personality disorder?

What counts against this is the thought that personality disorder is still a piece of bad luck. If it is caused by having particular genes, or by what happened in the womb, or at birth, none of this was under the person's control. If it is caused by parental rejection, cruelty, or abuse, none of this was the person's own fault. Such people are themselves victims. Given that treatment, any of us might have turned out the same. So blame and resentment seem unfair.

Yet, on the other hand, exclusion from the reactive attitudes is exclusion from part of the core of human relationships. Perhaps this exclusion too is unfair. And perhaps it is only by participating in relationships, including the spirals of reactive attitudes, that there is any chance of transcending the original, misshapen personality.

The reactive attitudes themselves are not totally under our control. We cannot just switch them on and off at will to bring about the best consequences. But we do have a degree of choice about how far we do or do not inhibit them. To the extent that we have such choices, a complex response (to, say, aggressive violence stemming from personality disorder) seems called for. The ideal seems to be both to retain the reactive attitudes to the person's own horrible attitudes to his victims, and yet to remember that he is a victim too, someone whose whole nature has been shaped badly by causes largely outside his control. This dual response is not easy, as I found when interviewing such people.

But the dual response is necessary if we are to do justice to the complexity of the case. It is probably right that we cannot entirely or largely abandon the reactive attitudes, and that life would be impoverished if we could and did. But there is also a determinist thought that should make us a bit uncomfortable with either Aristotelian or Strawsonian commonsense. It is about those of us who do

not have personality disorders. Although we shape our own characters by our voluntary actions, there is likely to be some causal explanation of how we come to choose some actions rather than others. And these causal explanations may well often go back ultimately to factors beyond our control: to genes, to what happened in the womb or at birth, or to what happened in our early childhood. As with those with personality disorders, our characteristics are certainly ours, yet are not entirely of our own making. In the long run, the dual response we develop to those with personality disorders may turn out to be what is appropriate for everyone else as well.

THE MORALITY OF ABORTION: AN EXCHANGE - THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

The Morality of Abortion: An Exchange By Jim Stone, Reply by Jonathan Glover

In response to Matters of Life and Death (May 30, 1985)

To the Editors:

The central pro-life argument is simpler and more forceful than Jonathan Glover recognizes [NYR, May 30, 1985]. It begins with a proposition accepted on both sides of the abortion debate: healthy infants have a powerful claim to our care and protection, and we wrong them seriously if we kill them. The second premiss is that there are no morally relevant differences between infants and fetuses. A difference is morally relevant when it justifies a difference in treatment. Is being unborn the difference that deprives the fetus of a right to life?

Abortionists sometimes dismember a late-term fetus in the womb to preclude live birth. We shall have to say this isn't seriously wrong—after all, the fetus isn't born—but it would be wicked to dismember her immediately after birth. What about viability? Before five and onehalf months the fetus cannot survive outside the woman's womb. But that greater dependence comes to this: the fetus needs her care and protection more. How can his greater need for care and protection deprive him of a claim to care and protection? But the fetus isn't sentient before nine weeks. Does temporary unconsciousness deprive a man of human rights? Suppose a baby is born in a coma which began at conception. Doctors determine that the coma will lift in a few weeks and the child will develop normally. Does she have less of a right to life than other babies? What about human form? The fetus doesn't even look human for the first eight weeks. But surely fundamental human rights do not depend upon the way your body looks: that is what is the matter with racism and sexism. Why reinstitute that sort of thinking here?

The differences between infants before and after they are born turn out to be like kinky hair and brown skin: they cannot justify a difference in treatment. It follows that fetuses have the powerful claim to care and protection enjoyed by infants. To avoid this conclusion one must deny a premiss. Glover denies that healthy infants have a claim to our care and protection and that we wrong them if we kill them. This is the price of a coherent prochoice position: we must roll back the rights of the born in order to justify killing the unborn. Glover acknowledges that the denial of the rights of babies seems "repulsive." He tries to make it palatable by arguing that killing babies would still be wrong, not because it would be bad for babies but because it would be bad for us. Many people care about babies and would be upset if we killed them; and if we took to using spare babies for medical research, this practice—while innocent in itself—might lead to Nazi-style medical experiments on people who do matter.

Surely this is more repulsive. Better to embrace infanticide outright than to condemn it, not for the sake of infants, but because of its bad effects on us. One is reminded of Kant's claim that torturing a dog is indeed evil—because it might make me hard in my dealings with men. It seems heartless and paradoxical to denounce a lethal practice because of the pain it causes those who share the nearly universal concern for its victims, while denying the victims matter. And Glover is committed to the view that if our concern for infants slackened—and what, better way to weaken it than to maintain that infanticide is wrong only because it might be bad for us—and we had good reason to believe we wouldn't act like Nazis, then there would be nothing the matter with experimenting on anaesthetized infants. Certainly we wouldn't have to worry about wronging them. And if new developments enabled us to meet vital adult needs by, say, killing spare infants and giving their organs to dying adults, then we ought to do it, so long as we produce more good than harm for those who matter.

We would be naive to assume these consequences never will become actual if the view that infants have no right to life is promulgated. Disenfranchise the powerless in theory and soon they will be disenfranchised in practice. Millions have been murdered in this century because they were supposed to lack human rights. Now, when told a segment of humanity doesn't have rights after all, surely it is our duty to ask "Exactly why not?" And we ought to reject any answer that is less than conclusive. Our feelings for infants involve the recognition that we wrong them if we kill them. This must be dismissed as a moral hallucination. Why exactly? Because, Glover tells us, infants aren't persons.

What are persons? Glover never tells us what he takes the word "person" to mean. What is he talking about? Are persons souls or Cartesian egos? Shall we deny infants rights because they fail to be we know not what? Does Glover take "person" to mean "entity with a right to life"? Then the claim that infants lack a

right to life because they aren't persons is circular. Does "person" mean "entity that is counted as a full-fledged member of the moral community"? Then infants certainly are persons, because they are so counted.

According to Glover, "being a person is bound up with a minimal level of self-consciousness, an awareness of a frontier between yourself and the rest of the world and awareness of yourself as having continuous existence over time." This might be informative if we knew what persons were. Perhaps Glover is saying that self-consciousness is necessary for having human rights. This is implausible. Victims of severe strokes sometimes lose the neural capacity for self-awareness for several months; they behave like infants. Do they lose the right to life too? And if a human animal needn't manifest present self-awareness to have human rights, why isn't it enough that she will be self-aware, if we don't kill her?

Perhaps Glover believes an infant doesn't benefit from continued life unless she actually desires to go on living. This would have the implausible consequence that killing an infant painlessly is no harm. Why isn't the fact that she is busy becoming self-aware on account of her biological nature sufficient to ground an interest in continued life? She will have the good which it is her nature to make for herself if she isn't killed. Certainly we believe that infants have a powerful interest in growing up and living long and happy lives, and that we rob them of a considerable benefit if we kill them. Why shouldn't this ground a claim to our protection?

Glover admits that killing an infant involves the loss of the years of life she would otherwise have enjoyed. But this argument doesn't make infanticide objectionable, Glover says, because it makes contraception as bad as infanticide. He writes, "All eliminate a lifetime that would otherwise have been enjoyed." This is to misconstrue the argument. Infanticide is objectionable because it deprives the infant of the years she would have enjoyed, and this is a harm. We do not harm the infant in merely preventing her from being conceived: she cannot be deprived of anything if she doesn't exist.

The moral claim of infants is more obvious and forceful than any arguments to the contrary. To discount that claim would involve a terrible failure of sense and humanity. But then, sooner or later, we must oppose abortion, for the differences between infants before and after they are born are like the differences between men and women, whites and blacks, Aryans and Jews. We shall have to come to terms with the fact that we have failed to extend protection to fetuses because they were invisible, because they were powerless, and because it was convenient. If infants have human rights, the 1.5 million abortions each year represent an appalling injustice. Shall we deny the claims of the born in order to kill the unborn? In matters of life and death, if not philosophy, argument must end somewhere.

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Jonathan Glover replies:

Professor Stone's powerful and reasoned comments challenge just those points of my argument that are most open to question. And Professor Stone's version of the prolife argument is indeed simple and forceful. His first premise is that "healthy infants have a powerful claim to our care and protection, and we wrong them seriously if we kill them." This has obvious intuitive plausibility. And to deny his second premise, that "there are no morally relevant differences between infants and fetuses," seems to require good reasons for drawing a line, and Professor Stone is rightly skeptical about the standard attempts to do this. The two premises, if accepted, entail the prolife conclusion. It is a pleasure to have elicited this powerful reply. And yet I am still not convinced.

Consider the second premise, that there are no morally relevant differences between infants and fetuses. This is used to extend the protection we give to infants all the way back to conception. The first thing that should make us uneasy about this strategy is that it works just as well in the other direction. To many people, their belief that taking the morning-after pill is not murdering someone has as much intuitive force as the belief that infants have a right to life. If infants and newly fertilized eggs do not differ in morally relevant ways, accepting either of these beliefs commits us to denying the other. We can slide smoothly from platitude to paradox either in one direction with Professor Stone, or in the other direction with some of his opponents. Perhaps the premise which allows this needs more careful scrutiny.

The apparently simple premise, that there are no morally relevant differences between infants and fetuses, blurs an important distinction between what can be called external and internal differences. Someone's external characteristics are constituted by their relationships with others, while internal characteristics are independent of those relationships. The distinction is not always sharp, but an example may make it clear. Suppose there is a fire, and I can save some, but not all, of those threatened. If I save my own children in preference to other children, some very severe equal rights theorist might think I have shown unjustifiable discrimination. If only internal features are relevant, other children had an equal claim. But if external features count, the fact that they are my children may be morally relevant. The plausible-seeming claim that infants and fetuses do not differ in morally relevant ways depends on the difficulty of citing relevant internal differences. It assumes that our relationship with an infant is irrelevant. This assumption should be questioned. We also need not accept that a newly fertilized egg is morally of the same standing as a late fetus. Where differences are of degree, difficulty in justifying sharp lines proves less than is

often supposed. There is no sharp line between some leaves and a heap of leaves, but a hundred leaves piled on top of each other are a heap and one leaf is not.

Now consider Professor Stone's other premise: "Healthy infants have a powerful claim to our care and protection, and we wrong them seriously if we kill them." This premise appeals to intuitions almost everyone shares, and at the same time implies a theoretical view about their basis.

The element of debatable theory in this apparently innocuous premise can be brought out by mentioning one way in which Professor Stone misunderstands the things said in my review about the moral claims of infants. He says, "Glover denies that healthy infants have a claim to our care and protection and that we wrong them if we kill them." Of course healthy infants have a claim to our care and protection. As I said in the review, killing a healthy baby is unthinkable, and "we are right to recoil from any position that removes moral protection from the lives of babies." The difference between our two positions is not about whether this moral protection should be maintained, but over what the reasons are for it. Denying the grounding given by prolifers for this claim about moral protection is not the same as denying the claim itself. (I do not want to slur over, however, the real difference between us about keeping alive some very severely handicapped babies.)

Professor Stone thinks that the objections to killing a healthy baby must depend on some internal feature of the baby, while I think they are bound up with our relationships with the baby. Our two positions agree that an infant is and should be accepted as a "full-fledged member of the moral community." We differ in that Professor Stone thinks this is based on features which independently give them moral claims, while I think these claims are generated by relationships with other members of the moral community.

Professor Stone thinks that this second view has the consequence that, if our concern for infants slackened, and we also had good reason to think that we would not act like Nazis, "then there would be nothing the matter with experimenting on anaesthetized infants."

This argument makes legitimate use of the philosophical technique of thought experiments: casting doubt on a principle by showing that, under different circumstances from those that do prevail, it would have unacceptable consequences. But it is worth noting just how different things are in this case. We have to imagine people utterly callous toward babies, but whose emotions are so compartmentalized that this does not in any way affect their feelings toward older children or adults. And presumably this coldness toward babies is supposed to leave their emotional development unharmed. These people seem more like Martians than like us. It is far from obvious that a principle should be

thrown out because, when combined with a repellent Martian psychology, it generates conclusions we find repellent.

I said that our developing relationship with a baby starts at birth: "The emotions of childbirth and of the early days and weeks of parenthood are utterly incompatible with regarding babies as disposable living material. Most of us are incapable of adopting such an attitude. And even if we could adopt it, the world would be a worse place if we did so." If we were Martians, we might have to choose between Professor Stone's approach and infant experimentation. On the alternative approach, the important thing is not to become like Martians. Professor Stone is wrong in thinking that I attach importance to the claim that infants are not persons. I put no weight on this, saying in my review that "perhaps there is not enough agreement on the use of the word 'person' for it to be clear that any of the rival views on this issue of definition are simply mistaken."

Professor Stone and I agree that the moral protection a healthy baby now has should be preserved. To some, our disagreement over whether this is to be explained by citing internal or external characteristics will seem to be metaphysical hairsplitting. But two of the distinguishing features of Professor Stone's view are of real importance. Making relationships irrelevant gives plausibility to the claim that infants and fetuses have no morally significant differences. And his view has the problem of citing the relevant internal feature. What is the internal characteristic that gives a newly fertilized human egg a stronger claim to life than that of an oyster? (It is one of the problems of using the "no relevant difference" argument that the relevant feature of infants has to be present as far back as the argument is pushed.)

The difficulty of finding a relevant internal characteristic already possessed by fetuses is often seen by supporters of the prolife view. They sometimes move away from basing fetal rights on what a fetus is now like. They cite its potential to become a developed person. I argued that this too has problems. If what is wrong with abortion is the loss of the developed person there would otherwise have been, the argument proves too much. That argument rules out contraception, and chastity too.

Professor Stone offers a different version of the argument. He thinks that abortion and infanticide are objectionable because they deprive fetuses of the years they would have enjoyed. But, "we do not harm the infant in merely preventing her from being conceived: she cannot be deprived of anything if she does not exist." The underlying principle here may be that you only do wrong if your act harms someone who exists. This sounds plausible, but on closer examination things again turn out to be more complicated.

To illustrate this, I will adapt a thought experiment devised by Derek Parfit. Suppose, as may be true, that there are biological mechanisms favoring the conception of normal babies over those that will be abnormal. Imagine a factory polluting the atmosphere with a chemical which, in the case of some kinds of handicap, reverses such a mechanism so that it favors the conception of handicapped children. And suppose that the handicap, although severe, does not make life not worth living. (It might be congenital blindness.) The pollution causes the birth of blind children rather than normal ones. It has not made those children worse off than they would have been, since without it they would not have existed. The blindness may distress other members of their family, but it is perverse to object to the pollution solely on these grounds. (That would be like Kant's repellent views on cruelty to animals.) It may seem obvious that starting a process resulting in more handicapped children does some harm. But the question arises: to whom is this harm done? The handicapped children are not worse off than they would have been, so it is hard to see them as harmed. Although the world is a worse place because of the pollution, the case that any particular person has been harmed by it is hard to sustain.

This thought experiment might seem loaded because it involves an act (introducing the pollutant) which interferes with normal biological mechanisms. But contraception also involves this. And any objection to the thought experiment on those grounds would need a defense of the presumption against interfering with natural processes, which is not easy to provide.

The plausible-sounding principle, that to do wrong you have to harm someone who exists, separates abortion from contraception, but at the cost of making it hard to object to the pollution except by citing distress to the children's families. The principle deals less well than at first appears with these complex issues about the ethics of conception.

A possible view of the pollution case is that creating these handicapped children is wrong although no person is harmed by this policy. But if wrongs need not involve harm to individuals, it is unclear how abortion is shown to differ morally from contraception by saying that someone is harmed by it.

There is an underlying difference between Professor Stone and me about how to think about moral issues. I have stressed the complexity of the abortion issue, and the need to submit our intuitive responses to analysis before accepting them as final. Professor Stone resists going too far from our first responses: "In matters of life and death, if not philosophy, argument must end somewhere." His preference is rooted in something important. In the arguments I have given, the thought experiment may seem artificial and the distinctions scholastic. There is a danger of abstract theorizing weakening the human responses that are the source of any living morality. And I share, and hope others do, his protective responses to babies. But I also share, and hope others do, some of the

prochoice responses to the idea of forcing women to continue with unwanted pregancies. All argument must end somewhere. But when we, as a society or as individuals, are torn between deep but conflicting responses, perhaps we should not stop exploring the arguments too soon.

TRANSCENDING HUMAN VALUES

Acentral thread of human history has been the self-transformation of our species. For better and for worse, the growth of our knowledge and of our ability to apply it has led to almost continuous alterations in the conditions of human life. And these created changes in our circumstances have changed us too, in ways it is platitudinous to enumerate. We are different from medieval people in our understanding of how the world works. Consequently, we are different from them in our health and expectation of life, in our ability to travel, in the comforts and conveniences of life, and in our ability to use our minds and technology in turn to increase the knowledge and understanding on which all this depends. Less happily, our dark side –the side that leads to torture and cruelty, genocides and war- has also had its destructive powers hugely enhanced, to the point where our survival as a species is in question. Also less happily, our technology threatens our survival through its potential to make the earth uninhabitable. All these changes, and our knowledge of them, mean that our minds too –our beliefs, values and concerns- are in many ways utterly different from those of people in the Middle Ages.

These platitudes of transformation are countered by the platitudes of continuity. We recognize the people depicted in the Bayeux tapestry –with the strength of their ambition to overcome their rivals and to rule, with their use of duplicity and war in the contest- as potential players in the politics of our own time. The bits of the tapestry depicting ecclesiastical sex scandals are familiar too. To a twenty-first century eye, they come somewhere between graffiti on a lavatory wall and items in a tabloid newspaper. This second set of platitudes suggests that human nature never changes.

Of course there is truth in both pictures. People change in some ways and stay the same in others. This raises a problem for the contemporary debate on whether we should use biotechnology to transcend the limits of human nature. The debate often assumes that underneath the historical changes, there is a central core of human nature, so far unaltered, but which genetics and neuroscience may give us the power to change. The assumption is plausible yet hard to pin down. If this central core exists, to establish its boundaries will take a lot of empirical and conceptual work. Until that work has been done, a key part of the debate about transcending our nature remains out of focus. But here I will put up with that blur and just assume that we have some intuitive idea of what transcending human nature might involve.

Proposals for such “transhumanist” projects are usually about changes that may help people live lives more in accord with desires and hopes that are already part of our stock of “human values”. Perhaps, if we were changed in various ways, we would more closely approximate to ideals of the good life we already have. We might be kinder, more generous, more intelligent, more imaginative or more creative. Perhaps a modified version of human nature would make it easier to eliminate some of the wars and other killing, the torture and other cruelties, that disfigure our human world.

What makes these proposals appealing and at the same time frightening is that their promises and their dangers are both so great. The Nazis used primitive technology in the service of improving the gene pool, a project guided by equally primitive values. Brave New World suggests that more benevolent values combined with more sophisticated technology can also create a nightmare. These dangers show there is something to be said for sticking with the free range version of people. But, against that, the history of humanly created mass death and mass misery shows there is something to be said against it too. It is not easy to balance these considerations against each other.

But the balancing is a matter of judging the alternatives in the light of our human values. Perhaps even deeper problems are raised by a more radical kind of proposal for transcending human nature. Could some of our values themselves be in need of change? Is there some external perspective from which “human values” can be seen to be limited or distorted? If so, as well as there being a case for changing our nature to fit our values, there could be a case for changing our values themselves.

The question I want to ask here is whether this more radical proposal is an intelligible one. Could there be reasons that we could accept for “transcending human values”?

WHAT ARE HUMAN VALUES?

THEORIES THAT ATTEMPT RATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION.

In some ways, people’s values obviously differ. On abortion, on war, on how to respond to terrorism, on how far to tolerate intolerant political or religious views, intelligent and thoughtful people disagree deeply. Two people may agree on the logic of the arguments, but have utterly conflicting intuitions about premises and conclusions. They may agree that avoiding a massive terrorist outrage could, in principle, and in some circumstances, require torturing a terrorist to gain information. One says that using torture is unthinkable and so we might have to accept a preventable terrorist attack. The other says that allowing so much loss of life is totally unacceptable and so we might have to accept the use of torture.

The same conflict may take place within a single person. Any of us may at one time be torn between the different views, or at different times oscillate between them. Many of us have intuitions that do not add up to an orderly and coherent system.

Some of the major ethical theories attempt to sort out this chaos by giving criteria for the rightness of actions and so, indirectly, for judging the reliability of intuitions. The principle of utility and Kant's Categorical Imperative are obvious examples. The utilitarian can judge moral intuitions about a particular case to be unreliable prejudices where they conflict with what the principle of utility says about the case. The Kantian can judge that they are mere subjective emotions, to be over-ridden by reason in the form of the Categorical Imperative it conflicts with them.

As is well known, both utilitarianism and the Categorical Imperative come into conflict with intuitions deeply embedded in us. Utilitarianism seems to allow ruthless trampling over the interests and even lives of some people if this is necessary to secure a greater good for a larger number of others. Kantianism seems absolutely to exclude telling a lie, even where this is necessary to save someone's life. And both make it problematic how far we should act on our natural affections. Each of these theories suggests that, in a life-threatening emergency, the decision to put saving our own children before saving a major public philanthropist needs first to be cleared by a test based on utility or on universality.

In denying or making marginal so much of what people value, both theories can seem like moralities for Martians rather than for human beings. Sensitive to this charge, both kinds of theorists stretch and squeeze the doctrines to bring them closer to our intuitions: the heavens won't really fall if justice is done, or we need to remember the long-term utility of encouraging natural affections. In the purest forms of these two doctrines, moral intuitions either have no weight or are extremely subordinate to the theory. But these efforts of theorists to make their principles more intuitively acceptable are a tacit acknowledgement of the need to align theory with things people actually care about.

Kant has a well known argument against a morality based purely on religious authority. Even if the Divine message is brought to us, we still have to use our own judgement in recognising that it does come from God, and so we cannot escape moral autonomy. "Even the Holy One of the gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize him to be such." If someone we at first took to be God told us to torture children, we would assess this in the light of our own values and decide that this person was not after all God or even a Divine messenger.

A parallel argument can be used against moral principles that we find too much at odds with deeply rooted moral intuitions. “If the Categorical Imperative tells me to let someone be killed rather than lie to their attacker, then there must be something wrong with it.”

THE APPEAL TO INTUITIONS.

All this suggests that a morality with only shallow roots in our intuitions is in trouble. This conclusion fits with the well known criticism made by Bernard Williams of utilitarian dismissal of anti-utilitarian intuitions as mere squeamishness to be overcome: we “cannot regard our moral feelings merely as objects of utilitarian value. Because our moral relation to the world is partly given by such feelings, and by a sense of what we can or cannot “live with”, to come to regard those feelings from a purely utilitarian point of view, that is to say, as happenings outside one’s moral self, is to lose a sense of one’s moral identity; to lose, in the most literal way, one’s integrity”. (REFERENCE TO BERNARD WILLIAMS: A CRITIQUE OF UTILITARIANISM, IN J.J.C. SMART AND BERNARD WILLIAMS: UTILITARIANISM, FOR AND AGAINST, PAGES 103-104.)

But an uncritical acceptance of moral intuition is also in trouble. If two people have different intuitions, this may just reflect the different kinds of upbringing they had. Why should we give so much moral authority to the people who had such power to shape our emotional responses in infancy and childhood?

And deeply ingrained intuitions often seem to be arbitrary. As Peter Unger and others have shown, our intuitive responses to an ethical dilemma often vary when the described situation is changed in ways that critical examination suggests may be of no moral importance. To most people, failing to respond to a charitable appeal for money to save lives may seem open to some criticism, but does not feel very bad. But refusing to drive someone to hospital because the blood from his wound will spoil the upholstery of your car, knowing that he will as a result probably lose a leg, feels much worse. (REFERENCE TO PETER UNGER: LIVING HIGH AND LETTING DIE, PAGES 24-25.)

And some of these arbitrary variations in moral intuitions may be the result of genetic programming reflecting our evolutionary past. Confronted with the “trolley problem”, many people intuitively feel that diverting a trolley from a track where it will kill five people onto a track where it will kill one person is a justifiable choice of the lesser evil. But very few people find it intuitively acceptable to save the five by pushing one person off a bridge so that the trolley kills him but is stopped. The different intuitions about the two cases could result from a genetically programmed inhibition against physical assaults against people close enough to hit back. Perhaps in the Stone Age, this inhibition helped gene survival. But a parallel inhibition against assaults at a distance

might not have developed, either because they were rarely possible or because there was less danger of retaliation.

Of course such an account is speculative, but if our responses were shaped by gene survival in the Stone Age, are they a good basis for morality? Richard Dawkins, who is not usually accused of downplaying the importance of genetic programming, thinks that in morality we may be able to improve on it. He hopes that we have the capacity for disinterested altruism, through having an understanding that allows us to over-rule our selfish genes: "we have the power to turn against our creators. We, alone on earth, can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators". (REFERENCE TO THE SELFISH GENE, PAGE 215.) Even if a response is useful to gene survival now (as caring more for our compatriots than for people physically or in other ways different from us may be), nothing follows about its moral acceptability. But usefulness to gene survival in the different circumstances of the remote past seems a particularly poor candidate as a reason for conferring moral authority on an intuition.

Our intuitions when examined seem often arbitrary, and their origins –whether in our family or in our evolutionary past- do not provide overwhelming credentials. Critical thought about them is clearly needed. In morality too, "intuitions without concepts are blind".

REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM.

It seems that morality cannot live without intuitions but cannot live entirely by them either. If there are good reasons not to exclude them and good reasons not to accept them uncritically, the Rawlsian approach of seeking "reflective equilibrium" seems to win by default. Intuitions should be probed and criticized, partly on the basis of moral principles that seem plausible. We should also be willing to test proposed moral principles, partly on the basis of how far they accommodate intuitions that are deep-rooted and which seem robust in the face of criticism. The Rawlsian hope for each of us is that, with a bit of accommodation on both sides, most of the moral principles that appear plausible will combine with most robust intuitions in a single reflective equilibrium. And, with long discussion and a huge amount of luck, this "narrow reflective equilibrium" at the individual level might even mutate into a "wide reflective equilibrium" shared across a society, or even perhaps across the human race.

There is a degree of optimism in the idea even of narrow reflective equilibrium. Even among people who have been thinking about ethics for most of our lives, some of us change our minds from time to time and have tensions between values still unresolved. And there is obviously even greater optimism in the idea of a reflective equilibrium everyone comes to share. Perhaps all moral differences one day will fade away. But, equally (at least!), perhaps they will not.

However, as a thought experiment, let us suppose that the most optimistic view turns out to be true, and that a human consensus emerges. This consensus will then be the "human values" we are wondering about transcending. If, instead, there are irreducibly alternative versions, the discussion can still take place in terms of transcending some or all of a plurality. But, to avoid cumbersome formulations, we will imagine a human consensus, and simply bear in mind the necessary adjustments to the discussion needed to accommodate any irremovable plurality.

If we were finally to reach a species-wide agreement on basic questions of value, what possible reasons could there be to consider "transcending" the set of values that emerged?

IS THERE AN EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVE?

If the human species were to reach a stable wide equilibrium about values, it might seem that there could be no reason to "transcend" it. We would have found the harmonious set of values whose possibility Isaiah Berlin consistently denied. Liberty and equality might still conflict with each other in particular cases, but there would be agreement on their relative weight. So the deepest disagreements we now have, either within a single person or between different people or groups, would have been eliminated. It seems like a version of "the end of history", at least for ethics. Through accommodating all the robust intuitions and all the robust principles, the consensus seems to have eliminated any possible basis for a challenge from within. So it may seem that any challenge to this value utopia would have to come from outside. What can "outside" mean here?

AN ENCOUNTER WITH INTELLIGENT ALIENS?

One version of a challenge from outside could be from intelligent aliens. I will discuss this challenge as a thought experiment, but, as is the way with thought experiments, one day it may become real. (Our galaxy may contain a hundred billion stars. In 1999, the Hubble telescope gave a figure of a hundred and twenty-five billion galaxies in the universe, but improved detection now suggests perhaps twice as many. It is not absurd to think there may be twenty-five thousand billion, billion stars. So far we have discovered over a hundred stars with planetary systems, and it is thought that such systems may be fairly common. (REFERENCES.) Even if only one in a million stars has planets, and only one in a million of those planetary systems includes a planet capable of supporting life, this still suggests a figure of twenty-five thousand million planets where life could emerge. Obviously there is huge arbitrariness in all these estimates. But if the number of potentially life-supporting planets is anywhere near the thousands of millions, the claim that alien life is unlikely may not be the obvious default position.)

If aliens do exist and we develop contact with them, how might the encounter go? A lot will depend on how powerful relative to each other they and we are. Or it may depend on –what may come to the same thing- how intelligent relative to each other they and we are. If there is a large disparity between how advanced they and we are, the relationship could be one of exploitation and domination, on the "colonial" model. We know the human capacity for colonial domination. And, if they are more advanced, we may discover their capacity for the same behaviour. Or, given that we are talking about different species, there is the even more discouraging model coming from the history of our treatment of animals, mainly as food or as domesticated slaves. If they are in this position of power over us, we can certainly imagine value changes being imposed on us, by such techniques as conditioning, selective breeding or some other form of genetic intervention. But that kind of non-rational, coercive value change is not of interest here.

The relevant thought experiment is one where we and aliens encounter each other as intellectual equals, and with no other imbalance of power. We and they have roughly the same scientific picture of how the universe works. It may be that we can fill in some gaps in their picture and they can fill in some gaps in ours. This just underlines how much our pictures agree. But some at least of their values are different from ours. The issue is about how far we and they could discuss this, and how far we could be persuaded by reasons to change our values.

INTELLIGIBILITY AND THE HUMAN FRAMEWORK.

Could their values be utterly different from ours? Or must there be some shared values to enable them to communicate with us? Wittgenstein and Quine in different ways have argued that mutual intelligibility depends on some shared beliefs. We get at what other people believe partly on the basis of what we take them to mean by what they say. And we get at what their words mean partly by hypotheses about what they believe, which are likely to be influenced by what we ourselves believe. What we think they believe gives us an idea of what they may be likely to say and so influences our interpretation of their words.

Wittgenstein and Quine, in elaborating on this circle of belief and meaning, both concentrate on factual beliefs. But something similar may hold for values. Suppose the aliens' behaviour suggests that they are enthusiastic about falling snow. (They behave in ways that we have in other contexts interpreted as showing pleasure; they show every sign of wanting to see it, going out of their way to do so, etc.) Among various other hypotheses, we may wonder whether they attach some religious significance to snow, or whether it gives them aesthetic pleasure. It is going to be much easier to find the "aesthetic" account plausible if their response is also triggered by sunsets, rich and interesting views, starry night skies: by things that evoke aesthetic responses in us. Even

then, the response could be religious, or could be some emotion we do not have at all. But, if there is no overlap between the triggers of their aesthetic responses and ours, recognizing theirs is going to be either impossible or at least extremely difficult.

This suggests that the interpretation of the meaning of the alien evaluations is interwoven with their content in a way parallel to that which holds for the meaning and content of factual beliefs. So let us make things easier in two ways. Assume they and we understand at least most of each others' languages. And assume a degree of overlap between their evaluations and ours. But there are also some important differences in values, and these lead them to suggest that we should transcend our purely human values (the ones not shared with them) in order to adopt theirs. How far will we be able to understand the values we do not share?

Half a century ago, Elizabeth Anscombe raised the issue of a person whose wanting something we might find unintelligible. A man says he wants a saucer of mud. "He is likely to be asked what for; to which let him reply that he does not want it for anything, he just wants it." Unless the other person thinks the man is either making some philosophical point or is "a dull babbling loon", he will want to ask the man more: "would he not try to find out in what aspect the object desired is desirable? Does it serve as a symbol? Is there something delightful about it? Does the man want to have something to call his own, and no more? Now if the reply is: "Philosophers have taught that anything can be an object of desire; so there can be no need for me to characterise these objects as somehow desirable; it merely so happens that I want them", then this is fair nonsense." (REFERENCE TO INTENTION, 1958, PAGE 70.)

It seems right that, for such a strange desire to be intelligible to us, some account needs to be given of what it is about the object that makes it desirable. The passage brings out the way in which some accounts and not others give an intelligible explanation. If the offered reply was, "I want a saucer of mud because it is brown, squelchy stuff in a shallow, round container", this would not explain. It would just generate the further question, "Why do you want that?" But the explanations proposed in the passage do make it intelligible. The person who wants a saucer of mud to use at the climate change demonstration as a symbol of the destruction of agricultural land, or someone who finds the colour and texture of mud delightful, or the person desperate to own something, can all be understood. Wanting something, having a high opinion of something, or caring about something, are intelligible attitudes when they hook on to the framework of concerns we already understand: such concerns as political campaigning, aesthetic appreciation or ownership.

When we come to understand values, tastes and desires that first seem strange or weird, it is by hooking them up in this way to human concerns we do

recognize. When first heard of, some of the sexual tastes of other people, or some of their tastes in food, may strike us as bizarre. So may willingness to accept martyrdom. But we come to understand all these things because we accept "it gives them sexual/gastronomic pleasure" or "they believe God may require them to die for their religion" as intelligible accounts.

The same goes for other people's phobias that may first seem bizarre. Alan Hollinghurst describes preparations for the philosopher Richard Wollheim coming to dinner. "Every scrap of newspaper had to be either thrown away or thoroughly concealed (not just tucked away findably under a cushion): the mere sight of newsprint would make it impossible for him to eat his dinner." (REFERENCE TO ALAN HOLLINGHURST: REVIEW OF RICHARD WOLLHEIM: GERMS: A MEMOIR OF CHILDHOOD, THE GUARDIAN SEPTEMBER 18, 2004.) Richard Wollheim bravely discussed this in his memoir and traced it back to a childhood experience. But even without a Freudian-type account, we can to some extent imagine even highly idiosyncratic phobias from the inside because we know what it is to be horrified, frightened or disgusted.

Perhaps there are hundreds of these intelligible attitudes, independent of each other. Or, perhaps, as some Aristotelians believe, there is some fairly short and manageable list of ingredients of the good human life, to which all these intelligible concerns can be reduced: safety, shelter, health, love, friendship, sex, religion, sport, art, recognition, and so on. Either way, suppose the map of the framework of humanly intelligible interests, values and concerns has been drawn up. (This is no more radical than reaching a stable wide reflective equilibrium in ethics, and may well be part of it.) The key point that Elizabeth Anscombe brought out in her discussion is that intelligible attitudes, values and desires have to hook up to this basic human framework. Her point has great plausibility within our species. But what happens in our encounter with aliens when a "saucer of mud" moment occurs?

DIALOGUE WITHOUT A SHARED FRAMEWORK?

Suppose the aliens have a pattern of behaviour that resembles that of lemmings. On a certain day of the year, they gather together in huge crowds and rush over a cliff. As a result about half of them die. We ask them why they do this and they say it is the deepest experience of a lifetime: an ecstasy which gives life its central meaning and which makes the high risk of death seem insignificant by comparison.

We might conjecture an explanation of why this behaviour might have come about: perhaps a Darwinian one about the benefits for gene survival of producing more offspring than the environment can support and then weeding out the weaker half by the rush over the cliff. But what they say does not

succeed in making us understand from the inside. We do not have any grasp of what is so good about the experience or how it gives meaning to their lives. We try to understand by seeing if we can link it to our human framework of values. Is it in some way like sport, or sex, or religion, or military parades, or a music festival? But the aliens happen to know about these and they assure us that it is not at all like any of them.

It seems that the most we can say is that we know what it is for an experience to be ecstatic. But the values that make it ecstatic are obscure. In this respect, they and we do not have enough of a shared framework. It is hard to see that they could give us a reason to participate ourselves in the rush over the cliff, other than the very minimal one that it may be interesting to experience anything at all that is new. Without re-designing our brains so that we became like the aliens, there is no reason to think we would experience anything wonderful. They could give us a reason for not destroying the cliff: that it matters to them. But, without enough shared framework, the values that make it matter remain impenetrable.

Karl Popper claimed that a fruitful dialogue in which both sides can learn from each other is possible in the absence of a shared framework. (REFERENCE TO THE MYTH OF THE FRAMEWORK.) He argued that, while agreement is easier if there are shared assumptions and values, we are likely to learn more from the more radical challenge posed by people of extremely different outlook.

He might have seen the encounter with aliens who have very different values as part of the historical process by which contact with other cultures opens our minds: “The Greeks started for us that great revolution which, it seems, is still in its beginning –the transition from the closed to the open society… Perhaps the most powerful cause of the breakdown of the closed society was the development of sea-communications and commerce. Close contact with other tribes is liable to undermine the feeling of necessity with which tribal institutions are viewed.” (REFERENCE TO Karl Popper: The Open Society and its Enemies, Vol.1. Ch.10.) In Popper’s account, Western civilization had its origin in a clash between frameworks. When the Greeks met the Egyptian and Persian civilizations, the contrasting outlooks made them aware of the fallibility of local beliefs. As a result, Popper believed, they stopped teaching beliefs as dogma and developed the method of exposing them to critical discussion.

I do not know enough about ancient Greece to assess Popper’s specific claim. But the response he describes is recognisable as one (sadly, only one) response to the encounter between different systems of belief in the current stage of globalization. There is no serious doubt that huge numbers of people have beliefs and values that have been changed and shaped partly by challenges posed by contact with other cultures with other ways of seeing things. It is

cheering to think that, even if aliens have very different beliefs and values, there is still the possibility of discussion, perhaps even with important benefits.

But it is worth noting that Popper defines a framework in a way that does not raise deep issues of intelligibility: "I mean by "framework" here a set of basic assumptions, or fundamental principles –that is to say, an intellectual framework". (REFERENCE TO THE MYTH OF THE FRAMEWORK, PAGE 35.) It is clear that he has in mind such debates as those between a Darwinian and a Creationist, between a Marxist and a liberal, or between supporters of rival views on abortion. In other words, they need not have difficulties in understanding each other's meaning: they share the range of background beliefs that make this possible. The basic assumptions and fundamental principles of their different frameworks are about such issues as religion, evolution, politics or the onset of the right to life. Behind these disagreements, if they are to understand each other, will be a whole set of broadly agreed "commonsense" beliefs about what the world is like, what words mean, and even to some extent about evidence and argument. The fruitful dialogue takes place in the context of framework disagreements that are only local rather than global.

TRANSCENDING HUMAN VALUES –WITH AND WITHOUT ALIEN ENCOUNTERS.

So, fruitful (or even intelligible) dialogue with aliens about the values we do not share will depend on how much framework we do share. Fruitfulness is likely to be a matter of degree. How far might we get? Might they persuade us to come closer to their value system? (Of course, we might persuade them. But it is simpler to stick to them persuading us. The question of this paper is about transcending human values.)

They might persuade us that it was our loss not to have the positive side of the rush over the cliff. We might regard fifty per cent mortality as a very high price, too high a price. But, the analogy could be with music and deafness. Many congenitally deaf people, while not knowing exactly what they are missing, are willing to accept that not having music is a loss. Whether the aliens could persuade us would depend greatly on the degree of our overlap with them in values. If we shared very little with them, we might not trust their judgement. But if we shared a lot we might have sufficient rapport to be convinced. (Think of how, when someone tells us we must go and see a particular film, or read a particular book, we react differently according to the degree of affinity we feel with the person.)

More generally, the aliens might be able to show us that some of our values were limited. They might be able to show us that, when the Parliament of the Planets meets, all the other alien species, from many different galaxies, share a common deep structure of values. Ours might be a limited case of this structure,

perhaps one distorted by rather special features of life on earth and of our evolutionary history. It would be open to us to accept this account and still to claim that our values are an improvement on the shared deep structure of the other species. Again, a lot would depend on whether we had enough shared framework to generate a real dialogue rather than just assertion and counter-assertion. But, if the shared framework was extensive enough, it seems conceivable that we might start to see our own human values as limited and parochial. In doing so, we would start to transcend them.

The encounter with aliens is a useful thought experiment to bring out both the possibilities and limitations of transcending human values. We might be made to see our values from another perspective and so become open to new critical thoughts about them and to their possible modification. There is a very large limitation on this process. At each stage, the alternative point of view has to be made intelligible to us. This is not just a matter of our understanding that aliens do value the rush over the cliff or whatever it is. It means that we have to have some grasp of why they value it: what they see in it. And this means that, to some degree, it has to be able to be mapped on to our value system. This links to a point that often strikes readers of Nietzsche. He talks about the revaluation of values, but this revaluation has to be itself undertaken from some evaluative standpoint. And, for us to have any reason to adopt it, this standpoint has to be part of our existing framework of values. (Neurath's image of rebuilding the boat at sea, applied to values: perhaps our value system needs rebuilding, but at any one time we have to keep enough of the boat afloat to reconstruct other parts.)

So the encounter with aliens does not suggest the possibility of total revolution, but rather a gradual evolution of our values, deciding to adopt or reject proposed new attitudes in the light of values we already have. The encounter with aliens turns out to be like the encounter with other cultures on our own planet. It is a continuation of the process we already know. For that reason, the "end of history" version of the final, stable wide reflective equilibrium is a myth. One aspect of our human values is their openness to change. And we can expect this to continue whether or not we encounter aliens. In this way, debating whether or not to transcend human values is like debating "transhumanism". For our species, the urge to transcend the way human nature has been up to now is itself part of our nature.

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10. BITS AND PIECES

ON THE COURTEOUSLY DISRESPECTFUL TONE OF VOICE.

SOCRATES AFTER BEING CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

It is not lack of arguments that has caused my condemnation, but a lack of effrontery and impudence, and the fact that I have refused to address you in the way which would give you most pleasure. You would have liked to hear me weep and wail, doing and saying all sorts of things which I regard as unworthy of myself, but which you are used to hearing from other people. But I did not think then that I ought to stoop to servility because I was in danger, and I do not regret now the way in which I pleaded my case; I would much rather die as the result of this defence than live as the result of the other sort... I suggest, gentlemen, that the difficulty is not so much to escape death; the real difficulty is to escape from doing wrong, which is far more fleet of foot. In this present instance, I, the slow old man, have been overtaken by the slower of the two, but my accusers, who are clever and quick, have been overtaken by the faster: by iniquity. When I leave this court I shall go away condemned by you to death, but they will go away convicted by Truth herself of depravity and wickedness.

PLATO: Apology.

OSIP MANDELSTAM.

OSIP MANDELSTAM TO STALIN.

You took away all the oceans and all the room.

You gave me my shoe-size with bars round it.

Where did it get you ? Nowhere.

You left me my lips, and they shape words, even in silence.

(Translated by Clarence Brown and W.S. Merwin.)

JOSEPH BRODSKY TO SOVIET OFFICIALS WHO SAID HE WAS A PARASITE.

There, still a boy, he was judged for being a poet, and by definition a loafer. It seems that he was the only writer in Russia to whom they applied that recently invented, barbaric law -which punished for the lack of desire to make money. Of course, that was not the point -with their animal instinct they already sensed full well just who stood before them...

"Who appointed you a poet?" they screamed at him.

"I thought.... I thought it was God."

Tatyana Tolstoya on Joseph Brodsky, in Robert B Silvers and Barbara Epstein: The Company They Kept, Writers on Unforgettable Friendships, New York Review Books, 2006.

SIGMUND FREUD AND THE GESTAPO.

Before Freud was granted the exit visa he needed to escape from Vienna, he was made to sign a document: "I, Prof. Freud, hereby confirm that after the Anschluss of Austria to the German Reich I have been treated by the German authorities and particularly by the Gestapo with all the respect and consideration due to my scientific reputation, that I could live and work in full freedom, that I could continue to pursue my activities in every way I desired, that I found full support from all concerned in this respect, and that I have not the slightest reason for any complaint."

Freud signed, but added in his own writing, "I can heartily recommend the Gestapo to anyone".

FROM A CONVERSATION WITH ISAIAH BERLIN.

A year or so before his death, the *New College Record* wanted me to interview Isaiah Berlin, among other things on the topic of his experience of being a Fellow in Philosophy at the College. He agreed to this and I went to his house in Headington.

As an undergraduate I had gone to his hugely attended lectures on political philosophy and had found them an exhilarating change from the rather dry philosophy that prevailed in Oxford at that time. The exhilaration came partly from the manner of delivery - the energy and speed with which the torrent of words was poured out - but also from the intellectual excitement and the range of reference, especially to Russian novelists, Russian and Jewish nineteenth century thinkers some of whom I had not even heard of before. We had met briefly a few times over the years but I thought he was unlikely to remember me, and I was a bit sorry that the emphasis of our conversation was supposed to be on his memories of New College, as - much as I love the place, where I taught for thirty years - it would probably be more exciting to talk about Herzen, Bakunin or Anna Akhmatova. So I approached Headington with rather mixed feelings.

He cheered me up very quickly. He had a problem with his voice and so was hard to hear, but he could not have been more welcoming. And he very quickly made it clear that he had found most of the Fellows of New College in his time to be worthy, decent and dull. It was not a time of his life he had found very interesting. He said a bit about it and -to his relief and my pleasure- we felt free to move on to other things.

Because his voice was weak, the tape recording gives a poor sound quality when he is talking, and not all of the conversation was for public reproduction. But here are four bits of it.

In the first extract he talks about novels, about his meeting with Anna Akhmatova, about Pasternak and about Tolstoy.

In the second extract the conversation turns to some of his philosophical contemporaries: Elizabeth Anscombe, R.G. Collingwood, Stuart Hampshire, Peter Strawson and Bernard Williams.

In the third extract Berlin recounts a famous story about Winston Churchill and talks more generally about Churchill, the war, about W.H Auden and Christopher Isherwood.

HERBERT HART.

In the final extract, Isaiah Berlin talked about the great legal philosopher Herbert Hart, who was his colleague and friend when they were both Fellows in Philosophy at New College, and also about an unexpected precursor who first stated of one of Berlin's central ideas.

ON THE TRUTHFULNESS AND CHILDLIKE LITERALNESS OF PHILOSOPHY: G.E. MOORE AND THE FINE LINE BETWEEN INTEGRITY AND ABSURDITY.

*It was over a hundred years ago, but there are still some reverberations from it in philosophy. Maynard Keynes described the impact of G.E. Moore's Principia Ethica on his generation in Cambridge: "*it was exciting, exhilarating, the beginning of a renaissance, the opening of a new heaven on a new earth, we were the forerunners of a new dispensation, we were not afraid of anything.*" On Moore's theory, goodness was an objective quality of things. Central was the goodness of various states of mind. To illustrate Moore's method of discussion, Keynes described disagreements about which of these states of mind were valuable:*

How did we know what states of mind were good? This was a matter of direct inspection, of direct unanalysable intuition about which it was useless and impossible to argue. In that case who was right when there was a difference of opinion?... In practice, victory was with those who could speak with the greatest

appearance of clear, undoubting conviction and could best use the accents of infallibility. Moore at this time was a master of this method -greeting one's remarks with a gasp of incredulity -*Do* you *really* think *that*, an expression of face as if to hear such a thing said reduced him to wonder verging on imbecility, with his mouth wide open and wagging his head in the negative so violently that his hair shook. *Oh!* he would say, goggling at you as if either you or he must be mad; and no reply was possible.

Keynes goes on to talk about the unworldliness of Moore's chapter on The Ideal, in which these mental states and their complex gradations of goodness were described with the kind of precision appropriate to complicated physical objects, saying that the chapter

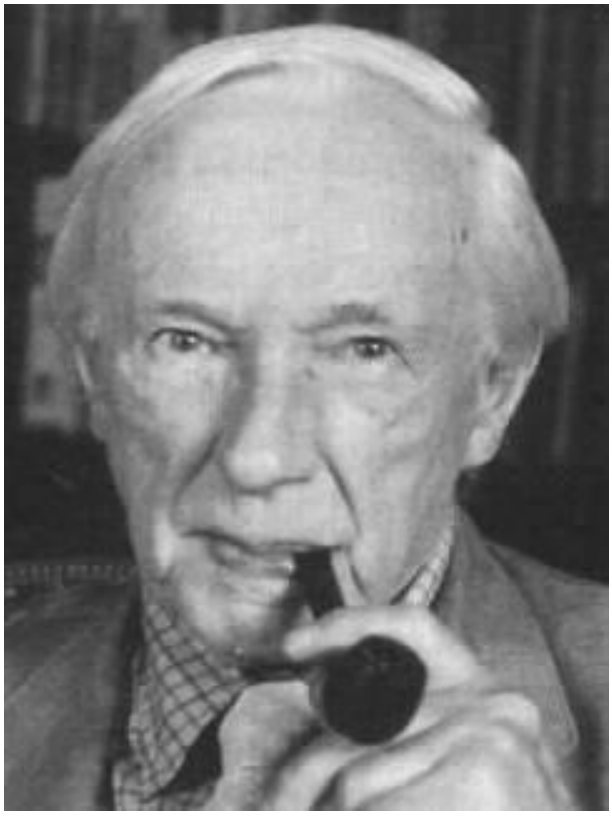
conveys the beauty of the literalness of Moore's mind, the pure and passionate intensity of his vision, *un*fanciful and *un*dressed-up. Moore had a nightmare once in which he could not distinguish propositions from tables. But even when he was awake, he could not distinguish love and beauty and truth from the furniture. They took on the same definition of outline, the same stable, solid, objective qualities and common-sense reality.

J.M. Keynes: *My Early Beliefs.*

This pure and passionate literalness was naive in the way Keynes brings out. But it also was part of the integrity that others rightly saw in Moore, the demand for precision and for the clear, plain statement which made cloudy philosophical formulations wilt under his questions. Some -with good reason- thought he had the literalness of a child. Virginia Woolf in her diary in 1940 noticed "Moore's candid childs eyes". Twenty years before, her diary had described an encounter when Moore was staying at the Woolf's house:

I lay in the shallow light, which should be written dark, I think, a long time, & then Moore came & took a cold bath at 1 in the morning, consequently I was too muddled next morning to follow his explanation of Berkeley. He has grown grey, sunken, toothless perhaps. His eyes small, watchful, but perhaps not so piercing as of old. A lack of mass, somewhere. He went off to take "my baby for a walk". I don't see altogether why he was such a dominator & dictator of youth. Perhaps Cambridge is too much of a cave. Yet (I don't attempt to balance this properly) of course there's his entire innocency & shrewdness, not the vestige of falsehood obscuring him anywhere.

Virginia Woolf: *Diary*, 23 June, 1920.



It is tempting to treat the extreme literalness and precision as a bit comic. In a discussion of issues about free-will I once quoted Moore: "It is true, as a rule, that cats can climb trees, whereas dogs can't" and said that I liked "as a rule": no-one is going to catch out Moore by citing some cat with amputated legs. In one way, the teasing is unfair. Trying to be extremely precise is part of how serious philosophy resists bad philosophy's gravitational pull towards talking nonsense. (In the "Travesties and Encounters" section of this website, see the "encounter" between Moore and Slavoj Zizek.)

But there is a fine line between integrity and absurdity. It is possible to teeter over the edge. The journalist Alan Watkins described once lodging with Moore and his wife in Cambridge. Dorothy Moore took a somewhat bossy interest in their tenants:

She once insisted on selling us a gate-leg table for £10 on the ground that it was genuine Jacobean. We never discovered whether it was or not. Sometimes she would invite us to tea with Moore and herself. Mrs. Moore was voluble, and he confined himself to interjections. She was once talking about a table that some of their previous tenants had bought. Odd how everything to do with Moore seems to come down to tables.

"You see," she explained, "they wanted it to have tea on."

"No, no, dear," he said. "That's not quite right. Coffee too."

Alan Watkins: *Brief Lives.*

MORE ON THE INNOCENCE OF PHILOSOPHERS.

GILBERT RYLE

Jerry Cohen reported a conversation with Gilbert Ryle, in which Ryle said that "unlike pain, pleasure does not have a bodily location". Jerry gave the counterexample of sexual pleasure. Ryle replied, "Well, yes, there is that case. But I was thinking of something more interesting."

(Taken from Gerald Dworkin's *In Memoriam G.A. (Jerry) Cohen,* on the website *3 Quarks Daily.*

CHILDREN ARE NATURAL PHILOSOPHERS.

Finding themselves in a world where there is so much that they do not understand, children explore and ask questions. Many of the questions are scientific: Why is snow so cold? How big is the world? Are there still dinosaurs? But the questions do not stop there. Does my cat think? Do you see red the same way I do? Can I know for sure that my friends really like me? Is there a God who listens to prayers? Is it bad to kill animals and eat them?

There is a nice instance given by Bryan Magee from his own childhood. Of course Bryan Magee became a philosopher, which is fairly rare. But, just as many children ask scientific questions without going on to become scientists, many people who did not become philosophers will perhaps remember wondering as children about questions of this sort:

I retain a vivid memory of myself... when I was seven or eight, standing in a shaft of sunlight in the corner of the kitchen by our back door, between a barred window and a green wooden wall, focusing my eyes keenly on the index finger of my right hand, which I held pointed upwards in front of my face. I'm going to count to three, *I was saying to myself,* and when I say "three" my finger's going to bend. *Then I counted:* One, two, thr- *And sure enough on* three *my finger bent. How did I do it? I did it again. Then I thought:* This time I'll count to four. *And on* four *my finger bent. Next time I counted to five. My finger bent on* five. *I tried dragging out the counting so as to catch my finger out;* one, two... three...four... [*wait for it*]... five! *But on* five *my finger, not caught napping at all, bent. I could bend my finger whenever I liked. Or not, just as I decided. Yet no matter how hard I concentrated I couldn't grasp anything at all about how I did it. How could something that was so completely within my command, solely and entirely a matter of my own conscious decision, be a nothing for me, just simply no experience whatever, and yet happen? From that day to this the problem has fascinated me.*

Bryan Magee: *Confessions of a Philosopher*.

The fact (if it is a fact) that fewer adults are interested in philosophical questions is a bit sad. It may reflect being discouraged as children by family, teachers or others of an excessively practical bent. "Don't waste your time on that kind of thing. It doesn't matter whether the cat can think and you won't get a good job if you don't get on with your Geography homework." It may reflect a defeated sense that these are not questions where we can make progress towards answers, a gloomy view that philosophers could do more to dispel. Whatever the causes, it is a human loss if these questions die out in someone. (John Donne: "We go through life never thoroughly awake".)

There have been many recent advances in the study of the cognitive psychology of children. We are putting together a fuller and richer picture of how children make causal maps of the world, and how they imagine alternative possibilities about the world, and about the minds of other people and of themselves. An excellent recent account is Alison Gopnik's *The Philosophical Baby, What children's minds tell us about truth, love and the meaning of life.* Developmental psychology is full of references to imagined counterfactuals. All this supports the view that the scientific and philosophical questions children ask are continuous with the questions they have to ask even to develop the commonsense picture of the world that excessively practical people think is the only one needed.

Perhaps there should be more philosophy written for children. It is one of the great virtues of Thomas Nagel's book *What does it all mean?* that, as well as being faithful to the nature of some of the fundamental questions, it can also be read by (some) pre-teenage children. Some books about philosophy are either

aimed at children as readers or are about philosophical conversation with children. They include Gareth B. Matthews: *Dialogues with Children*, Marilyn Bowles: *Philosophy for Children*, and David White: *Philosophy for Kids*.

I made a brief attempt once in answer to a request by my daughter, Ruth. Just before her eighth birthday, she asked me to include with her presents a letter about how we can know the difference between what is imagined and what is real. Unfortunately a letter, unlike a conversation, is a monologue. So, of course, if children want to think about philosophy (or anything else) a conversation is better. Although talking to children about such things is important, listening to them is even more so. But here is the attempt I made. It is Ruth's letter, but she has given me permission to reprint it here. Time has rushed by. This letter was put on the website on the thirteenth birthday of Ruth's son, and my grandson, Sam.

A LETTER TO RUTH.

Dear Ruth

You asked me to write to you about Imagination, and what is real.

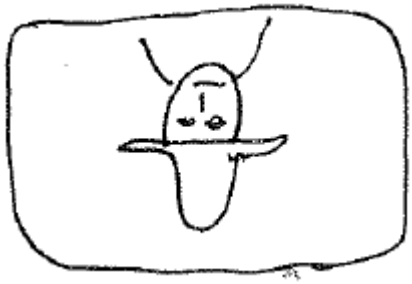
How do we know what the world is like? We know it through our senses. We know the sky is blue because we see it is. We know birds sing because we hear them. We know a cat's coat is silky because we can feel it. We know snow is cold because we can feel that too. And we know the taste of oranges or the smell of smoke because we have senses for them too.

When we use our senses, we have experiences. If someone fires a gun, the experience we have is hearing a loud bang. If Chilky is hungry, the experience we have is feeling someone rubbing against our legs. When we look down, we have the experience of seeing a cat looking up at us, and hearing her purr.

Usually, our experiences and the things that cause them are very like each other. We feel cold when we touch snow, because snow is cold. When we look at an elephant, we have an experience of something bigger than when we look at a dog, because elephants are bigger than dogs.

It is rather like what we see on television. The grass at a football match looks green on television, because the picture on the screen is very like the real football pitch the cameras are filming. Our experiences are a bit like the pictures on the television screen. Usually, our experiences are very like the things that are near us. If you have an experience of seeing a dog bounding towards you, this is probably because a dog is bounding towards you.

Sometimes television pictures go wrong:



I once had a television where it always seemed to be snowing at the football match:

And it always seemed to be snowing indoors too:

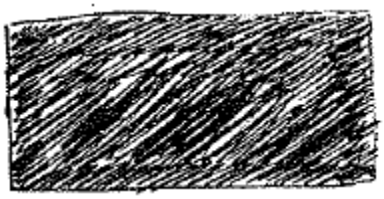
Because it snowed all the time on this television, I knew that it was not really snowing at the football, but something was wrong with the television.

This kind of thing can happen with people's experiences too. Vivette takes off her contact lenses when she goes to bed. Then everything looks blurry to her. If she was not very clever, she might think, "isn't it funny how the world changes? Hot in summer, cold in winter. Sharp in the day, blurry at bedtime."

But she knows with this blurriness that it is only her experience that changes, not the world.. Just like the snow on the screen, that isn't there on the football pitch. Like the picture on television, our experiences are usually very like things in the world, but not always.

Some ways our experiences are not like what is there in front of us

Sometimes we do not see what is there. If you wake up in the night, and it is pitch dark, your pink dress is on the chair beside you, but do you see it? No. If you look over there, all you see is this:

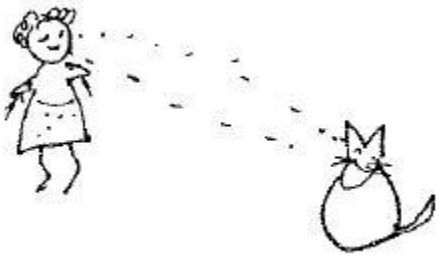


That is where the thing is there (the dress) but you don't have the experience.

Sometimes it is the other way round. You have an experience, but it is not of any thing that is there. Shut your eyes and think of Chilky.

Just then you had an experience of a cat without any cat being there. This happens when you dream too. There are three different experiences:

Seeing a cat



Imagining a cat

Dreaming about a cat

Can you always tell which you are doing? Sometimes it is easy to tell. Shut your eyes and think of Chilky again.

What that just the same as seeing Chilky? Or was it somehow fainter? And could you see how many whiskers she had, or exactly where the white changes to black? It is really a bit different from seeing.

Let's think about another experience with Chilky in it. You and she are in India, and she turns to you and says, "the trouble with these Indian cats is that they eat nothing but curry." Is this real, or can you tell it is a dream?

So we can tell that some of our experiences are not of something really there, because the experiences are different.

But is the experience seems real, does this mean it always is? Perhaps I could imagine or dream something in a very lifelike way? This does sometimes happen. Some people have hallucinations, where their experience is just like something real. Very thirsty people in the desert keep thinking they see an oasis with trees and water in front of them, when there is not really anything there.

How can we tell whether something is real or a hallucination?

Look at the chair. Is it real, or could it be a hallucination?

The first test

Go near the chair. One reason for thinking it is real is that it does not fade away when you go close to it. The oasis in the desert always seems to fade away when we try to go to it. You never seem to reach it.

The second test

And you can't touch the oasis.

Go up to the chair and touch it. Your sense of touch agrees with your sense of sight. Two senses are less likely to be wrong than one. Gently bang the chair and listen. If you heard a sound, you have three senses that agree. It is even less likely that all three are wrong.

But perhaps all your senses could be wrong. It is not very likely, but you might have an illness that has made all your senses go wrong. Another test might show this.

The third test

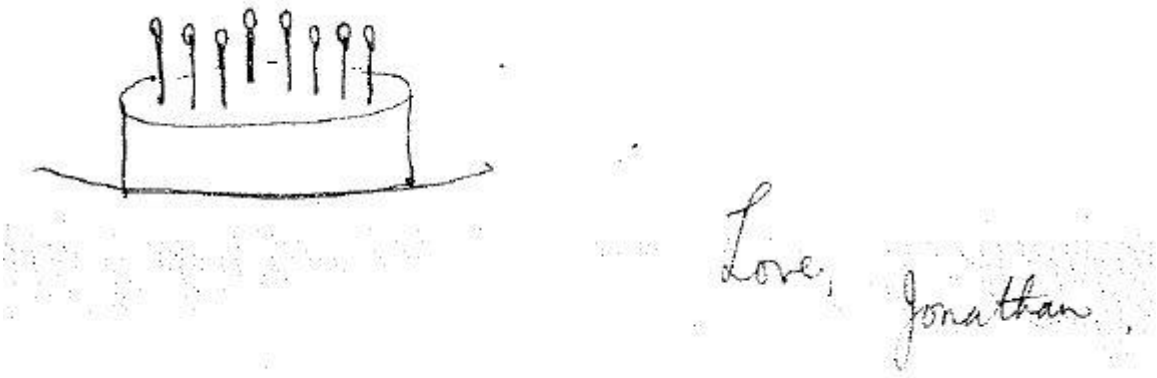
Ask other people. If other people all tell you they don't see what you think you see, this is a reason for thinking you might be wrong. (Of course, they might be teasing you, or their senses may have gone wrong. But if everyone disagrees with you, this suggests you may be wrong.) I think poppies in a field are rather hard to see. Most other people think they are very bright. Is this a reason for thinking there is something wrong with my way of seeing colours?

Suppose you have an experience that passes all the tests. The chair doesn't fade away when you go close. All your senses agree that it is there, and other people agree too. You have very good reasons for thinking the thing is really there.

But could you still be wrong? Well, you could. It could be that all your senses are wrong. They could be giving you wrong ideas about the chair, and about what other people are saying. It could be a very realistic dream. But, when you have used all the tests, you are much less likely to be wrong.

All this shows that we can never be quite certain of anything. Anything we think may be wrong. But using the tests makes us very unlikely to be wrong. We can't be quite certain, but we can be certain enough not to worry.

We could both be dreaming it is your birthday today. But I bet we aren't.



A FEW YEARS BEFORE, RUTH'S OLDER BROTHERS DISAGREED WITH EACH OTHER.

This next television documentary, about ethical questions raised by genetic engineering, was ostensibly presented by me. But children are natural philosophers, and the stars of the programme were Ruth's older brothers, Daniel and David. While I was out making coffee for the television crew, they persuaded the producers that they should be on the programme. I was dubious about this, but -as often- they turned out to be right.

ON NOT BEING INTIMIDATED BY PHILOSOPHY.

Learning to think about philosophy is, among mother things, to acquire a set of intellectual habits and skills. It includes being introduced to the ideas and arguments of some of the great philosophers as they tried to answer philosophical questions. But it is also about using rational methods in thinking for yourself about the questions.

There is a kind of intimidation that can make thinking for yourself seem hopeless. It can take years -perhaps eternity- to get on top of the philosophy of Kant or Hegel or Wittgenstein. And who can possibly keep up with the flood of often technical articles by professional philosophers in the journals each year? Who would *want* to do so, even if they had the time? So students can be made to feel utterly disqualified from getting anywhere with the subject.

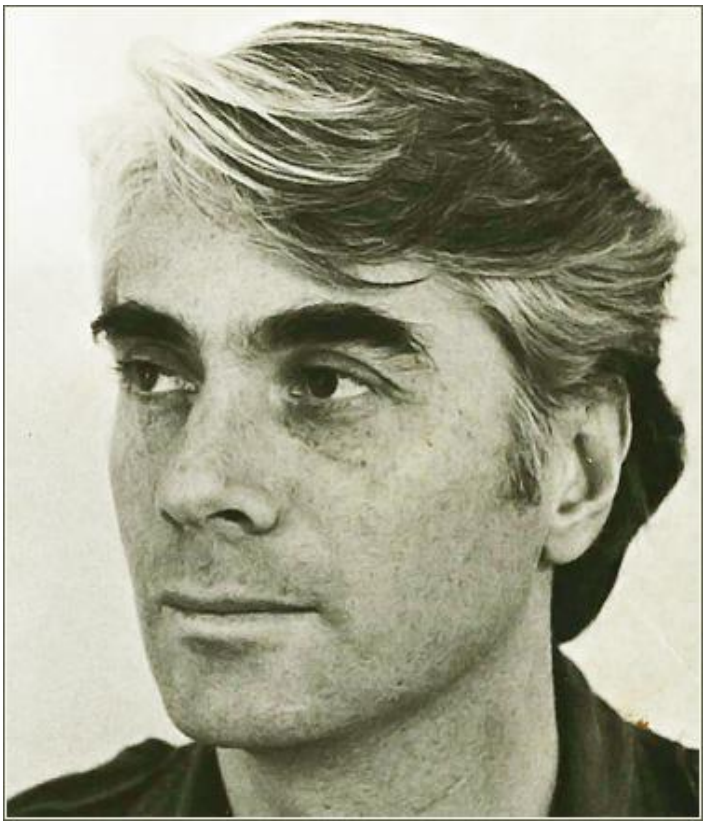
But it matters that people should go on thinking, as clearly and as rationally as they can, about some of the most important and interesting questions ever asked. So it is important to oppose this intimidation. Yes, we all lack important qualifications, but, for all that they tower above us, so did Kant, Hegel and Wittgenstein. A good part of teaching philosophy is a matter of getting across (not usually by explicit statement) that, while we lack the brilliance of the best philosophers, we can still make progress with the questions and still have a really interesting time doing so.

Here are contributions to the campaign against intimidation by two people who, although not Kant, Hegel or Wittgenstein, were themselves by any reasonable standards brilliant and inspiring philosophers.

Works of philosophy are written as though their authors believe them to be the absolutely final word on their subject. But it is not, surely, that each philosopher thinks that he finally, thank God, has found the truth and built an impregnable fortress around it. We are all actually much more modest than that. For good reason. Having thought long and hard about the view he proposes, a philosopher has a reasonably good view about its weak points; the places where great intellectual weight is placed upon something perhaps too fragile to bear it, the places where the unravelling of the view might begin, the unprobed assumptions he feels uneasy about. One form of philosophical activity feels like pushing and shoving things to fit into some fixed perimeter of specified shape. All those things are lying out there, and they must be fit in. You push and shove the material into the rigid area getting it into the boundary on one side, and it bulges out on another. You run around and press in the protruding bulge, producing yet another in another place. So you push and shove and clip off corners from the things so they'll fit and you press in until finally almost everything sits unstably more or less in there; what doesn't gets heaved away so that it won't be noticed... Quickly, you find an angle from which it looks like an

exact fit and take a snapshot, at a fast shutter speed before something else bulges out too noticeably... All that remains is to publish the photograph as a representation of exactly how things are, and to note how nothing fits properly into any other shape.

Robert Nozick*: Anarchy, State and Utopia.*



ROBERT NOZICK.

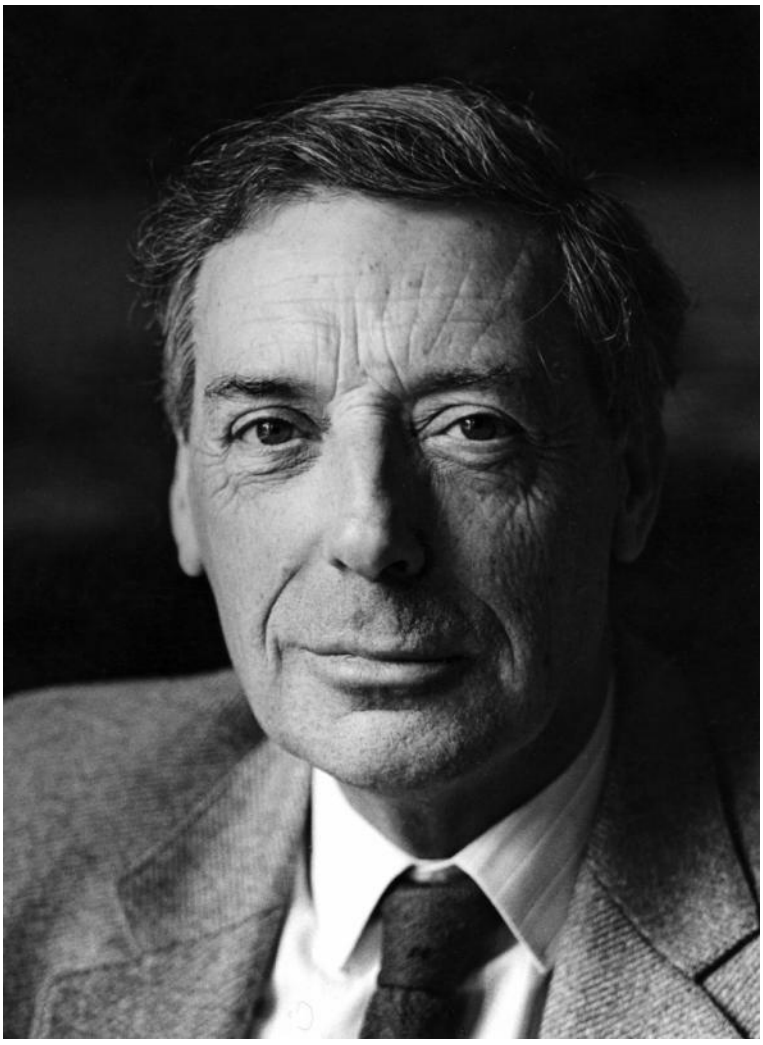
Isn't it ludicrous for someone just one generation from the shtetl, a pisher from Brownsville and East Flatbush in Brooklyn, even to touch on the topics of the monumental thinkers? Of course it is. Yet it was ludicrous for them too. We are all just a few years past something or other, if only childhood. Even the monuments themselves, so serenely in command of culture and intellect, must have been children once and adolescents -so they too are immigrants to the realm of thought. It wouldn't hurt for an acknowledgement of this occasionally through their magisterial prose to peep.

Robert Nozick: *Philosophical Explanations.*

It would be a bad friend of philosophy who did not admit that there is quite a lot of philosophical work that is unrewarding by any standard: unhelpful, boring, sterile. The awful fact is that some of it hardly tries to be anything else. It consists of exercises that are necessary for the structure of philosophy as providing an academic career. The professionalization of philosophy has being going on for more than a century (or longer, if you count the Middle Ages), but

it is now at an unprecedented level. It undeniably brings its own deformations, and the question that Stravinsky used to ask disobligingly about much contemporary music -"Who needs it?"- can be pressed against many products of academic philosophy.

Bernard Williams*: What Might Philosophy Become?*



BERNARD WILLIAMS.

And finally, three mild antidotes to philosophical or ethical self-importance:

REMEMBERING DOING A DEGREE IN PHILOSOPHY.

I was once working with the television documentary-maker Oliver Morse. At one point he mentioned having once done a degree in philosophy. I asked what he had got from it. He said he did not remember much about it. "But I do remember one article. I forget what it was about. Its final sentence was "only three ducks remained."."

A POLICE INSPECTOR INTERVIEWS A PHILOSOPHER.

BONES: *What is it that you do?*

GEORGE*: I'm a professor of moral philosophy*.

BONES (wagging a finger*): I'm very glad you said that, son.*

BONES*: Is God what?*

(He is reading the first page of the typescript.)

GEORGE: *It is a paper I am presenting to the symposium at the university... It would be a great opportunity if only I could seize it... I mean, it's really the event of the year (*Pause.*) In the world of moral philosophy, that is.*

BONES: (putting down the script*) It's not a world I move in very much.*

Tom Stoppard*: Jumpers.*

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11. TRAVESTIES AND ENCOUNTERS

(I doubt if many people -or anyone?- would want to read any part of this website from start to finish. This applies especially to this Travesties and Encounters section, which is meant as something for those who like this sort of thing to dip into.)

Tom Stoppard's sparkling play *Travesties* takes off from the fact that Lenin, James Joyce and the Dadaist Tristan Tzara were all living in Zurich during the First World War. In the play they are in the same room in the Zurich library. When the play starts Lenin is getting very excited in Russian about news of a Revolution in Saint Petersburg while Joyce is dictating to an assistant lines like "Morose delectation...Aquinas tunbelly... Frate Porcospino..."

Vladimir Lenin

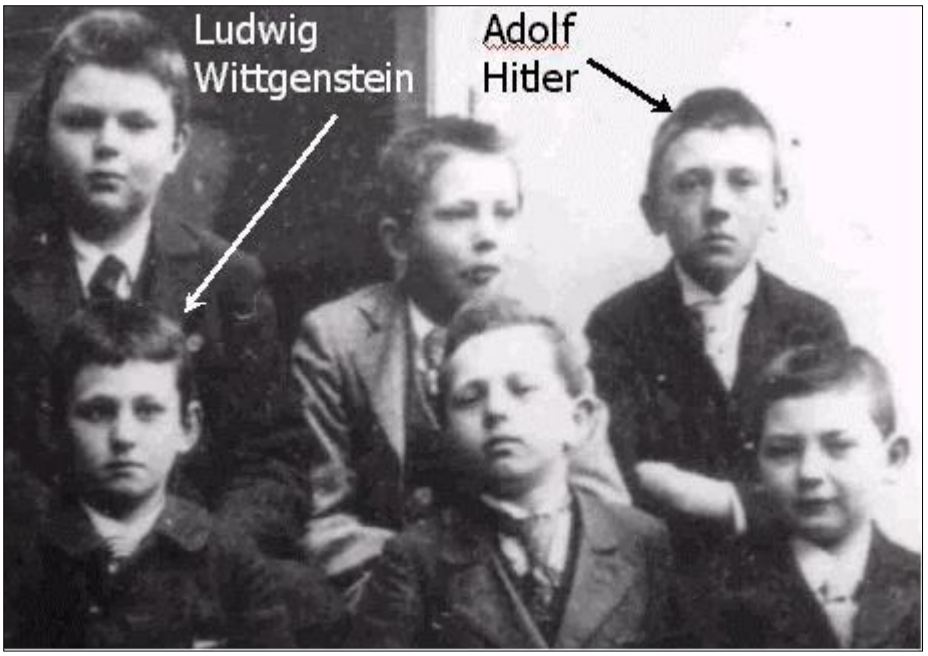
James Joyce

Tristan Tzara

Tom Stoppard

Perhaps few real chance meetings are quite as surreal as this, but ever since seeing *Travesties* I have been interested to hear about improbable or odd encounters. Ones I hear about often involve philosophers. Some are grim. Some are enjoyable. A number of the accounts to follow could be called gossip. People often think of gossip as a minor vice. That may be right when it is malevolent or involves intrusive invasion of the private lives of unwilling people, or even of the possibly willing "celebrities" of whom we hear too much. But, apart from these cases, gossip should be seen as a minor virtue. A person with no interest in gossip has no interest in stories about other people, and so has a drastically reduced capacity to enjoy and celebrate the wonderful peculiarity and diversity of those around us.

WITTGENSTEIN AND HITLER.



Among the darker encounters is that Hitler and Wittgenstein (almost exactly the same age, Hitler being six days older than Wittgenstein) were both schoolboys together in the *Realschule* at Linz in the year 1903-1904. Academically they were two years apart, as Wittgenstein had been advanced a year and Hitler was year behind. As the school had only about 300 students, it is likely that the two were at least aware of each other.

In the photograph there is no doubt about the identity of the young Hitler, although the correctness of the one marked as Wittgenstein is disputed. (I think the adult Wittgenstein can be glimpsed in the boy's face, but such judgements are obviously fairly subjective.) In Hitler's discussion in *Mein Kampf* of the origins of his antisemitism, he mentions a Jewish boy at school. It has been claimed (by Kimberley Cornish in *The Jew of Linz*) that the boy was Wittgenstein. Hitler mentions the Jewish boy in a way that seems to suggest that he was not an important influence on his antisemitism.

Having said that he grew up in a home without antisemitism, Hitler goes on: "Likewise at school I found no occasion which could have led me to change this inherited picture. At the *Realschule,* to be sure, I did meet one Jewish boy who was treated by all of us with caution, but only because various experiences had led us to doubt his discretion and we did not particularly trust him; but neither I nor the others had any thoughts on the matter". It is hard to assess whether or not this boy was Wittgenstein. It is obviously a possibility. It is easy to imagine Wittgenstein both having and communicating a very low impression of Hitler, and that Hitler would not be charmed by this. Hitler's own account denies that the boy influenced his antisemitism, although his claims about his personal history in *Mein Kampf* cannot be relied on. Whatever the truth about the claimed identity or the influence, the mere fact of the two knowing each other at school would be worthy of Stoppard's wit were the possible implications not so terrible.

THE PHILOSOPHER AS INHUMAN AGONY UNCLE: IMMANUEL KANT RESPONDS TO MARIA VON HERBERT.

Immanuel Kant famously made truth-telling always morally obligatory, regardless of consequences: "To be truthful (honest) in all declarations, therefore, is a sacred and absolutely commanding decree of reason, limited by no expediency".

Maria von Herbert was an enthusiastically Kantian philosopher, as was her husband. Their house was a centre of Enlightenment discussion and of the propagation of rational Kantian morality. In August 1791, Maria von Herbert wrote a letter to Kant about the consequences of her having told someone she loved the truth that she had concealed from him a previous relationship:

Great Kant,

As a believer calls to his God, I call to you for help, for comfort, or for counsel to prepare me for death. Your writings prove that there is a future life. But as for this life, I have found nothing at all that could replace the good I have lost, for I loved someone who, in my eyes, encompassed within himself all that is worthwhile, so that I lived only for him, everything else was in comparison just rubbish, cheap trinkets. Well, I have offended this person, because of a long drawn out lie, which I have now disclosed to him, though there was nothing unfavourable to my character in it, I had no vice in my life that needed hiding. The lie was enough though, and his love vanished. As an honourable man, he doesn't refuse me friendship. But that inner feeling that once, unbidden, led us to each other, is no more - oh my heart splinters into a thousand pieces!If I hadn't read so much of your work I would certainly have put an end to my life. But the conclusion I had to draw from your theory stops me -it is wrong for me to die because my life is tormented. Instead I'm supposed to live because of my being. Now put yourself in my place, and either damn me or conmfort me. I've read the metaphysic of morals, and the categorical imperative, and it doesn't help a bit. My reason abandons me just when I need it. Answer me, I implore you -or you won't be acting in accordance with your own imperative...

Kant replied in Spring 1792:

Your deeply felt letter comes from a heart that must have been created for the sake of virtue and honesty, since it is so receptive to instruction in those qualities. I must do as you ask, namely , put myself in your place, and prescribe for you a pure moral sedative. I do not know whether your relationship is one of marriage or friendship, but it makes no significant difference. For love, be it for one's spouse or for a friend, presupposes the same mutual esteem for the other's character, without which it is no more than perishable sensual delusion.

A love like that wants to communicate itself completely, and it expects of its respondent a similar sharing of heart, unweakened by distrustful reticence. That is what the ideal of friendship demands. But there is something in us which puts limits on such frankness, some obstacle to this mutual outpouring of the heart, which makes one keep some part of one's thoughts locked within oneself, even when one is most intimate...

We can't expect frankness of people, since everyone fears that to reveal himself completely would be to make himself despised by others. But this lack of frankness, this reticence, is still very different from dishonesty. What the honest but reticent man says is true but not the whole truth. What the dishonest man says is something he knows to be false... a lie. It may be harmless but it is not on that account innocent. It is a serious violation of a duty to oneself; it subverts the dignity of humanity in our own person, and attacks the roots of our thinking.

As you see, you have sought counsel from a physician who is no flatterer. I speak for your beloved and present him with arguments that justify his having wavered in his affection for you.

Ask yourself whether you reproach yourself for the imprudence of confessing, or for the immorality intrinsic to the lie. If the former, then you regret having doine your duty. And why? Because it has resulted in the loss of your friend's confidence. This regret is not motivated by anything moral, since it is produced by an awareness not of the act itself, but of its consequences. But if your reproach is grounded in a moral judgement of your behaviour, it would be a poor moral physician who would advise you to cast it from your mind.

When your change in attitude has been revealed to your beloved, only time will be needed to quench, little by little, the traces of his justified indignation, and to transform his coldness into a more firmly grounded love. If this doesn't happen, then the earlier warmth of his affection was more physical than moral, and would have disappeared anyway -a misfortune which we often encounter in life, and when we do, must meet with composure. For the value of life, insofar as it consists in the enjoyment we get from people, is vastly overrated.

Here then, my dear friend, you find the customary divisions of a sermon: instruction, penalty and comfort. Devote yourself to the first two; when they have had their effect, comfort will be found by itself.

Maria von Herbert replied in January 1793:

Dear and revered sir,

Your kindness and your exact understanding of the human heart, encourage me to describe to you, unshrinkingly, the further progress of my soul. The lie was no cloaking of a vice, but a sin of keeping something back out of consideration for the friendship (still veiled by love) that existed then. There was a struggle, I was aware of the honesty friendship demands, and at the same time I could foresee the terribly wounding consequences. Finally I had the strength and revealed the truth to my friend, but so late -and when I told him, the stone in my heart was gone, but his love was torn away in exchange. My friend hardened in his coldness, just as you said in your letter. But then afterwards he changed towards me, and offered me again the most intimate friendship. I'm glad enough about it, for his sake -but I'm not really content, because it's just amusement, it doesn't have any point.

My vision is clear now. I feel that a vast emptiness extends inside me, and all around me -so that I almost find myself to be superfluous, unnecessary. Nothing attracts me. I'm tormented by a boredom that makes life intolerable. Don't think me arrogant for saying this, but the demands of morality are too easy for me. I

would eagerly do twice as much as they command. They only get their prestige from the attractiveness of sin, and it costs me almost no effort to resist that.

I comfort myself with the thought that, since the practice of morality is so bound up with sensuality, it can only count for this world. I can hope that the afterlife won't be yet another life ruled by these few, easy demands of morality, another empty and vegetating life... I don't study the natural sciences or the arts any more, since I don't feel that I'm genius enough to extend them; and for myself, there's no need to know them. I'm indifferent to everything that doesn't bear on the categorical imperative, and my transcendental consciousness -although I'm all done with those thoughts too.

You can see, perhaps, why I want only one thing, namely to shorten this pointless life, a life which I am convinced will get neither better nor worse. If you consider that I am still young and that each day interests me only to the extent that it brings me closer to death, you can judge what a great benefactor wou would be if you were to examine this question closely. I ask you, because my conception of morality is silent here, whereas it speaks decisively on all other matters. And if you cannot give me the answer I seek, I beg you to give me something that will get this intolerable emptiness out of my soul. Then I might become a useful part of nature, and, if my health permits, would make a trip to Konigsberg in a few years. I want to ask permission, in advance, to visit you. You must tell me your story then, because I would like to know what kind of life your philosophy has led you to -whether it never seemed to you to be worth the bother to marry, or to give your whole heart to anyone, or to reproduce your likeness. I have an engraved portrait of you by Bause, from Leipzig. I see a profound calm there, and moral depth -but not the astuteness of which the Critique of Pure Reason *is proof. And I'm dissatisfied not to be able to look you right in the face.*

Please fulfill my wish, if it's not too inconvenient. And I need to remind you: if you do me this great favour and take the trouble to answer, please focus on specific details, not on the general points, which I understand, and already understood when I happily studied your works at the side of my friend. You would like him, I'm sure. He is honest, goodhearted, and intelligent -and besides that, fortunate enough to fit this world.

I am with deepest respect and truth, Maria Herbert.

Kant asked a mutual friend, Erhard, about Maria Herbert, and was told that she had "capsized on the reef of romantic love". In February 1793 he wrote to Elizabeth Motherby, the daughter of one of his friends, enclosing the two letters from Maria Herbert and the one from Erhard. Kant's letter to Elizabeth Motherby read:

I have numbered the letters which I have the honour of passing on to you, my dear mademoiselle, according to the dates I received them. The ecstatical little lady didn't think to date them. The third letter, from another source, provides an explanation of the lady's curious mental derangement. A number of expressions refer to writings of mine that she read, and are difficult to understand without an interpreter.

You have been so fortunate in your upbringing, that I do not need to commend these letters to you as an example of warning, to guard you against the wanderings of a sublimated fantasy. But they may serve nonetheless to make your perception of that good fortune the more lively.

I am, with the greatest respect, my honoured lady's most obedient servant, I Kant.

Kant never replied to Maria Herbert's second letter. In 1803 she committed suicide.

These letters are extracted from a sensitive and perceptive discussion of what they tell us about Kant's moral philosophy by Rae Langton: Duty and Desolation, *Philosophy*, 1992. There is a shortened version in Peter Singer (ed.): *Ethics*, Oxford University Press, 1994.

HEGEL LUNCHES WITH GOETHE AND HIS FAMILY.

It was lunch at the Goethe's, and Goethe himself was quiet,

... no doubt not to disturb the free speech of his very voluble and logically penetrating guest, who elaborated upon himself in oddly complicated grammatical forms. An entirely novel teminology, a mode of expression mentally overleaping itself, the peculiarly employed philosophical formulas of the ever more animated man in the course of his demonstrations -all this finally reduced Goethe to complete silence without the guest even noticing...

One of the others at the meal said afterwards, *"I cannot tell whether he is brilliant or mad. He seems to me to be an unclear thinker."*

Account by Ottilie von Goethe, quoted in Geoffrey Hawthorne: Hegel's Odyssey, *London Review of Books, October, 1985.*

SCHELLING'S LECTURES.

iN 1841, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling was lecturing in Lecture Hall 6 in the University of Berlin. In the audience was Friedrich Engels: "alongside him perched Jacob Burkhardt, the nascent art historian and Renaissance scholar; Michael Bakunin, the future anarchist (who dismissed the lectures as

"interesting but rather insignificant"); and the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who thought Schelling talked "quite insufferable nonsense"."

Tristram Hunt: *The Frock-Coated Communist, the Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels,* Allen Lane, 2009.

Those of us who give lectures or classes in philosophy may be a bit saddened, though not entirely surprised, if some of the audience feedback describes the content as "rather insignificant" or "insufferable nonsense". (In the section of this website called Philosophy, Beliefs and Conflicts, my lecture on "The Philosophy and Psychology of a New World Order" has been taken from Youtube. With it have come a couple of splendid examples of comments of this sort.) Even a huge quantity of negative or inane feedback would be a price worth paying to have a class including the people in Schelling's.

LONDON PUBS AND THE EARLY DAYS OF COMMUNISM.

Lenin worked in Clerkenwell as editor of the revolutionary paper *Iskra* (The Spark) from 1902 until 1903. The office was at 37a Clerkenwell Green. Stalin, having met Lenin at a 1905 conference in Finland, visited him that year in London, and local legend has it that they used to talk together in the Crown and Anchor pub (now the Crown Tavern) on Clerkenwell Green.

It is unlikely that Lenin and Stalin having a drink together would make for a particularly convivial occasion. I would have prefered to eavesdrop on the pub conversations of Marx and Engels. After moving to Primrose Hill in 1870, Engels used to walk over from Regent's Park Road to Marx's house in Maitland Park Villas for their daily talk together. Often their talk would take place on a long walk over Hampstead Heath, and would continue the conversation as they ended by having a drink at Jack Straw's Castle.

We do not know for sure what Lenin and Stalin may have discussed at the Crown and Anchor, or what Marx and Engels talked about at Jack Straw's Castle. We do know what was discussed at the second congress of the Communist League at the end of 1847 in the room above the Red Lion pub in Great Windmill Street, Soho. For ten days the League met in this room and argued about their basic principles, ending in victory for the views of Marx and Engels that were to be the basis of the *Communist Manifesto*.

The depictions of Marx in the gargantuan statues erected in Moscow, East Berlin and other parts of the former communist world might suggest an intellectual giant, dedicated only to developing and acting on theories of the dialectic and the class struggle. For such an unremittingly granite thinker and fighter, pubs would have served only as convenient places for political discussion and debate.

MARX NEAR THE BOLSHOI THEATRE.

MARX AND ENGELS NEAR ALEXANDERPLATZ.

But parts of Marx's actual life make a nice contrast to the granite version. One night Marx walked up the Tottenham Court Road with Wilhelm Liebknecht and Edgar Bauer. They planned to have a glass of beer in each of the eighteen pubs between Oxford Street and what is now the Euston Road. In the last pub they got into a drunken row with some Englishmen and had to escape. Then Bauer stumbled over a heap of paving stones and threw one at the gas lantern, smashing the glass. Francis Wheen, in his very lively biography of Marx, quotes Liebknecht's account: "Marx and I did not stay behind, and we broke four or five street lamps -it was, perhaps, two o'clock in the morning and the streets were deserted... But the noise nevertheless attracted the attention of a policeman who with quick resolution gave the signal to his colleagues... The position became critical... We raced ahead, three or four policemen some distance behind us. Marx showed an agility that I should not have attributed to him. And after the wild chase had lasted some minutes, we succeeded in turning into a side street, and there through an alley -a back yard between two streets- whence we came behind the policemen who lost the trail. Now we were safe. They did not

have our description and we arrived at our homes without further adventures."

STALIN'S PHILOSOPHY TUTOR.

Stalin asked his assistant to assemble a library of books for him and he put philosophy first on the list of subjects to be included. He then appointed the philosopher Jan Sten to be his tutor. Sten must have thought that he had a chance of influence not given to any philosopher since Aristotle taught Alexander the Great. He drew up a programme to teach Stalin about Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Feuerbach, Plekhanov, Kautsky and F.H.Bradley. In the tutorials, Stalin sometimes asked questions like "What's all this got to do with the class struggle?" or "Who reads all this rubbish in practice?"

Despite his impatience, Stalin persevered with the subject enough to think of himself as a philosopher. In 1930 he gave a philosophical lecture to an institute of professors, which is summarized in the minutes:

"We have to turn upside down and dig over the whole pile of manure that has accumulated in philosophy and the natural sciences. Everything written by the Deborin group has to be smashed. Sten and Karev can be chucked out. Sten boasts a lot, but he's juist a pupil of Karev's. Sten is a desperate sluggard. All he can do is talk. Karev's got a swelled head and struts about like an inflated bladder. In my view, Deborin is a hopeless case, but he should remain as editor of the journal so we'll have someone to beat. The editorial board will have two fronts, but we'll have the majority."

After this philosophy lecture there were questions. Unsurprisingly, they were undemanding. One was, "What should the Institute concentrate on in the area of philosophy?" Stalin replied:

"To beat, that is the main issue. To beat on all sides and where there hasn't been any beating before. The Deborinites regard Hegel as an icon. Plekhanov has to be unmasked. He always looked down on Lenin. Even Engels was not right about everything. There is a place in his commentary on the Erfurt Programme about growing into socialism. Bukharin tried to use it. It wouldn't be a bad thing if we could implicate Engels somewhere in Bukharin's writings."

It would be a nightmare for any philosophy tutor to give tutorials to Stalin. And a tutor might be depressed at being described as a desperate sluggard by the most famous person he had taught. But things got worse. Jan Sten was later described as a lickspittle of Trotsky and executed.

From *Humanity, a Moral History of the Twentieth Century*.

WAR SERVICE: PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE TWICE HOPES TO IMPRESS THE ADMINISTRATION OFFICER OF *PHANTOM*.

Doing his Second World War service in the army, Peregrine Worsthorne -later a distinguished conservative journalist- was assigned to the intelligence organization "Phantom":

Back at B Squadron I became friendly with the administration officer, Captain Michael Oakeshott. He seemed to be amused by my company which was very flattering since he was much older and of senior rank. There was also something intriguely different about him... Then there was the matter of my overcoat. Before coming out to Holland I had got my tailor to run me up one in fur, the sole purpose of which, I maintained, was to keep the cold out. Not all my fellow officers agreed... Just when the critics were on the edge of convincing Peter Patrick to ban the garment, Michael Oakeshott successfully intervened on my behalf with a decisive quotation from the Duke of Wellington to the effect that "dandies make the best soldiers". What I had no idea of at the time was that Michael Oakeshott, in civilian life, was already a famous Cambridge philosopher; nor, I think, did anybody else... after dinner in the evening we sometimes had informal debates at which I would try desperately to shine in an effort to show that being bad at map reading did not necessarily make one a complete fool. Although Michael used to giggle joyously he never took part.

THE ADMINISTRATION OFFICER, PHANTOM.

After the war Peregrine Worsthorne went back as an undergraduate to Cambridge:

My only regret was not being able to finish the course of lectures in political philosophy by one M.J. Oakeshott, who turned out to be my old Phantom comrade-in-arms... he had never given me any idea of his true identity during the war. So his appearance on the podium at my first lecture in cap and gown took me completely by surprise. Typically he only giggled when he saw me staring up at him from the front row. Just as he had made no fuss of his academic eminence in the army, so now he made no fuss of it back at Cambridge. After the lecture we went off together to have coffee at the Copper Kettle in King's Parade as if nothing had changed. But it had. Now I was a bit overawed by him, anxious to impress and since what he liked in the young was cheek and arrogance, my new respectfulness was the last thing to give pleasure. A few years later, after my marriage, he became our lodger in London. But by then it was in the company of my wife that he found the zest and exuberance which in the army he had found in mine.

Peregrine Worsthorne: *Tricks of Memory.*

WAR SERVICE: CAPTAIN EVELYN WAUGH DESCRIBES HIS COLONEL AT KELBURN CASTLE, GIVING SOME HELP TO LORD GLASGOW.

So No. 3 Cmdo were very anxious to be chums with Lord Glasgow so they offered to blow up an old tree stump for him and he was very grateful and he said dont spoil the plantation of young trees near it because that is the apple of my eye and they said no of course not we can blow a tree down so that it falls on a sixpence and Lord Glasgow said goodness you are clever and he asked them all to luncheon for the great explosion. So Col. Durnford-Slater D.S.O. said to his subaltern, have you put enough explosive in the tree. Yes, sir, 75 lbs. Is that enough. Yes sir I worked it out by mathematics it is exactly right. Well better put a bit more. Very good sir.

And when Col. D. Slater D.S.O. had had his port he sent for the subaltern and said subaltern better put a bit more explosive in that tree. I don't want to disappoint Lord Glasgow. Very good sir.

Then they all went out to see the explosion and Col. D.S. D.S.O. said you will see that tree fall flat at just that angle where it will hurt no young trees and Lord Glasgow said goodness you are clever.

So soon they lit the fuse and waited for the explosion and presently the tree, instead of falling quietly sideways, rose 50 feet into the air taking with it 1/2 acre of soil and the whole of the young plantation.

And the subaltern said Sir I made a mistake, it should have been 7&1/2 pounds not 75.

Lord Glasgow was so upset he walked in dead silence back to his castle and when they came to the turn of the drive in sight of his castle what should they find but that every pane of glass in the building was broken.

So Lord Glasgow gave a little cry & ran to hide his emotion in the lavatory and there when he pulled the plug the entire ceiling, loosened by the explosion, fell on his head.

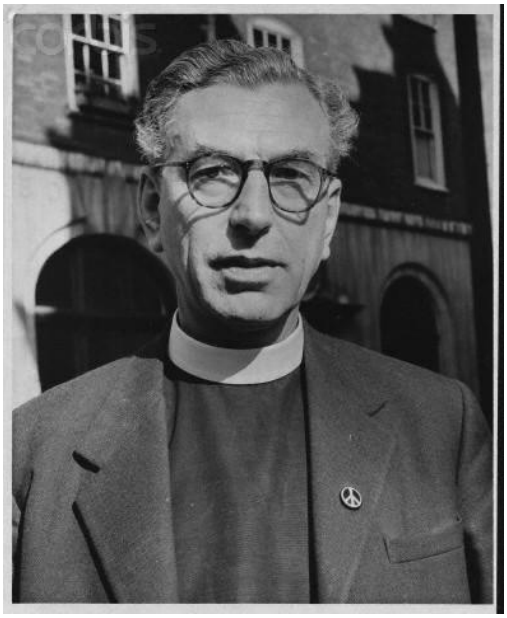
This is quite true.

Letter to Laura Waugh, 31 May 1942, in Mark Amory (ed.): *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh.*

EVELYN WAUGH.

KELBURN CASTLE.

AIR MARSHALL SIR ARTHUR HARRIS AND THE REV. JOHN COLLINS.



In the Second World War, the saturation bombing of German cities was masterminded by Air Marshall Sir Arthur Harris. (In the chapter about this policy in Humanity, a Moral History of the Twentieth Century *I agreed with those who see this policy as a war crime.)*

The moral case for area bombing was contested within Bomber Command itself. The chaplain at Bomber Command Headquarters at High Wycombe was John Collins. (In the 1960s, and by then Canon Collins, he was a well-known leader of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. There is something surreal about John Collins and Sir Arthur Harris having to work together.)

John Collins invited the Minister of Aircraft Production, Sir Stafford Cripps, to give a talk on the subject "Is God My co-pilot?". Cripps argued that officers should only send men on bombing raids which they thought were morally as well as militarily justified.

Sir Arthur Harris replied by arranging a lecture on "The Ethics of Bombing". This was given by T.D. ("Harry") Weldon. a Fellow in Philosophy at Magdalen College, Oxford. He later wrote a book on Kant and an austere linguistic work on political philosophy. *The Vocabulary of Politics*. He was Personal Staff Officer to Sir Arthur Harris in Bomber Command and drafted the communications Harris sent to the Cabinet and the Air Ministry. Predictably, his talk was rather different from that given by Cripps. When Weldon had finished, Collins asked whether Weldon had not taken his subject to be "The Bombing of Ethics"?

(Sir Arthur Harris comes out of this story with some credit. It is hard to imagine the German equivalents of John Collins and Sir Stafford Cripps using Luftwaffe headquarters for an ethical lecture critical of the German bombing policy. And,

if they had, Hermann Goering's response might not have taken the form of a rival lecture by a philosopher.)

From *Humanity, a Moral History of the Twentieth Century.*

STUART HAMPSHIRE INTERROGATES ERNST KALTENBRUNNER.

Stuart Hampshire was one of the most civilized and fastidious of philosophers. At the Nuremberg trials, Ernst Kaltenbrunner gave an impression of cold brutality extreme even by Nazi standards. (During the trial, where the horrors he was so deeply invoved in were spelt out, he wrote, "No one will find us weak! What a splendid feeling to have lived a life that demanded and found danger and readiness for action".) It would have been fascinating to eavesdrop on Hampshire's conversations with Kaltenbrunner. His own brief account is very reticent. It is reproduced here partly because he indicates the interweaving -too rarely made explicit- of philosophy and personal experience.

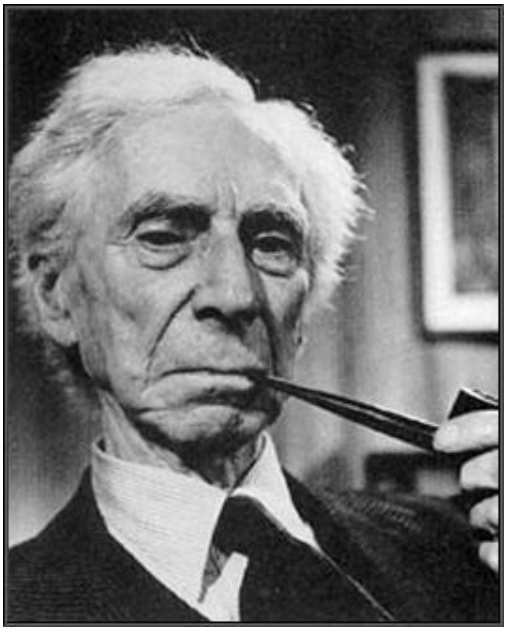
It therefore began to seem necessary that philosophy should finally abandon its shortcuts and its grandiose claims and should proceed in the tentative problem-solving style of the natural sciences. With this idea the study of the peculiarities of natural languages came to be considered a central part of philosophy. Then came the war, long anticipated. As an intelligence officer in the war for four years I studied the espionage and counter-espionage operations of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Himmler's Central Command, which controlled the whole of the SS, including the Gestapo, excluding only the Waffen SS. This experience altogether changed my attitude both to politics and to philosophy, as the full scale of the SS's operations in occupied Europe and in Russia became known, and as the programme announced in *Mein Kampf* could be studied in action. I interrogated some leading Nazis in captivity at the end of the war, including Heydrich's successor as head of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Kaltenbrunner, with whom I talked at length when he was a prisoner with U.S. Army headquarters, and whom I brought to London for further interrogation. I learnt how easy it had been to organise the vast enterprises of torture and of murder, and to enrol willing workers in this field, once all moral barriers had been removed by the authorities. Unmitigated evil and nastiness are as natural, it seemed, in educated human beings as generosity and sympathy: no more, and no less, natural, a fact that was obvious to Shakespeare but not previously evident to me.

Stuart Hampshire: *Innocence and Experience.*

T.S. ELIOT READS *THE WASTE LAND* TO THE ROYAL FAMILY.

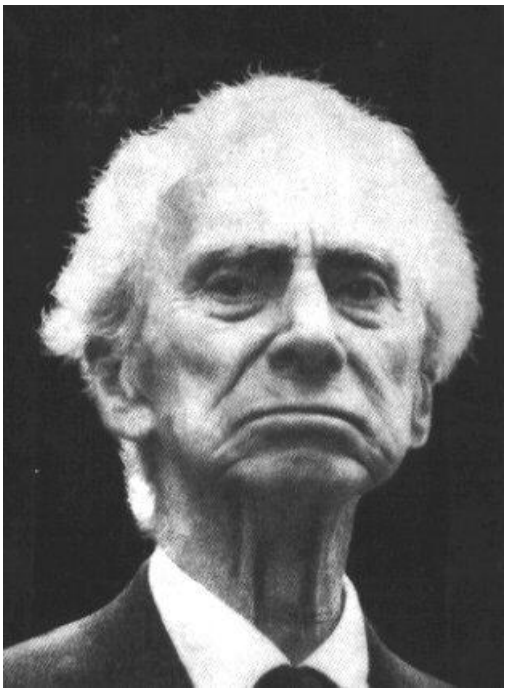
A.N. Wilson wrote about a lunch with the Queen Mother. She talked about an occasion when, as part of the education of her daughters Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret, T.S. Eliot had been invited to read some of his poetry to the Royal Family. She remembered "this rather lugubrious man in a suit, and he read a poem... I think it was called "The Desert". At first the girls got the giggles and then I did and then even the King... Such a gloomy man, looked as though he worked in a bank."

T.S. ELIOT ATTENDS A TALK BY BERTRAND RUSSELL.



When Mr. Apollinax visited the United States
His laughter tinkled among the teacups.
I thought of Fragilion, that shy figure among the birch trees,
And of Priapus in the shrubbery
Gaping at the lady in the swing.
In the palace of Mrs. Phlaccus, at Professor Channing-Cheetahs
He laughed like an irresponsible foetus.
His laughter was submarine and profound
Like the old man of the sea's
Hidden under coral islands
Where worried bodies of drowned men drift down in the green silence,
Dropping from fingers of surf.
I looked for the head of Mr. Apollinax rolling under a chair
Or grinning over a screen
With seaweed in its hair.
I heard the beat of centaur's hoofs over the hard turf
As his dry and passionate talk devoured the afternoon.
"He is a charming man"- "But after all what did he mean?" -
"His pointed ears... He must be unbalanced."-
"There was something he said that I might have challenged."
Of dowager Mrs. Phlaccus, and Professor and Mrs. Cheetah
I remember a slice of lemon, and a bitten macaroon.

PHILOSOPHER KINGS? THE TWO APPROACHES MIGHT BE HARD TO COMBINE: BERTRAND RUSSELL AND KING GEORGE VI.



Some years before I gave the Reith Lectures, my old professor and friend and collaborator in *Principia Mathematica*, A.N. Whitehead, had been given the OM. Now, by the early part of 1950, I had become so respectable in the eyes of the Establishment that it was felt that I, too, should be given the OM. This made me very happy for, though I daresay it would surprise many Englishmen and

most of the English Establishment to hear it, I am passionately English, and I treasure an honour bestowed on me by the Head of my country. I had to go to Buckingham Palace for the official bestowal of it. The King was affable, but somewhat embarrassed at having to behave graciously to so queer a fellow, a convict to boot.

He remarked, "You have sometimes behaved in a way which would not do if generally adopted". I have been glad ever since that I did not make the reply that sprang to my mind: "Like your brother." But he was thinking of things like my having been a conscientious objector, and I did not feel that I could let this remark pass in silence, so I said, "How a man should behave depends upon his profession. A postman, for instance, should knock at all the doors in a street at which he has letters to deliver, but if anybody else knocked on all the doors, he would be considered a public nuisance." The King, to avoid answering, abruptly changed the subject by asking me whether I knew who was the only man who had both the KG and the OM. I did not know, and he graciously informed me that it was Lord Portal.

Bertrand Russell: *Autobiography*, Volume 2.

NIELS BOHR AND CHURCHILL: "WE DID NOT SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE".

Bohr escaped from occupied Denmark. Because of the threat of a Nazi bomb, he was willing to work on the Manhattan Project. He started to think about the deeper problems of atomic weapons and realized that, since the United States had made the bomb, the Soviet Union would soon follow. The choice was simple: international control or a nuclear arms race. He saw international control as the only safe option...

Bohr returned to England, and persuaded the President of the Royal Society, Sir Henry Dale, of the importance of the issue. Dale was among those who persuaded Churchill to see Bohr. Thinking of voluntary abstention from using the bomb, in the interests of future international control, Dale wrote to Churchill: "It is my serious belief that it may be in your power even in the next six months to take decisions which will determine the future course of human history. It is in that belief that I dare to ask you, even now, to give Professor Bohr the opportunity of brief access to you."

Privately, Dale expressed the fear that Bohr's "mild, philosophical vagueness of expression and his inarticulate whisper" might mean that he would not get through to "a desperately preoccupied Prime Minister".

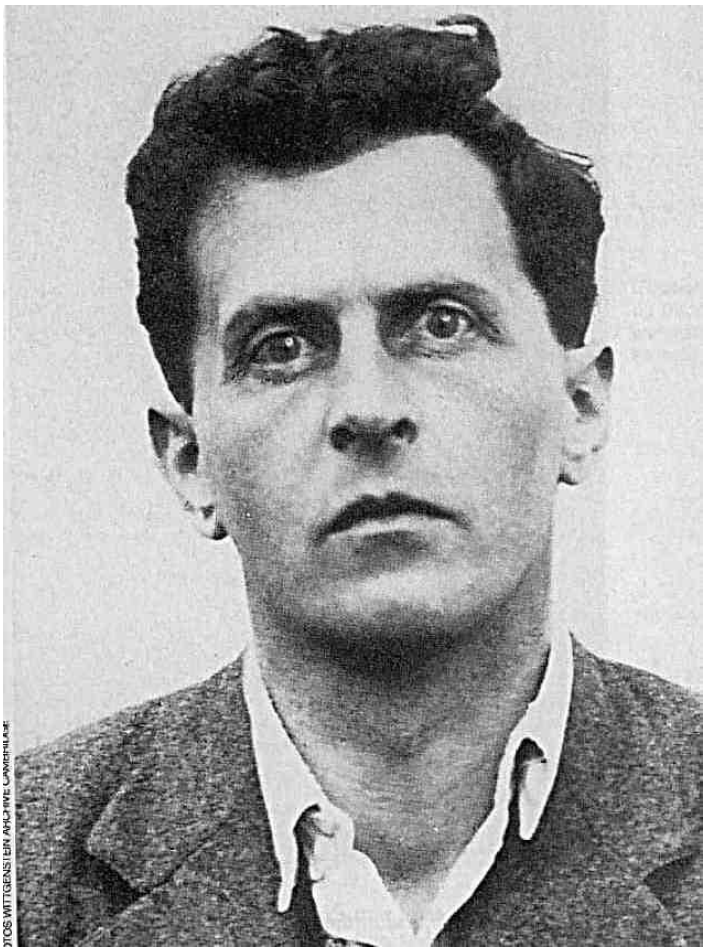
The meeting was not a success. Lord Cherwell was present and much of the time was taken up with argument between him and Churchill on points irrelevant to Bohr's purpose. According to Bohr's own "very vivid memories" of the interview, recounted to Margaret Gowing, the main point was never reached. "Professor Bohr was unable to bring the Prime Minister's mind to bear on the implications of the bomb or to tell him of his belief that the President

himself was giving the subject such serious thought." Churchill disliked the meeting. Bohr asked if he could send a memorandum on the subject to Churchill:

The Prime Minister replied that he would always be honoured to receive a letter from Professor Bohr but hoped that it would not be about politics. Bohr came away greatly disappointed at the way the world was apparently governed, with small points exercising a quite irrational influence. "We did not speak the same language," said Bohr afterwards.

From *Humanity, a Moral History of the Twentieth Century*.

PHILOSOPHERS ARE NOT ALWAYS SERENE. 1: WITTGENSTEIN REPLIES TO OSCAR WOOD'S UNDERGRADUATE PAPER ON DESCARTES, FOLLOWED BY AN EXCHANGE WITH H.A. PRICHARD.



LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN.

H.A. PRICHARD.

Wittgenstein started his reply (uttered in tones of disgust and disbelief) with the words "Mr. Wood seems to me to have made two points". He then abandoned Mr. Wood and Descartes altogether and started to talk in his own style about what "the cogito" could possibly be thought to mean. At one point he said, "If a man says to me, looking at the sky, "I think it will rain therefore I exist" I do not understand him" upon which a very old philosopher, H.A Prichard... interrupted with "That's all very fine; but what I want to know is, is the *cogito* a valid argument or not?". Prichard was very deaf, his voice was ancient and querulous, and he had a terrible cough, but he interrupted three or four times. Wittgenstein never once mentioned Descartes, and at one point was provoked into saying that Descartes was of no importance. Prichard's last contribution was, "What Descartes was interested in was far more important than any problem you have addressed this evening", and with that he tottered out. There was considerable embarrassment, as I recorded in my diary, at Prichard's rudeness. It proved to be his last outing. He was dead within a week.

Mary Warnock: *A Memoir: People and Places*.

PHILOSOPHERS ARE NOT ALWAYS SERENE. 2: ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE ATTENDS THE CLASSES OF J.L. AUSTIN.

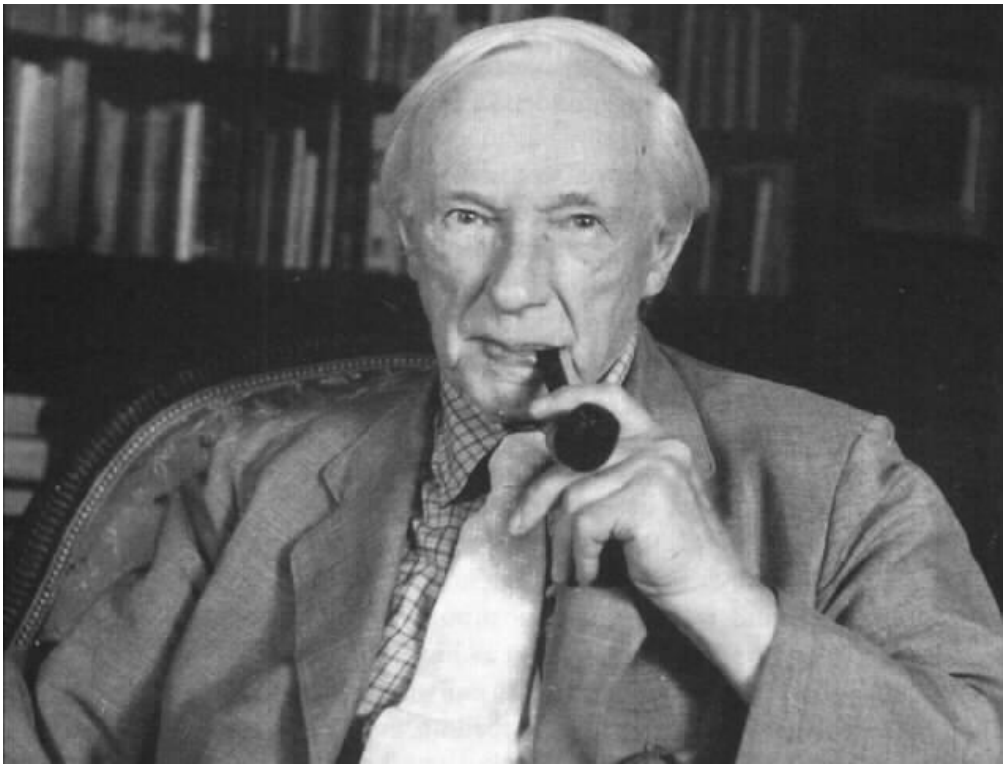
Elizabeth attended these classes, I suppose, in part, to observe Austin in action... but also as the champion, or even the spy, of Wittgenstein. In any case she was a troublesome presence and frequently intervened to pour scorn on what was being said. On one particular evening, when she had behaved with notable rudeness, I tried to evade her afterwards by scuttling very fast out of the Magdalen back gates, but she caught up with me as I was struggling with my bicycle lock in Longwall, and hissed "To think that Wittgenstein fathered that bastard".

Mary Warnock: *A Memoir: People and Places*.

ACROSS 103 YEARS: SLAVOJ ZIZEK AND G.E. MOORE.

When we perceive something as an act of violence, we measure it by a presupposed standard of what the "normal" non-violent situation is -and the highest form of violence is the imposition of this standard with reference to which some events appear as "violent". This is why language itself, the very medium of non-violence, of mutual recognition, involves unconditional violence. In other words, it is language itself which pushes our desire beyond proper limits, transforming it into a "desire that contains the infinite", elevating it into an absolute striving that cannot ever be satisfied.

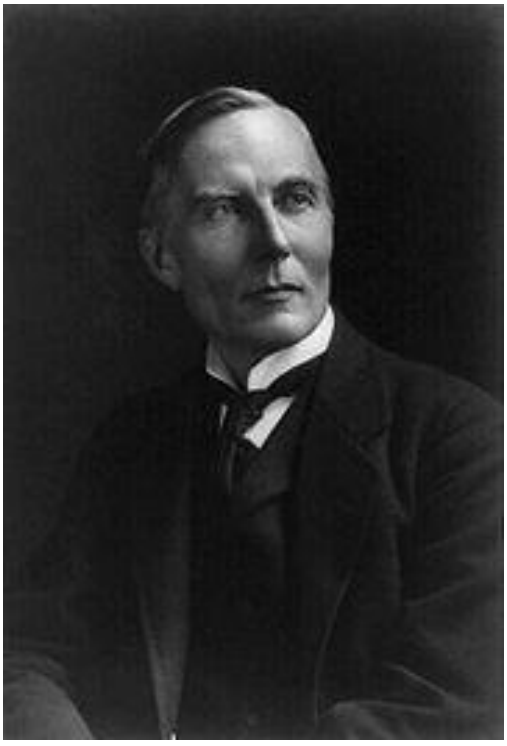
Slavoj Zizek: *Violence, Six Sideways Reflections*, 2008.



My brother has just published a book on Durer. There is a great deal of philosophy in it, which begins with this sentence: "I conceive the human reason to be the antagonist of all forces other than itself". I do wish people wouldn't write such silly things -things, which, one would have thought, it is so perfectly easy to see to be just false. I suppose my brother's philosophy may have some merits; but it seems to me just like all wretched philosophy -vague, and obviously inconsequent, and full of falsehoods. I think its object is to be like a sermon -to make you appreciate good things; and I sometimes wonder whether it is possible to do this without saying what is false. But it does annoy me terribly that people should admire such things -as they do.

G.E. Moore: Letter to Leonard Woolf, 1905.

VIRGINIA WOOLF VISITS H.A.L. FISHER WHEN HE WAS WARDEN OF NEW COLLEGE.



Staying with the Fishers. A queer thing, people who accept conventions. Gives them a certain force. H[erbert] has the organisation behind him. But robs them of character, of vagaries, of depth, warmth, the unexpected. They spin along the grooves. H to some extent anxious to impress his privileged impartial position. Many stories of "when I was in the Cabinet". Yet why not? The odd thing is that when with them one accepts their standards. And whats wrong? So nice, just, equable, humane. But how chill! And over his shoulder I see the rulers; small; but not evil; striving, -a complex impression. Wardens have lived there since 1370 -or so. How can he differ?... Yes, Herbert accepts the current values, only rather intellectualises & refines... Tells stories of Balfour & in the manner of the

great man -discreet, nipped, bloodless, like a butler used to the best families. Toils at history of Europe. Is an example. Do their duty by the college. Represent culture, politics, worldly wisdom gilt with letters. Nothing to whizz one off one's perch at New College: all in good taste, & very kind. But Lord to live like that!

Virginia Woolf: *Diary*, 4 December, 1933.

PENELOPE FITZGERALD VISITS STEVIE SMITH.

PENELOPE FITZGERALD.

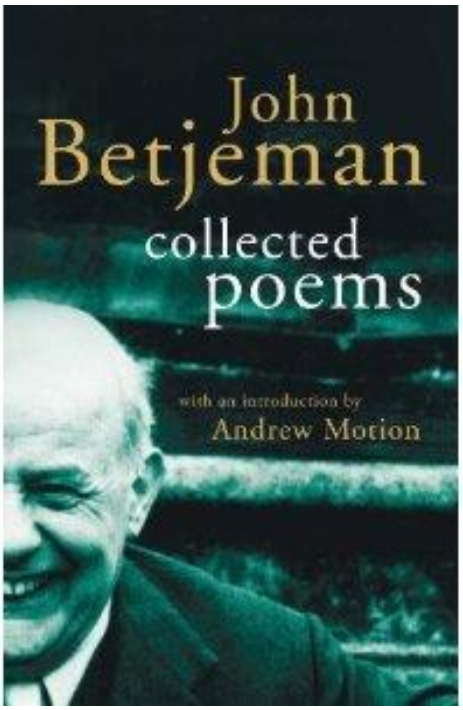
STEVIE SMITH.

In 1969, Penelope Fitzgerald and her daughter Tina went to lunch with Stevie Smith at her house in Palmer's Green. It is hard to know whether it would be more intimidating to be visited (and perhaps described) by Virginia Woolf or by Penelope Fitzgerald:

Combination of shrewd business woman, genuine artist, lonely middle-aged woman anxious to please, and mad-woman. House where she had lived for 61 years with her aunt... not changed in all that time... Upstairs, aunt's bedroom just as she left it when she died, freezing cold... Downstairs in the basement, stone sink, ancient stove with stovepipe, might have come out of *La Boheme*, faint mould... a cupboard with bits of tarnished silver... fluted gilt teacups, Japanese teapots, no lids, nut-crackers, dim cruets; Stevie struggling mysteriously with the lunch, a large tough chicken... There were squares of carpet on the floor -we thought they were samples and she was choosing a new one -they were samples, but she had got them free and was sticking them together to make a carpet. Evidently it was too late for her now to learn to cook; she looked dwarfed by the huge thick plates and forks; she had bought some large white tombstone-like meringues from the local shop; felt distressed by her going to this trouble.

Penelope Fitzgerald's typed account of the visit, found inside her copy of Stevie Smith's *The Frog Prince*, quoted by Hermione Lee, the *Guardian*, April 3, 2010.

THE TWELVE YEAR OLD JOHN BETJEMAN SHOWS HIS POEMS TO A TEACHER.



I couldn't see why Shakespeare was admired;
I thought myself as good as Campbell now
And very nearly up to Longfellow;
And so I bound my verse into a book,
The Best of Betjeman, and handed it
To one who, I was told, liked poetry -
The American master, Mr. Eliot.
That dear good man, with Prufrock in his head
And Sweeney waiting to be agonized,
I wonder what he thought? He never says
When now we meet, across the port and cheese.
He looks the same as then, long, lean and pale,
Still with the slow deliberating speech
And enigmatic answers. At the time
A boy called Jolly said "He thinks they're bad"-
But he himself is still too kind to say.

John Betjeman: *Summoned by Bells*.

MARCELLE QUINTON HELPS ISAIAH BERLIN PACK HIS TRUNK AND NOTICES HIS KUMQUATS.

In 1952 Isaiah Berlin was delivering the Flexner Lectures at Bryn Mawr. He brought letters from Tony and I helped him pack his trunk. On the mantelshelf in his room at the Deanery, which I needed special permission to visit, he had about half a dozen jars full of kumquats in syrup. I eventually found out that he took them out only as far as his fingers could descend into the jar, his great mind not thinking either of decanting or even using a spoon.

Marcelle Quinton, in Marcelle and Anthony Quinton: *Before We Met.*

ALAN BENNETT FINDS CONVERSATION EASIER WITH A WORLDLY PHILOSOPHER THAN WITH AN UNWORLDLY ONE.

In the evening to the Savile with Mary-Kay for the Hawthornden Prizegiving. I sit between Anthony Quinton and Iris Murdoch and am grateful for the worldliness of one and the unworldliness of the other, Quinton chatting easily and with seeming gusto and also being very funny despite having flown back from Boston that day, while Dame Iris keeps up a constant flow of questions ("Where do you live?" "Do you drive a car?" What colour is it?" "Where have you parked?"). a nice purling stream as she tucks into the Savile's duck, followed by apple sorbet.

Alan Bennett: *Diaries 1980-1990*, in *Writing Home*

ANTHONY QUINTON.

ALAN BENNETT

IRIS MURDOCH.

IRIS MURDOCH DOES A KINDNESS TO ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE AND GEORG KREISEL.

ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE.

GEORG KREISEL.

I could record one other cooking experience in Iris's life, and one I still find quite upsetting to remember. It must have taken place about the time I first met her, or perhaps before I met her. Two friends of hers, the strong-minded female philosopher who practised "telegamy", and a mathematical logician of international standing who was a bachelor, had asked to borrow her room for a day while she was absent. The room she then lived in had a gas-ring and wash-basin but not much else, and they required it not for secret sexual congrress but because the mathematician wanted to indulge himself in a culinary experiment. Why they should have required Iris's room for this purpose I still cannot fathom, except that the room was handy and that they knew they could presume on her discretion and her unbounded good nature. (They were right of course, but I still grind my teeth when I think of it, even though they are not my own teeth any more but false ones, a denture.) The experiment was in the manufacture of herring soup, which the mathematician, Viennese but possibly with Baltic origins, swore he was on the verge of perfecting. The philosopher affected not to believe him, and swore in her turn -she was a lady with a strong streak of Puckish humour- that she could never be induced under any circumstances to partake of such a dish, however exquisitely prepared. The very idea of it was repellent to her. So they made what amounted to a bet.

The mathematician won the bet. The soup was a triumph: the philosopher capitulated and said that it was so. Indeed she consumed it with relish. When Iris returned a few days later it was to find her room in the most gruesome possible disorder, smelling strongly of fish, and her landlady furious. Other

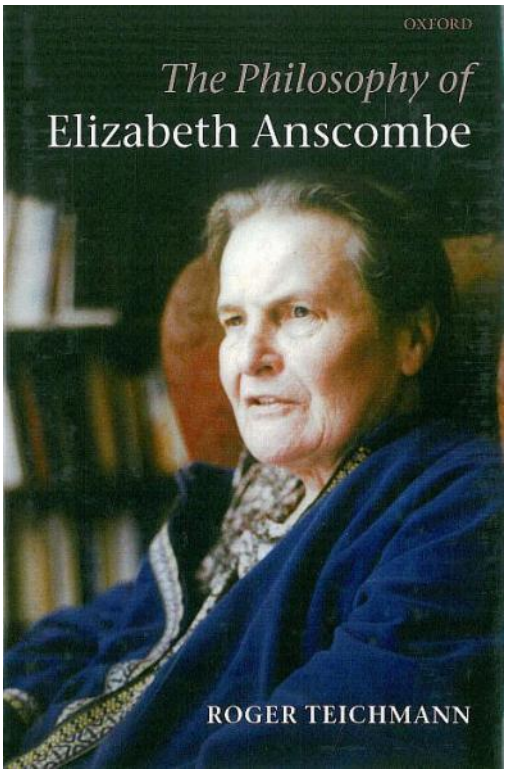
tenants had complained of the noise and the smell. Miss Murdoch's reputation, once immaculate, was now in ruins. In the eyes of the landlady she was, and remained, a fallen woman: one who allowed the most unspeakable orgies to take place in her room, and no doubt participated in them herself. Iris left the house not long after, although its position and amenities had suited her very well. But that was not what upset me when Iris told me the tale, which she did in a tolerant amused way, without a trace of resentment.

Indeed she remained, and still does, on the best possible terms with both parties, even though neither attempted an apology for what had taken place, or even seemed to think one might be appropriate. It annoys me intensely that she should still revere them, none the less. But what upset me even more, and for some reason can still go through me like a spear, was that Iris found one of her most treasured possessions lying on the floor of the room, hideously violated. It was a blue silk chiffon scarf which her mother had given her as a special birthday present. Its state when discovered was so repulsive that Iris had no choice but to take it straight out to the dustbin, holding her nose while she did so. The logician had required the finest possible sieve to strain the end product of his masterpiece, and the philosopher, casually opening a drawer, had handed him the scarf.

I can still see and imagine the pair, wringing out the last drop. I have only met either of them a few times, but when I do I find it difficult to be more than barely civil.

John Bayley, *Iris*.

ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE WAS ALSO A HERO: PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S OXFORD DEGREE.



Suppose using the bomb had been the only way of shortening the war. Would it then have been justified? One contribution to this debate was made in 1956, when it was proposed that Oxford University should award an honorary degree to President Truman. Proposals for honorary degrees were always accepted and few university members bothered to vote on them. But on the day Truman was proposed, Congregation was full because there was a controversial proposal to include less Greek New Testament in the Theology degree.

One witness described the occasion: "*The House was preparing to snooze through the routine business before coming to what was the real reason for their presence, but suddenly and startlingly, Miss Anscombe rose and (after duly seeking the VC's [Vice Chancellor's] permission to speak English) delivered an impassioned speech against the award of an Oxford degree to the "man who pressed the button" of the Bomb. The VC called for a vote: she was in a minority of one."*

The speech elicited only "*the complete silence and impassivity of those present... not the slightest sign of approval or disapproval, not a murmur, not a rustle, not a change of countenance, but only utter impeturbability."* Memories of the occasion vary. In a different account, four people voted against the degree, including another philosopher, Philippa Foot.

The content of Elizabeth Anscombe's speech is reproduced in a paper she published at the time on "Mr. Truman's Degree". She correctly saw how area bombing had paved the way for the atomic bomb. She accepted that, in the circumstances, dropping the bomb probably saved many lives, but pointed out that the circumstances included the Allies' demand for unconditional surrender and their disregard for Japan's known desire for a negotiated peace.

Elizabeth Anscombe's central moral claim was that to kill innocent people as a means to an end is always murder. The state has a right to order killing in a war fought either to protect its own people or to protect others who are treated unjustly. There is no right intentionally to kill innocent people, those who are neither waging the war nor supplying its means. Attacking military targets as carefully as possible may involve unintended but foreseen civilian deaths, and this is not murder. But it is not acceptable to attack where the military objective can only be hit by taking as your target something which includes large numbers of innocent people: "Then you cannot very well say they died by accident. Here your action is murder."

Elizabeth Anscombe finished on a rhetorical flourish. She said that she would fear to go to the degree ceremony "in case God's patience suddenly ends". Afterwards Harry Weldon, Air Marshall Harris's former colleague, offered to arrange comprehensive air cover.

It is hard to warm to the response of those who heard Miss Anscombe and then voted in a way that left her in such a small minority. Just possibly, each person who voted against her may have had good reasons. But their silence and utter impeturbability now seem extraordinary. Was there too little time for discussion, because of the pressing issue of Greek New Testament in the Theology degree? Did no-one think that this courageous and powerful speech deserved the compliment of rational opposition? Apart from Philippa Foot, where were the philosophers?

From *Humanity, a Moral History of the Twentieth Century.*

AYER ALSO WAS A HERO: FREDDIE AYER, NAOMI CAMPBELL AND MIKE TYSON.

A woman came into a party in a New York appartment saying that her friend was being assaulted in a bedroom. Freddie Ayer investigated and, finding Mike Tyson forcing himself on the young Naomi Campbell, told him to stop. In *A.J. Ayer*, Ben Rogers reports the resulting conversation:

"Do you know who the fuck I am? I'm the heavyweight champion of the world." Ayer stood his ground. "And I am the former Wykeham Professor of Logic. We

are both pre-eminent in our field. I suggest that we talk about this like rational men." Ayer and Tyson began to talk. Naomi Campbell slipped out.

MIKE TYSON.

FREDDIE AYER.

FREDDIE AYER AND RICHARD WOLLHEIM VISIT THE SAME LADY. RICHARD WOLLHEIM DESCRIBES THE BALLET OF HIS REMOVAL.

RICHARD WOLLHEIM.

The voice on the telephone begged me to come round. There was a man there. He might, he *might*, be a bore. I left the lodge, walked out into the garden, stepped over the wall of the churchyard, and in two minutes was knocking at the door. The man there, who was perhaps not altogether pleased to see me, was, I quickly realized, no ordinary person. He was in his late thirties, not tall, with dark wavy hair, parted near the centre of his head, which from time to time he combed back -combed back rather than brushed back- with his fingers... But it was the movement, the constant movement, of head, hands, fingers, hair, -the playing with the watch-chain, one bit rubbed against another, the feet going backwards, forwards, shuffling, tapping, turning on his heel and *sotto voce* a stream of "Yes, yes, yes" - it was this incessant movement, this constant stream of excitement, that so impressed me. It convinced me that I was in the presence of someone quite remarkable, and it was also it that led to a curious misunderstanding. The ballet was in Oxford that week, and I was almost convinced that my hostess had introduced the man as "Freddie Ashton", the dancer, the choreographer, who had made something out of English ballet.

Certainly I had, for a start, never seen anyone else in 4 Holywell quite so unoppressed by the heat. The stamina of all that training, I thought. I have no idea what the three of us found to say, but, about half an hour later, as the man was making to go, I followed him into the night air and down two steep steps on to the pavement, when suddenly with a daring balletic movement he leapt round me, jumped back into the house, and slammed the door behind him. I was confirmed in my misunderstanding.

Richard Wollheim: *Ayer: the Man, the Philosopher, the Teacher*, in A. Phillips Griffiths (ed.): *A.J. Ayer: Memorial Essays*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
