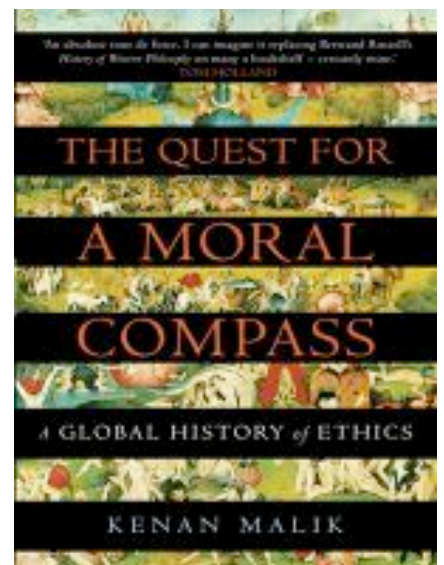
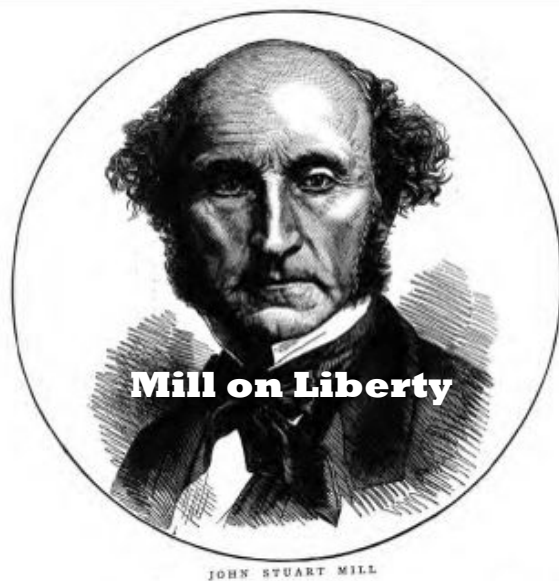
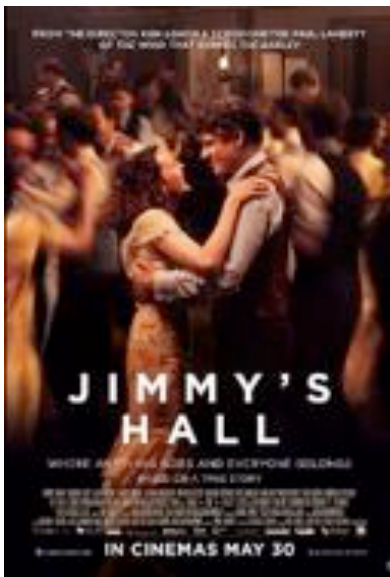


Hi Humanism Ireland

July-August 2014

No 147

£2.00/€2.75



Humanist Association of Ireland www.humanism.ie
Humanist Association of Northern Ireland www.humanistni.org



Freedom from Religion, Myth and Superstition



Humanism
Ireland



ISSN 1466-0555
No 147, July-August 2014

Humanist Association of Ireland 0861626988
Humanist Association of Northern Ireland: 028 91450990

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TWO SIDES OF ULSTER BIGOTRY

IN June a couple of incidents highlight Ulster bigotry from both sides of the sectarian divide. 16-year-old Jamie Bickerstaff (right) from the Protestant Woodvale area of Belfast, was beaten and shot six times with a pellet gun by Catholic youths after spending the evening with friends in the nationalist Lagmore estate on 18th June. Jamie, who has taken part in several cross-community programmes, feels too frightened to return to visit his Catholic friends but says he will not allow the youths who attacked him to stop him from being friends with them.



In the other incident, a Nigerian man, Michael Abiona (bottom left), was bullied out of his newly acquired Housing Executive home in the Knocknagoney area of east Belfast. The bungalow was plastered with banners saying 'local houses 4 local people'. Michael, a 34-year-old charity worker who has lived in Belfast for four years, described the protest as shameful. "It is not about me being elderly or local – it is about intimidation and discrimination", he said. He added that the protesters "should stop giving Northern Ireland a bad name".

However, first Minister Peter Robinson said he wasn't convinced the protest was racist. "You might have had exactly the same reaction if it was somebody from up country moving into an area where local people aren't able to get houses", he said. Not exactly an unambiguous response from a politician who had already put his foot in it over Pastor McConnell's hate speech.



ARTICLES

Articles will be accepted for publication, in part or whole, according to the space available and at the editor's discretion. The views of contributors represent the opinions of their authors and are not necessarily the views of any Irish Humanist organisation. Text set mainly in Sabon.

LETTERS

Letters to the Editor are welcome and need not necessarily be from Humanists. They may be edited in the interests of quality and space. Names and addresses will be published unless otherwise requested. Articles, letters etc. should be addressed to the Editor, Brian McClinton, 25 Riverside Drive, Lisburn BT27 4HE. Tel. 02892677264 (brianmccclinton@btinternet.com)

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HUMANISM IRELAND

Obtainable bimonthly by mail. Cheques (annual: £15/€25, including p&tp) to Sidney Ewing, Humanist Association of Northern Ireland, 10 Castlehill Park West, Belfast, BT4 3GT, phone 02890760002; or the Administrator, Humanist Association of Ireland, 34b Royal Terrace West, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, phone 0860887744.

Deadline for next issue: 12th August

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

HAI Meeting, 3rd August
How Humanists deal with Life Crises
Buswell's Hotel, Molesworth Street,
Dublin (opposite Leinster House)
4pm - 6pm

Humanist Summer School,
Carlingford, 29th-31st August
Humanism and Sexuality
Diana Brown • Roy Brown
Tom Inglis • Peter Tatchell

BOOK NOW!

See page 24 for more details

Brian McClinton

Kids, Cunning and Cuddly Dogs

IRELAND is not so much a land of saints and scholars as an island of liars and hypocrites. Take the Catholic Church. On abortion it rails about the sanctity of life and the rights of the child. But where were the rights of the child in a mother and baby home? And where were the rights of the child victims of Father Brendan Smyth, or Father Séan Fortune, or Father Eugene Greene, or any of the other 82 priests accused of sexual abuse, according to a 2011 Catholic Church report? And where were the rights of the child when it covered up these crimes and ordered some boys to keep quiet?

Or take the DUP. Its leader Peter Robinson proclaims: “I strongly believe that Pastor James McConnell has the right to freedom of speech. I will defend his right just as I defend the right of others to express views with which I disagree”. But as far as his party is concerned, this commitment to freedom of speech seems to vanish when you are putting on a film in Belfast or a play in Newtownabbey or an art exhibition in Banbridge.

Then it’s a different story. It becomes: “we cannot permit blasphemy” and “we must protect the rights of the child”. Apparently, it’s okay in public to refer to another religion as the ‘spawn of the devil’ and to say you don’t trust Muslims, but it’s not okay for even Christians to take a light-hearted look at their own holy book.

And there’s that thing about the rights of the child again. Anyone would think that Ireland was a child paradise, safely ring-fenced from the evils of the world by watchful adults. They are so well protected here that West Belfast has the second highest level of child poverty in the UK and, according to Barnardos, one in ten children live in poverty in the Republic. And what is the DUP doing about the rights of Protestant children to have a decent education? They trail well behind their Catholic counterparts. The top 5 schools for GCSEs in 2013 were all Catholic. In general, in primary school Maths, Northern Ireland comes 27th out of the top 30 countries, behind England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, and in terms of reading it comes 19th. The truth is that the rights of the child are low on the list of priorities for our leading parties and churches.

Of course, when it comes to lies, hypocrisy and a child protection policy, neither the Catholic Church nor the DUP can hold a candle to Sinn Fein, many of whose members seem to have magically morphed from IRA thugs and murderers into human rights activists in the twinkling of an eye. Sinn Fein MLAs and councillors are quick to label attacks on young people as ‘barbaric’, while forgetting their military wing’s endless beatings, knee-cappings and padre pio hand-shootings in the recent past.

During the Troubles, more than 80 children under 14 and more than 500 under 19 were killed, most of them by the IRA. Its leader has mutated from ‘Grizzly Adams’, the alleged mastermind behind Bloody Friday and Jean McConville’s murder, into cuddly Adams, tweeting about his cakes, his teddy bears and his rubber ducks, and peppering it all with political posturing.

None of this sickly sweet Gerry nonsense is innocent. It is all carefully calculated to appeal to young people who are deeply into social media and who were born after the IRA atrocities. Adams is shifty and evasive at probing face-to-face interviews, but he is a master of playing an audience. This was early apparent in the famous *Late Late Show* in 1994, when he was confronted by a hostile panel, including Hugh Leonard, who accused him of being a murderer. The more Leonard directed his righteous anger at Adams, the more Adams exuded charm and ‘taking it on the chin’, and he won the audience to his side. Leonard’s reward for speaking truth to turpitude was to be booed by the studio audience.

Sinn Fein’s fascist wolves are highly adept at wearing sheep’s clothing for media purposes. They never show anger but appear to be the epitome of reasonableness. They support worthy causes and display a hippy, street-wise coolness. They let others rant and rave and make themselves look unpleasant and ridiculous. But, as

Hamlet says, “one may smile, and smile, and be a villain”. None of the other parties or religious institutions has been directly responsible for thousands of deaths and injuries and wrecked so many lives. Yet their leadership refuses to accept moral responsibility. This is the worst hypocrisy.

Adams denies he was ever in the IRA. Yet this is the man released from prison in 1972 by the British government for secrets talks as an IRA representative. This was the man named as head of the IRA by the US government in the 1988 Terrorist Group Profiles report, and the man named by several convicted IRA members, such as Brendan Hughes, Dolours Price and Ivor Bell, as their comrade in arms in Belfast in the 1970s. And, according to former IRA member Peter Rogers, it was he and McGuinness who ordered him to take explosives to England in 1980.

Thanks to all these lies and deceptions, Ireland’s moral compass has no direction. Thanks especially to Sinn Fein, the Irish moral world has been turned upside down: warmongers have become peace heroes, thugs have become vigilantes, fascists have become socialists, cultural reactionaries have become social liberals, ourselves alone nationalists have become cosmopolitan world citizens.

Do as I say, not as I do, is the lesson the churches and the leading politicians mete out to the young of our island today. We need cleaner minds, free of all the political and religious claptrap poisoning the Irish landscape. □



Torquemadder

Bones in the Tank

Church and State in the Republic must finally face up to decades of criminal neglect

NEITHER septic tanks nor cesspits were designed to have dead bodies interred in them; strange then that right in the middle of a housing estate in Tuam, Co Galway, is a 'cement' chamber designed to deal with human waste which allegedly harbours the remains of approximately 796 infants.

How and why this has happened may mask a sorry tale of cruelty and cover-up by Irish religious and civil authorities over many decades. For years it seems that no-one in any position of power has been prepared to acknowledge that a problem existed at all, as if the discovery of copious amounts of bones in an old tank was a perfectly normal event. Complacency? Shame? Religious scruples? Who wants to read the minds of people who refuse to see the case for justice for the innocent dead?

It seems that the British taxpayer originally funded the septic tank; it was designed to deal with human waste from the large workhouse built just outside Tuam shortly before the Irish famine in the 1840's. That's as far as we can offload our guilt elsewhere. When the newly independent Irish authorities took over in the early 1920's they were determined that such an unpopular institution as the workhouse (universally feared by working people everywhere) should not be maintained for its original purpose. But a large, perfectly functional building on a six acre site, in a small town like Tuam, must surely have some practical usage. So the building was offered to the nuns of the Bon Secours order for the purpose of running a 'Mother and Baby Home'. All of which might seem benign and even cosy, except that there were a few unresolved economic problems inherent in the way in which the facility was to be run.

The mothers who went to the facility tended to be young, rural, poor women who had fallen pregnant outside of marriage; the nuns, and indeed the prevailing public opinion of the time, regarded these pregnant girls as either pitiable fallen women, ungodly Jezebels or a combination of the two. By association, the babies born as a result of their mother's "fornication" were tainted goods, suspect and definitely guilty of original sin. After the birth, mothers were expected to leave their children in the care of the nuns and make their own way in a society overtly hostile to "fallen women." England was often the preferred escape route. If the children survived to a certain age, attempts were made by the nuns to have them adopted or fostered with suitable Catholic parents.

The nuns received funding from the Irish civil authorities to maintain the unit. As is always the case, such funding was always open to downward pressure: Local Councillors suspected the Home's fee of ten shillings a week was a bit lavish, especially if the child concerned

had yet to be weaned. On the other hand, the nuns were aware that any money which they could save would go to assist the work of the order elsewhere. In a regime where the inspections of the civil authorities tended to be cursory at best, it was the children who inevitably lost out, especially when their sole parent had been removed from the scene. Best estimates are that the death rate for children in the Home was four times that in the community- itself generally at a high rate because of widespread poverty and destitution. Poignantly, a local paper carried an advert calling for the supply of little coffins to the Home. This was in the early 1930s; it is not clear if any local firm actually supplied coffins specified in the tender. In 1961 the Home was finally closed

In the early years of the next decade, the now derelict six acre site was redeveloped as a public housing project. By local repute, it seems that the house builders soon became used to the discovery of human remains. They assumed

that these were from the famine era, therefore nothing unexpected, and certainly no reason to stop building the estate. In 1975, two boys playing in the rectangular waste ground formed by the back gardens of the new estate, discovered partially broken slabs. Naturally curious, the boys opened an aperture and discovered a hole underneath "filled to the brim with bones". No major investigation took place, as again these were assumed to be bones dating from the potato famine in the 1840s. Nothing the local Priest couldn't handle! A blessing was said at the site. A layer of topsoil was placed on top of the immediate area for sake of decency. Bones were normal for the area. There is an official church graveyard nearby, and a plot elsewhere for so-called "Limbo Babies" – newly-born children who had died before they could be officially baptised by the ever-caring Church.

Although the authorities had shirked the opportunity of an official enquiry, ordinary Irish people have an enormous respect for their dead. A small number of local people have tended the site for the last 35 years, cutting the grass and making the area look respectable. More recently, a local woman has undertaken research comparing deaths reported at the Home with official burial records in the town. Her research suggests that at least 796 children may be interred in the old tank. But the figure may be higher – a recent national newspaper report suggests that local police (Garda) are investigating the disappearance of death certificates relevant to the Home. On the other hand, short of a coroner's enquiry and thorough scientific analysis of the contents of the area, there is nothing but strong hearsay evidence to suggest that the bones are of human origin – assuming there are bones there in the first place. ↗



When the report of what had happened at Tuam resurfaced in an Irish national press, I was sceptical as to whether it could be true. In company of a colleague, I had to go and view the site for myself. Tuam is not the easiest place in the world to navigate ones way through, but armed with a bit of preliminary research, I was fairly sure I'd found the correct locality. The first person I asked directions from was unable to help; a second elderly gentleman pointed me to the estate in question; finally a young woman was able to lead us to the exact location – it is very difficult to find as there is only a pedestrian walkway leading to the small rectangular park; it is totally surrounded by the back gardens of houses. Things haven't changed much since the 1970's when these houses were first built. We were told that the local school had won a prize for having written up "the baby graveyard" as a history project, and that most local people were aware that many of their houses might have been built on the remains of other dead bodies.

The site of the alleged mass burial is three quarters surrounded by two metre walls, but at the front the wall is only about a metre high; the enclosed area amounts only to perhaps 600 square metres. Near the back wall, a small grotto of the Virgin Mary has been erected by local donation and effort. Obviously local people were not prepared to apportion blame to the Catholic Church for what had happened. There is a much less garish simple black plaque in memory of the dead by the front gate, and a metal crucifix is emblazoned on the gate itself. To the immediate left of the memorial site there is an extensive children's play area. The local authority was unable to see the irony of placing the play facility next to a site where dead, maltreated children are supposedly buried. It was a warm summer day; strangely, there were no children in the play area, but people were at work in their back gardens – one man was up a ladder painting his upper storey.

So this place was real, not just some apocryphal story. A tale of suffering, neglect and death. I stood in contemplation for a few minutes, then went back to my car and cried in grief. Everyone dies, but who could let innocent children suffer as many of these children apparently had? The thread of a web discussion about the subject says so much:

"This site was a former home for unmarried mothers run by the Sisters of the Bons Secours Order. They also ran a local hospital in Tuam. The children who remained on there went to the local convent schools and were referred to as Home Babies. Their mothers left after their births as far as I'm aware. It wasn't a Magdalen home. I also understand the children moved on to other homes after a certain age. I'm in shock about the discovery of these remains. I lived up the road from this home which was enclosed behind high walls and we went up and down to school with the children. It wasn't a Limbo Grave as there was another one of those not too far away. As a young child I hadn't a clue as to the implications of any of this but now as an adult I'm appalled and distressed. Thank god someone's unearthed this. What can be done I don't know but something has to happen."

"I agree with you Mary, I didn't live near the home but I went to school in the Mercy down the road, and was very aware of the fact that the children were 'different'. They were all very thin and pale badly dressed and scared. They were not allowed to make their communion or confirmation with the rest of us, they were during the week when no one was around. I remember at the time of its closure there were rumblings of ill treatment and rumours of deaths being investigated, but nothing happened. But this is shocking, something has to be done. Why is there not an investigation launched into this scandal?"

"Maura. I have spoken to people in their 60's and 70's in Cork who have similar stories about young women just disappearing. The mothers would even scare their kids by telling them that they would give ("them?") to the nuns if they were bold. The problem is that those who spoke out were branded as loonies. The church was so ingrained that you risked being called unIrish for speaking out. You still have it today. If you are non catholic in this country you are some how seen as foreign."

Yes, that is exactly how I felt – a foreigner in my own country. Worse still, what does this all say about humanity, the supposedly noble species we are all part of? Ten days later, the memories of my visit are still raw. Questions keep pouring in... Those children would all be baptised Catholics; were they given the last rites of the Church? Did a priest really conduct 800 funeral ceremonies, stand by the open tank and condone the burial of the innocents in unconsecrated ground? I doubt that very much. Should not baptised Catholic children be at least granted the dignity of being buried in ground sanctified by their own religion? Even by the tenets of their own twisted dogma, any women or men who would have been complicit in these alleged interments would have to be condemned as guilty.

The diligence and research of local people have done so much to keep the memory of these events alive; what a shame these well-intentioned people failed to notice the irony of placing the Virgin statue overlooking the supposed mass grave, when the Virgin's female representatives on earth did so much damage when these children were alive? Has the Irish Coroner or State Pathologist no place to play in investigating not only this sad tale but the many other tiny graveyards around the country which might hide similar "secrets?" Why was there no official enquiry into such matters back in 1975? The fact that there has not been may well indicate that civil officialdom has been complicit with church authorities. If that were to continue to be the case then the only recourse for Irish people is to appeal to International Courts of Justice for redress. Our State will have failed us.

I suspect that recent publicity will mean that more and more people like myself will be curious enough to visit the site of this alleged atrocity. Locals may have to reconcile themselves to the area becoming a macabre minor tourist attraction. One strand of residents opinion is to "Let the dead rest in peace"; but masking the problem with a thin layer of topsoil is no longer a viable option, not with the glare of international media focused on Tuam, and other similar "Homes" elsewhere.

What has happened is not a cause for sectarian triumphalism – there are 229 unmarked baby graves at the Protestant "Mother and Home" site near Dublin. Recent efforts by campaigners to have this officially investigated were dismissed by the current Dublin Government. The probability is that there are sites also in Northern Ireland; for decades, successive Unionist Governments left control of education and other social amenities for Catholics in the control of Church authorities. The prevailing philosophy was "Let them run things for themselves as long as they preach against Republicanism." There have been instances of similar abuses in other countries, such as Canada. Those facts merely put the problem into context, they do not excuse or condone gross negligence by Church and State authorities in the Republic of Ireland.

The truth most win out, however unpalatable that truth may be. Please, please, let us investigate and accept the facts of our past; otherwise we may be destined to relive them. □

Ireland 2014



Tuam Babies. Human remains of babies and children Found in a septic tank. Hundreds more buried in a mass grave. Our shame.

It's safe to feel outrage at religious bigots in foreign lands Where girls are raped and hanged from trees Where small minds issue death sentences and Shoot a girl in the head and Kidnap hundreds more for going to school.

Even safe, if uncomfortable, to feel outrage at Ireland's collusion With our own religious zealots of yesteryear Breeding the vile religious doctrine of Legitimate and 'illegitimate' children Stigmatizing innocent children from birth As lower than the lowest.

It's easy to feel outrage at foreign lands and the distant past But tricky to admit equal cause for shame today. Then, in Irish mother and child homes, Medical experiments, forced adoptions, mass graves. Today, de facto forced baptisms of infants by parents Just so their children can get a place In their local primary and secondary school, Most of which remain Catholic-controlled In an Ireland where it remains lawful in 2014 To discriminate in these State-funded schools Against anyone who isn't a baptized Catholic.

So let's save some of our outrage for ourselves And the abject failure of Irish politicians to make good the Tattered guarantee of the 1916 Proclamation to Cherish all of the children of the nation equally.

Joe Armstrong



Alister McReynolds, who spoke on Francis Hutcheson and John Toland at the Humani meeting on 12th June

photo: Bertie McCullough

Terry Moseley

Humani Statement on Pastor McConnell's Comments

On 18th May, Pastor James McConnell described Islam as "heathen" and "satanic", during an address at the Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle Church in Belfast. He told his congregation "a new evil had arisen" and "there are cells of Muslims right throughout Britain". Terry Moseley, then Chairman of Humani, issued the following statement on behalf of the Association.

.....
Humani do not accept the doctrines of any religion, and do not single out the beliefs of Muslims as being any more or any less acceptable than those of Christians, Hindus, Jews, Mormons, Scientologists etc.

Humanists believe in respect for all fellow human beings, and our general philosophy can be summed up most simply in the 'Golden Rule', i.e. "Do unto others as you would wish them to do onto you."

We support the principle of Free Speech, including the right to criticise any religion, as long as that stays within the law.

We also support the right of any individual to believe whatever they choose, including the right to change their religion, although we always welcome the opportunity to enter into discussion and debate on the matter. We also of course support the right of anyone to leave religion altogether to become an atheist or humanist.

We strongly oppose any form of hate crime against anyone on the basis of their religion, or indeed of their ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.

We also strongly oppose any oppression, physical mutilation or discrimination of any form by adherents of any religion (or of none) on the basis of a person's beliefs, ethnicity, gender, sexuality etc. That includes such practices as forced circumcision, FGM, and forced child marriages.

We also oppose the forced adoption of any religion or faith on young children, which we regard as a form of indoctrination.

In relation to Pastor McConnell's comments, we do not agree with the beliefs of Muslims, as stated above, but we would not describe them as 'Satanic', nor 'the spawn of Hell', both because we would regard this language as being deliberately offensive, and because we believe neither in Hell nor in Satan.

We in Northern Ireland have seen all too horrifically the effects of prejudice based on religion, culture and ethnicity. Quite often that was stirred up by some churches and politicians. Human lives and human dignity are more important than church attendance figures or votes, and we are told that we are now in a 'new dispensation', so it is time for all religious and political leaders to unite in condemning such prejudice and intolerance. □



End Faith Schools Now!



THE issue of Religion in schools is a hot potato in the UK in recent months as a result of the Operation Trojan Horse controversy in Birmingham. In November 2013 an anonymous letter to Birmingham City Council told of a plot through which Islamists had allegedly infiltrated school governing bodies in the city and effectively taken them over. The letter is widely believed to be a fake and, for those who are old or learned enough, recalls the infamous *Zinoviev Letter*, published by the *Daily Mail* four days before the election of 1924, supposedly outlining a British communist plot for revolution in Britain.

Whether or not the Trojan Horse letter was a hoax, it has stirred up a hornets' nest of accusation and counter-accusation about the role of religion in schools. At the extreme were the allegations that some Muslims were trying to brainwash children with Sharia law and terrorism. Of course, for some people in the UK, Islam means suicide bombings, amputations, maltreatment of women, and the like. But there is clearly a gulf between being a conservative Muslim and a jihadi, and it may well be that some of the schools under scrutiny moved in the former direction.

In this sense, they are probably no different from strict Protestant, Catholic or Jewish schools. Moreover, the 6,844 state faith schools in the UK do not face the same scrutiny because they are not under local authority control. Perhaps these Birmingham schools simply behaved as if they were faith schools.

In the aftermath, Prime Minister David Cameron has backed the promotion of 'British values' in schools, by which he means freedom, tolerance, personal and social responsibility, respect and the rule of law. Such values are, of course, not exclusively British. Indeed, the most important are universal and applicable anywhere. Yet we have to ask whether these principles are adequately served in any kind of 'exclusive' school. Is a school a proper place to promote any religious faith?

If the state is to be genuinely neutral and multicultural, then it should not publicly fund faith schools. But there is an even bigger question: should the state even permit privately owned and financed faith schools? Religious leaders constantly refer to the rights of parents to educate their children in accord with their own religious beliefs. But what if, in certain areas, schools are predominantly of one faith? In the Irish Republic, where 84% identify themselves as Catholic, does an atheist, Protestant, Jewish or Muslim parent effectively have the same right as the Catholic parent? Hardly.

It is odd that we have given children freedom from exploitation, maltreatment and corporal punishment, but we have not yet granted them freedom from mind control

In any case, children are not mere objects of brainwashing. They have a basic right to reflect on the various ideologies and world views and make up their own mind what to believe. It is odd that we have given children freedom from exploitation, maltreatment and corporal punishment, but we have not yet granted them freedom from mind control.

Northern Ireland is one of the worst examples of the deleterious effects of faith schools. The main Protestant and Catholic churches use education to control and manipulate their communities, a process which maintains the bigotry and sectarianism for which the province is world famous. 93% of children are educated in religiously segregated schools, in which the ethos is predominantly of one faith.

The RE syllabus does not address the reality of religious bigotry which is central to the divided society. The main churches treat this problem as if it didn't exist by ignoring it alto-

gether in the education of children. There is no attempt to explain to Protestant or Catholic pupils the nature of the difference between them, if any, in historical or theological terms. In other words, there is absolutely nothing to counter the widespread assumption on one side that the Pope is the anti-Christ or on the other that Protestants are not 'real' Christians. In the face of 30 years of sectarian strife and centuries of bigotry on both sides, this omission is an appalling dereliction of duty.

Secondly, the core fails to be properly inclusive of the increasing diversity in the wider community. All parties now say they embrace pluralism, but not apparently the main Christian churches themselves when it comes to educating children. They still adhere to an almost exclusively Christian worldview, despite the fact that children have a basic right to learn about the major life stances adopted by all the peoples of the world.

The syllabus also ignores Humanism, which is hardly respectful to a legitimate alternative viewpoint, especially when 18% of the people declare that they have no religious belief. Yet Humanism is now being studied by pupils in schools in England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland, as well as in countries throughout the EU. Northern Ireland is now a glaring exception. This is surely a violation of fundamental human rights, including the right of the child not to be indoctrinated. In international and EU law, it is probably illegal and the Education Orders which enshrine it clearly need to be repealed without further delay.

Church and state should be separate. Schools should be secular and open to all, regardless of faith. They should teach *about* the major religions as well as secular philosophies in an objective manner and provide the opportunity for children to develop their own response as their mind develops. The way forward in Northern Ireland, and elsewhere, is to establish schools that are both integrated and secular. □

Martin O'Reilly

The Rise of the Superlovers

LOVE, it is fair to say, is probably the strongest emotion we can all experience. It can come in many different forms such as love of one's parent, sibling, or child. Most people, however, consider romantic relationships—which include companionship, sexual passion, intimacy, warmth, procreation and child-rearing—as the most significant component of one's life, and it is probably the thing we find discussed more than anything else in novels, films and music.

Committed romantic relationships have tended to occur within the institution of marriage—something that is ubiquitous to most, if not all, cultures. Today, though, love-driven relationships are not just confined to marriages, as many couples sustain relationships outside of wedlock. Being in a loving relationship is considered important for most people, as it contributes to happiness—something we all wish for. Not being in a love relationship, on the other hand, can reduce the chances of happiness. In *Marriage and Morals* (1929), Bertrand Russell conveyed these sentiments on the significance of love: “it is the principal means of escape from the loneliness which afflicts most men and women throughout the greater part of their lives”. We should, of course, try not to generalise too much either: people currently not in relationships (or indeed those with no intention of ever being in one) can also live a satisfying, happy, and meaningful life.

Marriages and other serious relationships, all the same, have become more unstable in recent years and have resulted in more separations and divorces. Rates of divorce soared in the 1960's and 1970's, and according to the Office for National Statistics, 22% of marriages in England and Wales in 1972 had ended in divorce by the 15th wedding anniversary; twenty years later, that figure was 32% after the same time period. During the second half of the 20th century, divorce for the first time within Western civilization replaced death as the most common cause of marriage breakup.



What are the possible causes of this trend? One consideration is that following the women's liberation movement, which began in the late 1960s, women began to acquire more social autonomy, and it became more common for them to enter full-term employment. With more independence, divorce became more desirable—more sought-after, in many respects, than earlier generations that were more reliant on their spouses. Around the same time, as attitudes started to change, less stigma became attached to divorce. Some also blame the Thatcher-Reagan *laissez-faire* economic policies that led to more uncertainty of employment and family instability, thus resulting in more divorces at that time.

People also started to acknowledge an elevated conception of what marriage. It should not merely include sexual relations and procreation but also express the intellectual desires, interests, and goals of each partner. If marriages don't realise this elevated conception, divorce is now considered an appropriate recourse for those within unfulfilling relationships. Indeed, a 1985 study in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* suggested that the most common reasons for divorce were unhappiness, incompatibility, emotional abuse, alcohol abuse, infidelity and physical abuse.

On top of that, due to birth-control technology, unwanted pregnancies have allowed us to isolate sex from reproduction, and condoms have also diminished the risks of STIs. In our current epoch, where we have easy and affordable access to long-distance transport, urbanisation and the near omnipresence of online social media, opportunistic love-affairs are less risky than in the past.

Finally, there are also plausible evolutionary reasons why relationships end. Natural selection did not plan our mating strategies to be in accordance with 21st century relationship ideals in mind. The human animal is the product of natural selection; we are survival machines designed to promote the survival and replication of our genes, not our marital success or individual well-being. In other words, evolution can stand in the way of our marital happiness, by giving different reproductive goals to men and women and through evolving relationship arrangements that promotes fitness over well-being. As Richard Dawkins pointed out in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), our genes are indifferent to us—they merely use our bodies as vehicles for their replication.

For this reason, there seems to be some tension between our biological reproductive drives and our relationships as value ideals. Most modern relationships assume monogamy and lasting fidelity, whilst extramarital sex is usually considered a serious moral shortcoming. One possible solution might be to relax the ideal of sexual exclusivity. This could well be something future generations will embrace, but it is unlikely to be something the majority of existing couples will adopt anytime soon.

Indeed, there are some good evolutionary reasons why we should be sceptical (or at least cautious) of this suggestion. Since jealousy seems to be something so deeply ingrained in our nature, it is unlikely most couples would be able to entirely avoid this strong emotion. At the same time, our modern sexual mores would seem unimaginable to those living over a century ago, so perhaps future generations will also regard sexually exclusive relationships as archaic.

It seems, then, at least for the moment anyway, we are only left with the option of aspiring to modern-day relationship ideals, in spite of acknowledging the problems of maintaining lasting relationships. One novel solution, however, was proposed by Oxford ethicists Julian Savulescu and Anders Sandberg ↵

who consider the possibility of biological manipulating our different love systems—lust, attraction and attachment. Writing in the journal *Neuroethics* (2008), they remind us that love potions have a long history, though this was probably “based on symbolism and wishful thinking.” But today the biological underpinnings of love are beginning to be elucidated, enabling science-based interventions into love’s domain. Perhaps we could create ‘love drugs’, they suggest, that could enhance intimacy—for instance, in order to recreate the glorious fulfilment and excitement of the early years that couples usually spend together. They conclude that we should use our knowledge of the neuroscience of love to enhance the quality of love by biological manipulation.

Someone might say we shouldn’t waste our time assessing the possibility of using something to enhance our relationships that may not actually arise, and focus instead on *actual* sociological and environmental reasons why relationships fail. The possibility of designing love drugs is not merely speculative, though. Granted, the capacity to do this kind of scrupulous engineering is beyond the ability of present-day neuroscience, but there is growing research developing such prospects: “in the near future, as our understanding of the neuroscience of love grows, there will be more opportunities to modify lust, attraction and attachment. We may be able to modify these factors either by blockers or enhancers to achieve a variety of valued outcomes: greater attractiveness to others, initiation of relationships, prevention or termination of relationships and improvement in the quality of relationships, for personal, couple-centered, child-centered or social reasons” (Savulescu and Sandberg).

They make a number of strong arguments in favour of the biological enhancement of love. Firstly, there’s no morally significant difference between relationship therapy, a massage, a glass of wine, or indeed viewing a romantic movie together. In terms of consistency, they all seem to function at a basic biological level to release substances like oxytocin and dopamine. It shouldn’t really matter which way enhancement was achieved. Secondly, western societies value personal freedom and this ought to include human relationships. People should be free to steer their relationships, assuming it isn’t harming anyone, in ways which best suit them.

Thirdly, healthy relationships promote well-being and happiness. Among the separated and divorced, not surprisingly, unhappiness and depression are more common. Separation can also be upsetting, stressful and harmful for children and other family members. Couples, therefore, have an obligation to preserve their relationships for the sake of their own well-being, their children, extended family and perhaps society at large. In short, love drugs may help couples better synthesise their biological instincts with their relationship values.

Of course, such drugs should only be permissible on the condition there aren’t any serious side effects and where users would not become addicted. There’s also the possibility of one partner coercing the other into taking them. There’s also the threat of someone using them forcefully to initiate a love affair by taking advantage of another person—e.g., through spiking her drink. These examples would all be morally indefensible, but if we accept that agents taking love drugs are autonomous in deciding their relationship, and with a good understanding of the outcome, then it seems more difficult to find a reason to say love drugs are morally wrong.

One objection variously expressed is that love drugs would render love inauthentic. You would only be attracted to the other person because of the facilitated chemical enhancement, not ‘true love’. Savulescu and Sandberg argue that they aren’t endorsing any substance that would be analogous to *soma*—a fictional hallucinogenic remedy from Aldous Huxley’s novel *Brave New World* (1932)—which would work like some kind of magical hedonistic potion. In fact, they seem to be invoking something different: love enhancement drugs could be used by couples who are already dedicated to each other and want to build and develop existing bonds. Nobody would say a couple that enhances their relationship by regularly watching romantic movies together, along with a few glasses of wine, is not authentic. By themselves, love enhancements are unlikely to strengthen existing relationships without any additional effort. Say it were possible to create love drugs that were much more powerful, then perhaps there is a stronger case to resist them, that is, say, if they were powerful enough to fundamentally alter a person’s identity, to the extent of her being a different person. But this is not

what Savulescu and Sandberg seem to be proposing here.

Another possible objection would be to focus on altering the environmental and sociological causes of relationship break-up, instead on altering humans. In short, change society, not people. Savulescu and Sandberg are sympathetic to this idea. They acknowledge we should focus on relationship therapy, psychotherapy and other social interventions ahead of biological ones, since they are likely to be more successful and probably safer. At the same time, this consideration doesn’t rule out the possibility of love drugs either, as they could be more effective for particular things. They say that “there may be many inherent biological obstacles to a good and enduring marriage” that conventional interventions cannot fully care for.

Overall, Savulescu and Sandberg’s argument sounds persuasive. If we have the capacity to enhance human relationships with love drugs, thus advancing the well-being and happiness of individuals, these are certainly fruitful benefits. Meanwhile, we should also consider some of the political and economic forces that can have an influence on public health policy and on drug research and administration—something Savulescu and Sandberg seem to mainly bypass. We might, for example, worry that therapists would over-prescribe love drugs at the expense of more time consuming psychotherapy. Further, we should not assume that the emergence of love enhancement drugs will fully attain its original expectation, bearing in mind that scientists often overestimate the prospects of their research.

Arguably, this is what’s happening with anti-depressants. The psychologist Jonathan Rottenberg, author of *The Depths: The Evolutionary Origins of the Depression Epidemic* (2014), claims that antidepressants on the market today are no more effective as those developed nearly 60 years ago, and that two-thirds of those who are treated with them “continue to be burdened with depressive symptoms”. To be sure, these points are *not* reasons necessarily to resist the prospect of pharmacological love drugs—as I maintain, they may help impede separation, divorce and family instability. As the case may be, we should proceed towards its aspired expectations with prudence. All the same, and in presupposing their feasibility, we should welcome their future emergence. □

Art Attack

Banbridge Council bans Gay Sex Picture

In May Banbridge district council banned an artwork from an exhibition in the town's FE McWilliams gallery. Ursula Burke's image of two men having sex, with a voyeuristic woman observing them from behind nearby bushes, was deemed unsuitable for inclusion. The piece, entitled *After Frans Van Bloemen – Arcadian Landscape*, was not included in *The Past is Unpredictable* exhibition which runs from 31st May to 17th August as it was



After Jan Willem Pieneman: another of Ursula Burke's landscapes

deemed "inappropriate for display to minors in a public gallery". A statement from Banbridge Council said: "The FE McWilliam Gallery and Studio prides itself as a family-friendly facility and encourages visitors of all ages to visit and view the exhibitions in a welcoming and comfortable environment".

Noel Kelly, chief executive officer of artist representative body Visual Arts Ireland, which submitted a petition with more than 500 signatures to the council demanding

that the work be reinstated, commented: "it is clear that galleries in NI have found ways to deliver on their child protection policies which all publicly funded spaces must have. Exhibitions can be clearly marked as to having content that parents may wish to control their children's access to. Cases in point are the recent Kara Walker exhibition in The MAC which contained scenes of sexual intercourse in Walker's shadow puppetry style, and the current exhibition by Alan Phelan in Golden Thread Gallery which contains scenes of extreme sexual practice in found video footage. Both exhibitions were open to the public with clear warnings".

Visual Artists Ireland, which describe Burke as "one of the important artists of her generation in Northern Ireland", said the move shows the council only wants to show art exhibiting values "more at home in Victorian Britain than in a modern forward-looking Northern Ireland".

VAI, which was speaking on Ms Burke's behalf, compared the move to Newtownabbey Council's controversial decision to try to ban the Reduced Shakespeare Company's Bible play. It added: "These actions make a laughing stock of the supports for culture in Northern Ireland and are to be condemned". The group said that what they called the "trend by councils to interfere with the curato-

rial and artistic autonomy of their funded spaces is a direct attack on the freedom of artistic expression".

Kelly added: "Burke is known for her work exploring identity and representation. She has exhibited widely and considered one of the important artists of her generation in Northern Ireland. The image in question is one of a series of nine studies in the style of Arcadian landscapes that were prominent in the 17th and 18th Century. In

primitive cultures right through to contemporary society the nude has a fetishistic role and has been used by artists such as Dürer, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Rodin, Manet, and Poussin".

Burke herself was quoted in the *Sunday Times* (8th

June) as saying that the picture "was in relation to the same-sex marriage debate that's going on in Northern Ireland at the minute". She also explained that the onlooker

represents society looking

on at the controversy. Other drawings in her series feature riot police and Union Jacks (see above).

Burke considered pulling all of her work from the show in protest, but felt that she had an obligation to other artists in it. "The whole scenario is quite ridiculous. If you take any backwards glance into art history, you'll see images a lot more challenging than that", she added.

Burke is quite right. The Council's decision to ban the picture is certainly to be deplored. To hide what is clearly a mixture of philistinism and homophobia behind a child protection policy is contemptible. It is easy to imagine that if these moral godfathers had ruled Florence in the 16th century, they would have ordered the destruction of Michelangelo's *David* on the spurious grounds of child protection. They have no conception of the history of great art as a shock and a challenge to the status quo. If their policy was followed universally, many of the greatest works in history would never be seen, on grounds of 'child protection'.

The question must also be asked whether their decision was influenced by their attitude to homosexuality and same-sex marriage. And finally there is a small matter of hypocrisy. Are they some of the same DUP politicians who boasted, in defending Pastor O'Connell's anti-Islam rant, that they are firm believers in freedom of expression? □

To hide what is clearly a mixture of philistinism and homophobia behind a child protection policy is contemptible

Jennifer Sturgeon

Francis Ledwidge

Soldier and 'Poet of the Blackbirds'

*h what a pleasant world 'twould be,
How easy we'd step thro' it,
If all the fools who meant no harm,
Could manage not to do it !*

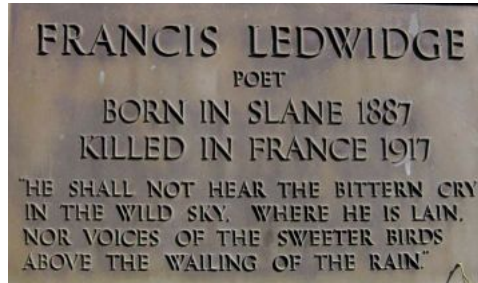
THESE wise words were written almost 100 years ago in a personal letter by Francis Ledwidge. Human nature has not changed in the intervening years and they could easily apply to modern day politicians and administrators whose well-intentioned actions impact adversely upon the lives of ordinary citizens. As we approach the anniversaries of battles and key events in the First World War, it is important to remember the contributions and sacrifices made by Irish soldiers. In his short life, Francis Ledwidge contributed 3 volumes of poetry to the world of literature and served in the British Army, making the ultimate sacrifice in the struggle against the German dominance of Europe.

Francis was born on 19th August 1887 near Slane in Co.Meath, the 8th of 9 children. Despite his apparently humble origins on a small farm, the family could trace their origins to the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland. His father died when he was only 5 years of age and his mother struggled to rear her brood on a meagre income. Young Francis left school at the age of 13 to become economically active and supportive of his mother and siblings.

He had a variety of jobs which included, farm labourer, road mender, supervisor of roads, shop assistant and copper miner, being sacked from the latter for organising a strike for better conditions, some 3 years before the General Strike of 1913. He had been a Trade Union activist since 1906 and although his formal schooling had been short-lived, he was very articulate in his arguments and displayed a flair with words. He was only 14 years old when the *Drogheda Independent* published several of his poems and in the year 1913-14 he was Secretary of the Slane branch of the Meath Labour Union.

His talent was quickly spotted by Lord Dunsany who wrote: "I was astonished by the brilliance of that eye that had looked at the fields of Meath and seen there all the simple birds and flowers, with the vividness which made those pages like a magnifying glass through which one looked at familiar things for the first time".

Dunsany knew that the rural themes in Ledwidge's poetry would appeal to The Irish Literary Revival and he became his patron, introducing him to W.B.Yeats and ensuring the publication of his first collection of poems, *Songs of the Fields* in 1915. He offered Ledwidge a stipend not to join the army but, like many young men of his era, Ledwidge was headstrong and, perhaps broken-hearted by the rejection of his sweetheart Ellie Vaughney, he enlisted in the 5th Battalion of the Inniskilling Fusiliers on 24th October 1914. Thus his fate was sealed.



He was promoted to the position of Lance Corporal and in 1915 he saw action in the Dardanelles in the Battle of Gallipoli. He was horrified by the waste of life and sensitive to the events which unfolded back home in his native Ireland at Easter 1916. When he heard of the execution of the 7 leaders of the Easter Rising at Kilmainham gaol, he wrote

the following *Lament for Thomas McDonagh*:

*He shall not hear the bittern cry
In the wild sky, where he is laid,
Nor voices of the sweeter birds
Above the wailing of the rain.*

*Nor shall he know when the loud March blows
Thro' slanting snows her fanfare shrill,
Blowing to flame the golden cup
Of many an upset daffodil.*

*But when the dark cow leaves the moor
And pastures poor with greedy weeds,
Perhaps he'll hear her low at morn
Lifting her horn in pleasant meads.*

On 31st July 1917 during the 3rd Battle of Ypres, Ledwidge was drinking tea with 5 comrades in a mud hole near the village of Boezinge when a shell exploded. The army chaplain, Father Devas later reported: "Ledwidge killed....blown to bits".

During his time in active service, Ledwidge had written prolifically and left behind enough material to create two collections of poems which were published after his death: *Songs of Peace* and *Last Songs*. There is a memorial to him on the spot where he died at the Flanders Fields Museum in Belgium and his birthplace near Slane is now open to the public as the Francis Ledwidge Museum.

It is somewhat prophetic that, not long before he himself was killed, he wrote a poem about the burial of a fallen comrade:

A Soldier's Grave

*Then in the lull of midnight, gentle arms
Lifted him slowly down the slopes of death
Lest he should hear again the mad alarms
Of battle, dying moans, and painful breath.*

*And where the earth was soft for flowers we made
A grave for him that he might better rest.
So, Spring shall come and leave it seed arrayed,
And there the lark shall turn her dewy nest.*

□

25. J.S. Mill's *On Liberty*

JOHN Stuart Mill, the leading English philosopher of the 19th century, was born in London in 1806 and educated at home by his Scottish father James Mill, himself a philosopher, historian and economist. John Stuart was a child prodigy, learning Greek at 3, Latin at 8 and beginning philosophy at 12. His father, a follower of Jeremy Bentham, had as his explicit aim to create a genius who would carry on the cause of utilitarianism after he and Bentham died. As a non-conformist who refused to subscribe to the 39 Articles of the Church of England, Mill was not eligible to study at Oxford or Cambridge and instead followed his father to work for the East India Company, where he remained for most of his working life.

In the winter of 1826-7, at the age of twenty, he suffered a nervous breakdown, which in his *Autobiography* he claims was caused by the great physical and mental arduousness of his studies that had suppressed any feelings he might have developed normally in childhood. He felt that he would never be happy because his over-rational education had rendered him incapable of emotion, and he contemplated ending his life.

Eventually he pulled himself together, with the help of poetry, music, and the philosopher and feminist Harriet Taylor, with whom he fell in love. She was already married but for 21 years the two were close friends and inspired each other and worked together. Harriet's husband died in 1849 and in 1851 Mill became her second husband. In the autumn of 1858 the couple went to France where the climate was better for Harriet's tuberculosis, but she died of respiratory failure in Avignon in November that year. Mills' *On Liberty*, which they had written together, was published in 1859 and was dedicated to Harriet. It is a major work of enlightened humanism.

Mill returned to England in 1865, when he was elected a Member of Parliament for Westminster. In 1866 he became the first parliamentary representative to call for women to be given the vote, vigorously defending this position in subsequent debate. He also became a strong advocate of such social reforms as birth control, land reform in Ireland, trade unions and farm cooperatives. In *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) he called for various reforms of Parliament and voting, especially proportional representation, the Single Transferable Vote, and the extension of the suffrage. He lost his parliamentary seat in 1868, so he returned to Avignon, where he died in 1873 and was buried alongside his wife.

On Liberty begins with an introductory chapter in which Mill points out that whereas in the past defenders of individual liberty had been most concerned with opposing the tyranny of political rulers, we now need to

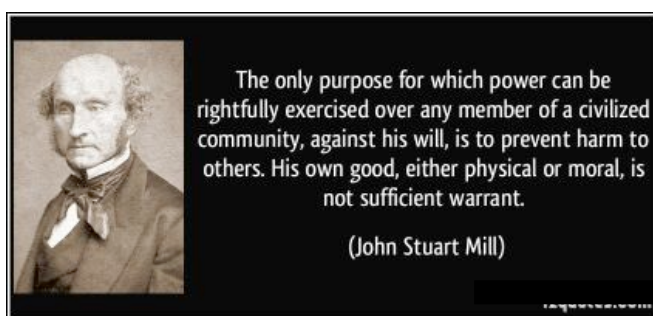
guard against the tyranny of the majority. A democratically elected government can become a vehicle for the majority to tyrannize the minority: "there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the development, and, if possible, prevent the formation of any individuality not in harmony with its ways, and compel all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own".

In his *Autobiography* Mill said that *On Liberty* was "a kind of philosophical textbook of a simple truth". It is usually described as the harm principle, but that is really only part of it, and to stress it alone is to put a negative spin on Mill's highly positive endeavour. For he is seeking, above all, to champion individual flourishing in which each person is free to develop to the

fullest of his own potential. The harm principle is the sole restriction on this individual liberty. So he writes: "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their member, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others".

Mill does not, however, believe that we all have a natural right to liberty. His harm principle is underpinned by his adherence to utilitarianism rather than natural rights as such. Thus he maintains that the right action is calculated by judging its consequences: will it give rise to the greatest happiness? "I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being". What exactly these interests are is, of course, open to considerable debate.

Chapter 2 is entitled 'Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion'. Mill is a passionate exponent of free speech. He writes: "if all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind". He offers three main arguments against repression of opinion. The first is the argument from fallibility: the repressed opinion may be true. "We can never be sure that the opinion we are trying to stifle is a false opinion", he writes. Thus a certain scepticism even about our own convictions is one of the basic justifications for freedom of expression. No government or social group should be permitted to claim infallibility for the limited perspective which any given group ↵



must hold towards events. If a controversial opinion is true, then we can never exchange truth for error so long as discussion is curtailed. On the other hand, if the controversial opinion is false, by silencing discussion we prevent more lively truths from gaining by healthy collision with error. Free speech is therefore essential because the truth can only emerge from constant argument, discussion and debate, from the free competition of differing opinions.

Mill also emphasises that open discussion is significant only if it includes extreme cases. Thus we should allow even the speech we hate because truth is most likely to emerge in a free intellectual combat from which no idea has been excluded. He notes how learned persons joined with those who persecuted Socrates and Christ for holding 'extreme' opinions which later won many adherents.

Mill's second argument for free speech relates to its value in keeping established truths and doctrines alive. The presence of a 'devil's advocate' compels us to know the reasons for our beliefs. Without challenge, even accepted beliefs and moral codes become lifeless and may even be held in the manner of prejudice or dogma, with little comprehension of their rational grounds. Organised suppression of opinions which conflict with the official views destroys 'the moral courage of the human mind'. With no enemy at hand, 'both teachers and learners go to sleep at their post'. In short, free speech is educational.

Mill's third argument rests on the possibility that competing views may share the truth between them. Opinions may not be wholly right or wholly wrong. By airing all sides, we can pick and choose the best parts of each and form a more complex, sophisticated and truthful opinion. He points out, for example, that the accepted moral codes of the modern era are not purely Christian but also stem from pre-Christian Greek and Roman influences. Many of our modern ethical codes and political philosophies are based on compromises over time. So free speech and compromise are often inextricably connected.

Mill rejects any argument for suppressing opinion on the grounds of sensationalism, insults or offence. No one can be trusted with such censorship because he will label whatever he disagrees with in such terms. A law against offensive criticism would also tend to favour the politically powerful against the weak. In the third chapter, 'Of Individuality, As One of the Elements of Well-Being', he states that to hold an opinion never constitutes a harm to others, and so should never be suppressed. To express an opinion *almost* never constitutes a harm to others, and so should only be suppressed in rare circumstances.

Behaviour is clearly different and can often constitute harm to others. "No one pretends that actions should be as free as opinions. On the contrary, even opinions lose their immunity, when the circumstances in which they are expressed are such as to constitute their expression a positive instigation to some mischievous act". He gives as illustration the difference between writing in the press that corn-dealers are starvers of the poor and delivering this message orally or on a placard to an excited mob assembled before a corn-dealer's house. In such circumstances the words become actions specifically designed to incite violence. Incitement to violence, then, is the one exception that Mill gives to free speech because only in this case will there be genuine harm to others.

As far as actions are concerned, Mill argues that it is not for the state or the church or any institution to dictate what is the good life. Each person should be allowed to realise their potential in their own distinctive way. "Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign". Individuality is also a prerequisite for creativity and diversity. Society as a whole benefits if people are allowed to experiment with behaviour that is contrary to custom and the opinion of the majority. Every positive advance in history that has added to human happiness was at one time contrary to custom. Moreover, to develop one's individuality, one's capacity for autonomously choosing one's own path in life, fosters happiness in and of itself. In short, "the grand, leading principle towards which every argument in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest variety".

Chapters 4 and 5 are largely concerned with objections to and applications of Mill's thesis. They do not, however, really address some of its basic problems, not least what Mill actually means by the notions of harm, utility and happiness. Take harm, for example. Very few of our words or actions do not affect others in some way. How do we decide if they are 'harmful' to them? Mill rules out being offended as not an aspect of being harmed, but this seems arbitrary. If we hurt someone's feelings, are we not harming them? And might not a utilitarian argue that in certain circumstances silencing some opinions could lead to an increase in happiness, for example in the face of imminent death or other tragedy?

We may also feel that Mill has over-estimated the ability of many people to know what is likely to promote their own happiness. Being seduced into short-term pleasure at the expense of long-term happiness is a common human failing, as are human self-deception and irrationality. Nor is there any guarantee that freedom of speech will ensure the triumph of truth over propaganda. In a society where the media are controlled by powerful interests, the balance between competing opinions that Mill seems to think will automatically arise from free speech may not in fact exist at all. The overwhelming support of the British media for the invasion of Iraq and the marginalisation of opponents is a case in point.

Mill's account of liberty is actually a defence of negative freedom: freedom from. As such, it a powerful argument, though we may well question the wisdom of relying on only one vague principle, that of harm, as a restraint on liberty. But he seems to believe that ensuring this negative liberty will by itself create the conditions for positive liberty; that is, the freedom to achieve what we want in life. Unfortunately, freedom *from* does not guarantee freedom *to*. No one individual is stopping me from owning a Lamborghini Veneno, but the lack of £3m is. Our freedom of action is determined by many things, including material, physical, intellectual and educational resources, and in these respects some are clearly more 'free' than others.

Mill acknowledges that freedom of action can never be as complete as freedom of speech. So it is possible to suggest that his defence of the latter is formidable and is as relevant now as when he wrote it. Freedom of action, on the other hand, may require more interventions and restrictions by the state than he perhaps would have wished. British liberals in the 20th century recognised this truth in committing themselves to a mixed economy and the welfare state. □



ROBINSON'S HOURLY SLAUGHTER

BY OUR RACE RELATIONS CORRESPONDENT KOO COX-CLYNN

FIRST Minister Peter Robinson today explained his recent decision to start sending Muslims to the shops.

"As usual, the media have got hold of the wrong end of the stick. When I said that Muslims could be trusted, the clear implication was that my wife, whom I sent to the shops between 1970 and 2009, could no longer be. You may recall that, about ten years ago, I told her to get a few sausages in. Well, she did visit a couple of local butchers, I suppose. However, it seems that my instructions were completely misinterpreted. In actual fact, they were misinterpreted once or twice a week, over the course of several years.

"Fortunately, in that case, an old family friend, who happened to be a property developer (not that that has ever been in any way relevant) was able to buy off the young m... was able to alleviate the situation, to a degree, by sponsoring a small job-creation scheme, in conjunction with, er, another old family friend, who happened to be a district council. But I'm afraid times change. In current circumstances, I couldn't risk letting Iris go to the shops.

1. Fred Frazer is pushing up the daisies [and not, as he was in the past, with a bulldozer - Ed]. 2. My personal fiefd... er, I mean the Borough of Castlereagh is being abolished. 3. Council cafes at local beauty spots [What? Iris now has her own personal cafe? These people really are running the country purely for their own benefit! - Ed] don't grow on trees.

"I think this adequately explains why I get Muslims to run errands for me. I can be certain that they will use only Hal-al meat suppliers and the latter aren't likely to engage in she-nanigans with their customers."

Speaking at a hastily arranged second press conference in the lobby of Parliament Buildings, later in the afternoon, Mr Robinson, now wearing a spangly jacket and bow tie, tried to deflect fierce criticism from animal welfare groups.

"Er, Geoffrey, this one's in G. Ladies and gentlemen of the press, my next number is a song which means a lot to me and I hope that you'll be moved by it, er, right down to the far end of Massey Avenue where you won't be able to bother me. I give you 'When Iris's Eyes Are Smiling'" [Sounds to me as if "PR" is in need of much better PR. - Ed].

VOTERS SICK OF BRUSSELS

[even without the addition of the word "sprouts" - Ed]

BY OUR FEDERAL SUPERSTATE CORRESPONDENT BONNIE PARTE

WHILE much of Europe lurched to the right, voters in Northern Ireland rocked back and forth a bit and then fell over. [Most people in Northern Ireland could lurch to the right only if they were shot out of a huge catapult from Donaghadee harbour. - Ed] **S-i-t-M got out and about among shoppers at city-centre off licences.**

"I, I, always vote er Inffiff.. Indiffer.. Induffer, fer the Thingy Party but whatyer askin me for? Snow elekshunnon tumminit, izzier?" said Tesco resident, Billy S Brew.

"Will, niturillay, Ay vootet foor thay Sooshel Kynvinshun Pertee et siv-vin ee-em awn thay dawt." said Millicent Fish-counter, while perusing the shilves of Merksynd Spinser foor in immoozing little roozay.

"Ezzaint thet reyt, dee-or? Bee the weey, this is may hooobie, Diz."

"Oooh, yee-as. Ebsoll-ootlay, Millay." agreed husband, Desmond.

"Way've bayn vooting foor Harbie MecYooseliss, the Sauk-Cawn coonsillore foor thay Intiedillooyin District Illicterawl Eeria, since 1954. Hay's nivver pootafoot wraw-ing, oolthooh

the paypurrs oonkeendly printed ay stoorie about en imbirrissing cimplit frim whetch hay siffurs. Wawts hit cawled, Diz?"

"Er, persisstint vigititive stay-it, dee-or."

"Yiss, thet's et. Ellawtov Ussa-bout nawthing! May frint-Awrithy, hiddit but shay wint to

thess mervellus hoomie-awphtie clinic nayer thay Hullywid Erches end et clayered up in noo time."

No supporters of the Boorish Upstart Federation (BUF) were willing to be interviewed. In any case, no BUF candidates were standing, this time round. The election date clashed with the annual manoeuvres of the Operation Barbarossa Re-enactment Society, so many BUF members were out of the country.

FREE COMEDY CD WITH A FUTURE ISSUE AT SOME UNSPECIFIED POINT, POSSIBLY...

FOR the first time, hear the uncensored "Tony and Georgie" sketches from the classic Noughties series "Round the Bend", recorded at (very) Camp David. Accompanying booklet contains original Polari text and (for the profoundly scared and the partially truthful) a translation into plain English. Remember the sketches will be available only in this special release by Public Records (in about ninety years' time). They will not be found in "The Complete Scripts" [pub. Chilcot and Whitewash, 2014, £8 million approx]. Disc features all-time favourites such as "Bogus Intelligence", "Bogus Reasons for Invasion", "Bogus Nation Building" and "Bogus Concern for Human Rights" [but, sadly, not bona fides, ha, ha, ha. Never let it be said that you mince your words. - Ed]

INSIDE TODAY: SPECIAL 50-PAGE SUPPLEMENT

Celebrating East Belfast's fortnightly "Giro di Banco" race (from front door to the "Legacy of Heavy Industry" wine bar via the Post Office). Says race organiser, Wendy O'Dressin, "Bringing inebriated crowds on to the streets, blocking roads for days on end and holding pointless parades of men in ridiculous costumes shows how much Northern Ireland has changed".

Alan Tuffery Reports on a Talk by Proinsias De Rossa

The European Commission is not God –

Why the next European Commission President Needs to be a Humanist

PROINSIAS De Rossa, (right) who was an MEP for 15 years, addressed the Humanist Association of Ireland on 4th May. He pointed out that the EU has been a significant driver of advances in human rights generally, including the rights of those with a secular philosophy. For us as humanists, how the philosophical views of the members of the European Parliament and the members of the Commission, and of its President in particular, affect decision-making are of critical importance. He emphasised the need for all European citizens to engage with the development of the EU mission and objectives and quoted the report of Italian MEP Roberto Gualtieri, which discussed the EU's constitutional problems, on the need for the “legitimacy of a political Union should not merely be based on input and output, on process and results, but also on a moral narrative, a compelling vision for the future”.



From its inception the EU has acknowledged the Christian heritage of Europe. However, during the negotiations in the ‘European Convention on the future of Europe’ (2003-2004), from which the Lisbon Treaty was derived, and in spite of strong opposition, a reference to our ‘humanist heritage’ was also included in the Preamble. Other provisions refer to diversity, the right to no religion, tolerance etc.

In addition, Article 17 (TFEU) along with Declaration 11, confirms that the Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations as well as religious associations and churches, while placing an obligation on the Commission to engage in dialogue with these bodies. The implementation of this article has not so far been very satisfactory largely because of the reluctance of those opposed to dialogue with secular organisations.

However, some complaints have been effective at the EU level. For example the Association Européenne de la Pensée Libre (Europe) complained in 2012 to the European Ombudsman that the representation on a committee on science and ethics (EGE) established by the Commission was not independent or pluralist; nine of the 15 members were theologians or clerics and mostly Roman Catholic.

While the European Ombudsman Emily O’Reilly declared in her judgement in February this year, that there was no ‘maladministration’, she nevertheless called on the European Commission to review how it selects members of this ethics committee and that: “At the time of the renewal of the composition of the EGE, the Commission could consider clarifying in the call for expression of interest that religious or personal beliefs are not taken into account for the selection and that ‘secular’ candidates are invited to apply”. This illustrates both the need for vigilance by Humanists, and that action can effect change.

Proinsias de Rossa also pointed out that a disturbing development throughout Europe at the moment is the rise of nationalism and xenophobia, and especially the re-emergence of the use of religion as a marker of national identity. This ideology, driven by fear, is destructive of society and the opposite of how we need to respond to the loss of democratic control and accountability of supra-national economic forces. He reminded us that the late President Mitterrand, addressing the European Parliament (17/1/1995), foresaw the danger when he warned that we had to overcome our past, otherwise we would face the re-emergence of nationalism, and declared that “nationalism is war”.

A further example of the growth of reactionary elements is their capacity in the European Parliament to block the advancement of human rights when they recently helped defeat the Edite Estrela Report (December 2013). Her report — on behalf of the Women’s Rights Committee of the EP — sought among other things to draw attention to the restriction on sexual health and reproductive rights in the EU, including in Ireland.

Proinsias de Rossa concluded his presentation by pointing out that the President of the European Commission has to be approved by the European Parliament, and that the Taoiseach and Tánaiste have influence on whom the European Council (Heads of State) propose to the EP for that position. In addition for the first time ever, due to the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Council has to have regard to the votes cast by EU citizens in the EP elections in making their proposal.

They should therefore be lobbied to ensure they comply with this more democratic process, while at the same time drawing their attention to the need to have a nominee both for the Presidency and for the Irish nominee to the Commission, who is actively committed to European values and objectives, in their totality. The HAI could perhaps produce a statement to circulate to candidates on these matters.

The HAI could also register with the Department of An Taoiseach as an ‘interlocutor’ for dialogue under Article 17 (TFEU). This would give us access to government and to the European Commission for inclusion in this dialogue process. In the medium to long-term, there is a need for the HAI to monitor the activities of Members of the European Parliament and their voting records, and the activities and initiatives of the Commission on issues relevant to the HAI. □

Philip Byers, who chaired the meeting, thanked Proinsias De Rossa for guiding us through the complexities of the EU, and presented him with a first-day cover of the new Darwin stamp, for which the Association had campaigned. ◆

Why God never received a PhD

1. He had only one major publication.
2. It was in Hebrew.
3. It had no references.
4. It wasn't published in a refereed journal.
5. Some even doubt he wrote it by himself.
6. It may be true that he created the world, but what has he done since then?
7. His cooperative efforts have been quite limited.
8. The scientific community has had a hard time replicating his results.
9. He never applied to the ethics board for permission to use human subjects.
10. When one experiment went awry he tried to cover it by drowning his subjects.
11. When subjects didn't behave as predicted, he deleted them from the sample.
12. He rarely came to class, just told students to read the book.
13. Some say he had his son teach the class.
14. He expelled his first two students for learning.
15. Although there were only 10 requirements, most of his students failed his tests.
16. His office hours were infrequent and usually held on a mountaintop.

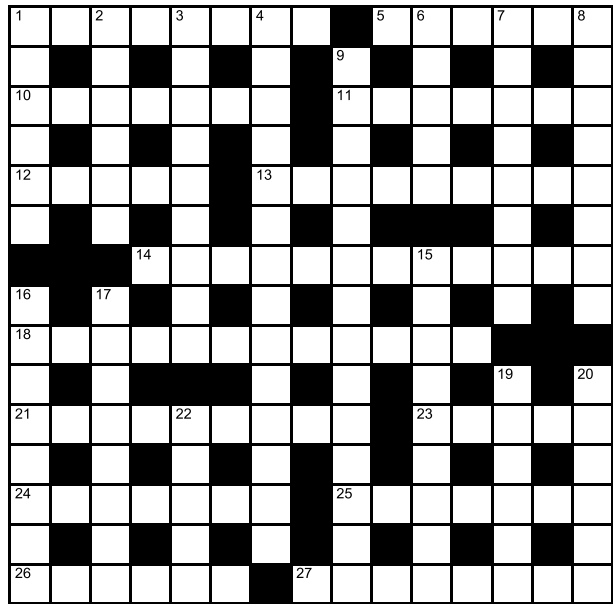


From *The Guardian*

Crossword No 7 Solution

O	S	A	S	O	L	G							
A	P	E	N	N	Y	N	A	R	R	A	T	O	R
E	O	A		U	A	I	E						
G	N	A	W	T	A	B	U	L	A	R	A	S	A
M	B												I
D	I	V	A	L	E	V	I	T	A	T	I	N	G
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I	D	O	L	A	W	O	K	E	I	S	L	E	
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B	R	I	D	E	S	M	A	I	D	A	J	A	R
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G	O	R	G	O	N	Z	O	L	A	T	O	W	N
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R	E	M	E	D	I	A	L	E	A	T	E	R	Y
R	E	L	Y	R	E	D							

CROSSWORD NO 8 BY STRANGER MOJO



Across

- 1 Renunciation of belief wavering as to a spy (8)
- 5 Limb tip raised to unpleasant hollow (6)
- 10 Learner embraced by excited short-sighted sports champion (7)
- 11 French street turns up as I am endlessly for land mass (7)
- 12 Better leave tiger beetle alone for feudal superior (5)
- 13 Roget lent curious glasses to see diva (9)
- 14 Stephen King prom book succeeds Irish upper-class person (7,2,3)
- 18 Sly Papa Harry curiously contented like Lawrence (5,2,5)
- 21 Cheat race circles stacks of hay before ruler (9)
- 23 The Spanish operators endlessly disappear to wed (5)
- 24 Bard's tragedy of towering inferno encircled by king-side castling (7)
- 25 Irish ship follows holy man wrapping clothes into bottle-shaped object (7)
- 26 Carl abandons secularism to treat something badly (6)
- 27 Be the cause of Unionist red raising untruth (8)

Down

- 1 Irish men quit April fool for space programme (6)
- 2 Castrated bull on fourth of July generates endless odourless gas (6)
- 3 It's a long way to variously enquire into the private affairs of Jack Sparrow's profession (9)
- 4 Saint Lucia rose blossoms when religious influence, power and control declines (14)
- 6 Royal Navy admits long period of history staged again (5)
- 7 The option is to arrange something in a particular way (8)
- 8 Sounds like surprise attack headed by Turkish leader at beginning of October pushed Fianna Fail into compromise (5-3)
- 9 Edward's head lost in steep valley makes persistent attack on offspring for guitarist (6,8)
- 15 Abstracted bath rehabilitates Jew (9)
- 16 Switzerland aims to reduce escalating cattle sound from area of Internet (4,4)
- 17 Shelters hide self-righteously moralistic person from posts (8)
- 19 Maelstrom causes death collapsing European Monetary System (6)
- 20 Remove the dart from the dead letter (6)
- 22 Cocktail on top of sickness bumps off head of state (5)



Letters & Emails



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UNITE AGAINST RACISM

WE in Northern Ireland have become used to evangelical hate preachers over the years. However, Pastor McConnell chose a time to rant and rave against Muslims when minorities are regularly under attack in East Belfast and other areas. He gave the green light for any racist to attack Muslims and will, of course, step back and deny that any attack had anything to do with his hate preaching. How often have we heard this before?

Pastor O'Connell used the appalling story about 26-year-old woman Meriam Ibrahim who was due to be executed for apostasy, which is converting to Christianity, to prove that Muslims are untrustworthy. This is of course shocking and nobody in their right mind would support such behaviour. However every religion has its skeletons in the cupboard. 8,000 Muslims were murdered by Christians and buried in mass graves and their women raped during the Bosnian war. Six million Jews were slaughtered in the gas chambers by a Christian country, Germany, and we have our very own Shankill butchers who murdered in the name of their Protestant religion.

The good Pastor supported the right wing racist views of Enoch Powell which led to attacks of black people in the United Kingdom in the sixties and seventies and these views were subsequently disowned by just about everybody.

This is an opportunity for the established Churches and political parties to unite against racism and hate crime. They all claim to be against attacks on minorities, therefore it should be reasonable to expect them to stand shoulder to shoulder against the ranting of Pastor O'Connell whose behaviour is no different to Muslim hate preachers like hook-handed Abu Hamza and Anjem Choudary, who represent a small proportion of Muslims.

Looking back through the long telescope of history, we ignore these views at our peril. Don't think it will just blow over, because we should all be aware of how prejudice of this nature gets out of hand and minorities are blamed for all our ills. The Football Association tackled racism head on and in a short time it was eliminated from the Premier League. We need to do the same.

**Andy Barr,
Bangor, Co Down**

CHRISTIAN FASCISTS FIND ANOTHER THREAT

I READ with interest an article in the June issue of the *Presbyterian Herald* that the recent motion in favour of same sex marriage in the Northern Ireland Assembly has again been defeated.

Why are the Christian fascists within the DUP allowed to use their veto to deny gay couples this basic right? It is time that the rights gay people have in England and Wales are extended to Northern Ireland.

And it seems that, along with atheists, gays and

members of Sinn Fein, the religious right in the province are now turning their attention to Muslims as being a threat to the chosen people, i.e. evangelical Christians. Ulster is beginning to sound like Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

**James Annett,
London**

THE MADNESS OF WAR

THIS year's war commemorations illustrate the oddness of humans still waging wars on one another. Louis-Ferdinand Céline fought in the First World War. In his semi-autobiographical novel *Voyage au bout de la Nuit* (1932) he describes the existential strangeness of what happened to the men. He thought that every Frenchman who fought in the trenches was mentally damaged and that they could no longer create a future of hope. When they returned to Paris, people cheered them but the men just found the cheering strange because these people could never know the horror they had experienced.

In Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, a set of novels exploring the history of the First World War by focusing on the aftermath of trauma, she describes a mental home in Scotland which actually existed. In this sad place, people with psychosomatic illnesses were treated so that they could go back to the front and fight again. There were people who could not see though there was nothing wrong with their sight, and people with twisted limbs though there was nothing physically wrong with them. One poor doctor had been operating at the front, without anaesthetics. A bomb landed nearby while he was standing with his palm upwards. An eye landed in his hand and he went insane. In the Scottish hospital he sees the eye day and night. He can talk about nothing else. That is what war does to the soul.

**Nicholas Emmett,
Oslo, Norway**

BLAIR LEAVES US IN THE DARK

TONY Blair argues that Islamic extremism takes root in schools, and certainly all people of goodwill, religious or not, think that schools should not be used by religious authorities as places for 'faith formation'.

Blair uses the term 'open-minded education', but how on earth can education be open-minded while the Bible, the Koran, the Torah or the Gita lurks in the background as the definitive authority underpinning that school's moral system? Just look at Northern Ireland.

I blanched when Blair described certain Muslim ideologies as being based on the view that there is only one true religion. That is what was dinned into us in Ireland for centuries. But we had a different 'one, true' faith.

I welcome the humanitarian work Blair's Faith Foundation is engaged in, but he needs to go back to the drawing board on this one.

**Paddy McEvoy,
Holywood, Co Down**

Stuart Hartill

Clinging to a Rock



All views expressed in this article are my own and should not be taken as representative of my fellow Isle of Man Freethinkers. See: <http://clingingtoarock.blogspot.co.uk>

A PUBLIC lecture organised by the Freethinkers has sparked a debate which may well lead to the Isle of Man 'going it alone' on drug reform.

On April 28th Professor David Nutt (whose tongue-in-cheek – if factual – comparison of the relative harms of Ecstasy and horse-riding led to his dismissal as Chair of the UK government's drugs advisory body) talked to a packed house at the Manx Museum lecture theatre. His topic was the need for sensible drug-law reform guided by an admission that the much touted 'War on Drugs' has failed.

In addition, and in particular, he urged the Isle of Man to break with the UK's criminalisation of cannabis use or cultivation in order to allow the island to become an international centre for research into the medicinal use of the cannabinoids. While doors officially opened at 7 PM for a 7.30 PM start, the queue outside formed much earlier, and by a quarter past the island's largest public speaking venue was full.

The Freethinkers worked with the Positive Action Group, a small but lively monthly political discussion forum, to mount the event. Both groups have long wanted to mount lectures on edgy topics by such a prominent speaker, but thought the cost well beyond us. In fact, the professor generously waived any fee so only his flight and accommodation needed funding. In turn, this led to us deciding not to sell tickets, but to let listeners decide what (or even if) to pay by dropping money in collecting buckets on their way out.

Those who attended ranged from pensioners to parents seeking sensible advice, from old hippies to teenagers to rabid UKIP supporters. I even noticed one Catholic priest sitting with a group of concerned parishioners who run a sink estate anti-drug project.

Thus, even those with limited means were able to hear a renowned expert start a debate which, if begun



by even the most well-meaning local, would render that person unemployable. The debate continued next day with a local radio phone-in. Public interest was huge, but even we could not hope for or predict what happened next.

We are slightly stunned at our own success, and the ease with which we made a major contribution to discussion of a moral, legal and medical issue

Within a week, the Chief Minister confirmed that he will look seriously into both the prospects of such a niche pharmaceutical industry and research possibility and the possible decriminalisation of cannabis in specific circumstances which might be needed to bring that about (e.g. cultivation for medical use only, such as research and possible self-medication for pain relief amongst those with MS or cancer).

The Chief Minister's announcement was supported and applauded by, amongst others, the island's chief advisor on Public Health and the psychiatrist for the Drug and Alcohol Team. The latter spoke movingly about the moral dilemmas faced by some of her clients, for example terminally ill people

who did not want to break the law or see relatives arrested but for whom conventional painkillers no longer work.

We are slightly stunned at our own success, and the ease with which we made a major contribution to discussion of a moral, legal and medical issue without one religious 'authority' either offering comment to (or being asked to comment by) the media.

Interestingly, just a couple of weeks later a liberal clergyman (and close friend) asked if I would discreetly broker talks with PAG which could lead to such speakers on other social issues. Through historical privilege, the clergyman enjoys close working relationships with government departments we Freethinkers can only dream of. But he candidly admits he cannot be seen to front such debates if he wants his long church career to last until retirement. It is an intriguing request, and one which, being made by a decent man and good friend, I intend to follow up.

Perhaps, in boldly making the choice to discuss topics no one else dares raise, the Freethinkers have discovered a role the Church cannot assume. It may be that we can take the lead in bringing about social change that at least more responsible and fair-minded church leaders also want to see, and in doing so can make allies of them for the future. □





Prospero's Media Diary



'Toxic Idiocy' of Shakespeare Heretics

FINTAN O'Toole has written on Shakespeare and probably considers himself a bit of an authority on the bard. He is one of those so-called 'scholars' who cannot leave the authorship question alone, if only to poke fun at the heretics. Thus he arrogantly asserts in the *Irish Times* (26th April) that questioning the authorship shows an alarming contempt for real scholarship and actual evidence. Indeed, he writes: "it is an apparently harmless form of idiocy that is actually quite toxic. No serious scholar doubts Shakespeare's authorship". He lumps heretics with those who believe that the moon landings were faked and refers to the 'nuttness' of the 'crank' theories.

Yet before he contemptuously labels the doubters as cranks displaying 'nuttness' and 'toxic idiocy', he should examine his own failings in this regard. For example, he repeats the common error that nobody doubted Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare before James Wilmot in the 1780s. I wonder if he has checked this claim for himself rather than simply parroted the mistaken opinions of other orthodox scholars. The truth is that several contemporaries questioned the authorship. In his 1597 satire *Virgidemiae*, Joseph Hall suggests that a concealed cynic whom he calls 'Labeo' wrote two Shakespeare plays and the two long poems.

In *The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image* (1598) John Marston agrees but also calls the author 'Canaidos' and 'Mutius' (a character in *Titus Andronicus*; also meaning 'the silent one'), and a man whose motto was 'mediocria firma' (the family motto of Francis Bacon). Indeed, H.N. Gibson, an orthodox scholar, in *The Shakespeare Claimants* states that the first Baconian in print was John Marston in this 1598 work.

In the anonymous play *The Return from Parnassus*, performed by students at Cambridge in 1598-1601, we are told that Shakespeare made himself rich by "mouthing words that better wits have framed". In the anonymous 1605 pamphlet *Ratseyes Ghost* the writer suggests that Shakespeare, who had bought 'some place or lordship in the country', was not the real author of *Hamlet*. And, strangest of all, in a letter to Francis Bacon, Sir Tobie Matthew attributes *Henry IV Pt1* to "that excellent author Sir John Falstaff".

Or take the famous first apparent reference to 'Shakespeare' as an "upstart crow, beautified with our feathers", in the *Groatsworth of Wit*, attributed to Robert Greene and published in 1592. Arguably, this pamphlet spills the beans at the very beginning, but orthodox scholars cannot allow this interpretation of the words, which fits the con-

text, and instead claim that he is merely complaining about Shakespeare's plagiarism, which doesn't make sense since they all – Greene included – stole voluminously from other authors.

The feathers metaphor turns up elsewhere. Thomas Nashe writes in the preface to Greene's *Menaphon* that "sundry other sweet gentlemen have vaunted their pens in private devices and tricked up a company of taffeta fools with their feathers". And Greene himself writes (*A Farewell to Folly*, 1591): "Others... if they come to write or publish anything in print...which for their calling and gravity being loth to have any profane pamphlets pass under their names, get some other Battillus to set his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokery, and he that cannot write true English without the aid of clerks of parish churches, will make himself the father of interludes" (Batillus put his name to the works of Virgil, and interludes were plays).

Perhaps, with his wealth of scholarship on the subject, Fintan can enlighten us on who these gentlemen of the time who used allonyms were, and why 'Shakespeare' was definitely not one of them. One thing is certain: personal abuse of your opponent is demeaning and no substitute for "real scholarship and actual evidence".

These contemporary doubters knew what they were talking about, unlike Fintan O'Toole and the other priestly purveyors of the Shakespeare myth. Although we may not be able to pluck out the heart of the mystery of genius, we can at least hold a mirror, however clouded, up to its nature. Francis Bacon had the time, inclination and qualifications necessary to write Shakespeare, and there is sufficient evidence to suppose that he did in fact do so.

From the evidence we have of William, his authorship is highly improbable. Fintan should take a closer look at his documentary records, which are not those of a literary genius but of a man with business acumen and a mediocre intellect. His mind and that of the real author are simply light years apart, and genius was never that miraculous nor mysterious. Even at a superficial glance, Bacon's mind is seen to 'resemble' that of Shakespeare, as numerous orthodox critics will freely admit.

Oxford, Marlowe, Derby and the other claimants are all red herrings. A close study reveals the strongest argument of all that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, namely that only he qualifies. We are indeed dealing with one and the same mind—a mind that bestrides the intellectual and imaginative worlds like a colossus; a man so rare as, perhaps, the world has not seen since it was a world. In short, we are glimpsing the veritable god of literature.

Prospero



Max Beerbohm cartoon

Books

Brian McClinton



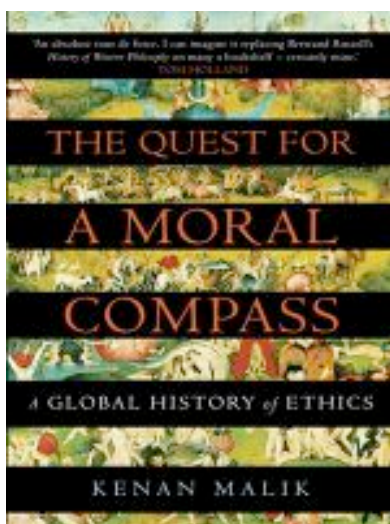
Ethical Holy Grail

The Quest for a Moral Compass • Kenan Malik • Atlantic Books • 2014

BOOKS written in English on the history of morality tend to concentrate on western thought and offer rather abstract, not to say heavy, discussions of the key figures. Kenan Malik's excellent new work is different. First, it is a truly global history which also encompasses Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese and Islamic writings. Secondly, it is a highly lucid and immensely readable survey in which Malik wears his learning lightly. The reader will readily gain a greater knowledge of the search for the elusive ethical holy grail and a greater insight into the complexities of human behaviour. It is quite simply one of the three best recent books on intellectual history, the others being Steven Pinker's *The Better Angels of our Nature* (2011) and Anthony Pagden's *The Enlightenment and Why It Still Matters* (2013).

Malik begins with the ancient Greeks, including Homer, Aeschylus, the Presocratics, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. He has much to say about the Stoics, including the second-century philosopher Hierocles, whose *Elements of Ethics* refers to the concept of concentric circles. Each individual stands at the centre of the first circle. Next comes the immediate family, followed by the extended family, the local community, the country, and finally the entire human race. To be virtuous, Hierocles suggested, is to draw these circles together, constantly to transfer people from the outer circles to the inner circles, to treat strangers as cousins and cousins as brothers and sisters, making all human beings part of our concern. Epictetus indeed thought that everyone should 'call himself a citizen of the world'.

This process, known by the Greeks as *oikeiosis*, is alive today, though we might add the animal kingdom and even the earth itself as further outer circles. The notion provides the title of Peter Singer's book *The Expanding Circle*. In his *History of European Morals* (1869), Lecky regarded it as the key element of humankind's moral progress from primitive times.



A key feature of Malik's approach is indeed to demonstrate that while different cultures and eras have had some different notions of morality, there are also many common themes. This is apparent in his detailed treatment of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, as well as Christianity. Thus the Golden Rule was formulated by Kongzi, better known in the West as Confucius, 500 years before Jesus as: "Do not inflict on others what you yourself would not wish done to you". It surely remains as a fundamental principle of morality in the modern era.

Malik returns constantly to the question of the basis of morality. Obviously, the monotheistic religions argued that it is God's law. Nor was there any point in asking, as Socrates did, whether God's law is good. "Morality was indeed arbitrary. That was the whole point of it" (p171). Yet most secular philosophers have not been satisfied with this (non) answer. Malik gives excellent outlines of the ethical philosophies of Hume (morality is based on emotion and our benevolent nature), Kant (morality is based on reason and duty) and Hutcheson-Bentham-Mill (morality is based on consequence and the greatest happiness of the greatest number).

Entering the modern era in a chapter entitled 'The Unravelling of

Morality', he discusses what many regard as the current moral crisis, which he says was heralded by the Cambridge philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe in a 1958 paper and developed further by writers such as Alasdair MacIntyre in his 1981 book *After Virtue*. For MacIntyre the Enlightenment was the main culprit because it denied any external purpose in life and substituted the sovereignty of the individual for objective values. Yet of course this is a religious critique, reinforced by the fact that both Anscombe and MacIntyre converted to Catholicism.

Though Malik is highly critical of their argument, he also questions attempts by so-called New Atheists such as Sam Harris (in *The Moral Landscape*, 2010) to root morality in science. "The irony is that the classic argument against looking to God as the source of moral values – the Euthyphro dilemma – is equally applicable to the claim that science is, or should be, the arbiter of good and evil" (p317). If wellbeing is defined simply by the existence of certain neural states, or particular hormones or whatever, then the notion of wellbeing is arbitrary.

Malik ends by quoting *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946), written by Viktor Frankel, who had spent three years in concentration camps, including six months in Auschwitz. Humans, he suggests, find themselves only through meaning in the world, and that meaning exists in our relationship with others. What can possibly be more Humanist than that?

Perhaps the best recommendation for Malik's terrific survey is that it was rubbished by John Gray in the *New Statesman* (6th-12th June). He believes that progress for the human animal, with its 'perpetually warring moralities', is an illusion. But Gray, the magazine's lead reviewer, is an anti-humanist, reactionary pessimist, which makes it particularly strange that such fatalistic thinking should constantly besmirch the pages of a left-liberal weekly journal of hope. □

Books

Bert Rima



It's All in the Mind

Hallucinations • Oliver Sacks • Picador • 2012

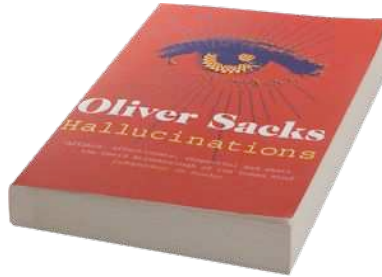
HALLUCINATIONS by Oliver Sacks is one of those rare books that give an insight into the human mind and tricks that can be played on it. Sacks is without doubt my favourite neurologist. For those who are not familiar, he is a culturally Jewish but non-religious psychiatrist who has written numerous books about what his patients tell him. He relays their stories vividly and concisely but always expresses strongly the human impact of their experiences. *The Independent on Sunday* calls him the David Attenborough of the human mind.

His books are without exception interesting. The first I read, *Awakenings*, dealt with the wonderful effects of the Parkinson's drug L-DOPA in the late 1960s on a group of patients who had been in an almost frozen Parkinson-like state since they contracted shortly after the First World War a disease called encephalitis lethargica. Essentially, L-DOPA woke them out of this state and restored a near normal life to them. Sacks has written numerous other books on other patient groups such as *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat*, dealing with various brain injuries, and *The Island Of The Colorblind* dealing with the normal senses. All are well worth reading because of the interest and humanity with which Sacks describes his patients and their experiences.

Hallucinations are generally defined "as seeing things or hearing things that are not there". Sacks prefers the definition formulated by William James in 1890: "A hallucination is a strictly sensational [not in the current sense of the word but meaning of 'to do with sensation'] form of consciousness, as good and true a sensation as if there were real objects there. The object does not happen to be there, that is all". They differ from dreams because dreamers are almost always active participants whilst with hallucinations this is often not the case.

In this book, Sacks autobiographically describes his experimentation with mind-altering drugs and in one of these altered states he describes how it encouraged him to become what he now is, a writer who carefully, systematically but with social sensitivity and humanity describes the problems of his patients. His first book was on Migraine and he treats the subject with great humanity and understanding as he himself is a "migraneur" (I too am a migraneur and occasionally have the visual disturbance of the expanding arc of flashing horizontal and vertical stripes but unfortunately they do not provide any somewhat more interesting 'visionary' experiences for me).

Why is this book important for humanists to read? Hallucination may explain phenomena such as religious visions and life-changing experiences. Sacks describes a great number of different types of hallucinations that occur commonly in patients with specific deficits in their vision, auditory or olfactory (smell) systems from the simple migraines and the visual disturbance that most patients get to the life-altering visions of some associated



with more severely altered states of mind. To own up to having hallucinations has always been difficult for people (and I hesitate to call some of them 'patients') as they are usually associated with disease and madness, but the book demonstrates how common they are, especially in those who lack one of the normal senses, such as the blind or deaf.

Sacks quotes William James who, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, refers to the ways in which the mind can reach a state of reconciliation in altered states of consciousness. Sacks shows that these states of inner peace can be achieved through meditation, prayer, fasting, dancing or extreme physical exercise but that there is a short cut through drugs. Most cultures have found a drug to take the short route to altered consciousness, though this is not always the route to inner peace.

In the final and possibly most important chapters he describes how common it is for amputees to have phantom limbs which plague them often for considerable periods of time with pain and undesirable sensations. Until recently it was not appreciated how common this is. The ultimate occurs in quadriplegic patients who often feel that they have a phantom body and in some extreme cases that the parts which aren't any longer sensed belong to another person. This feeling of the doppelgänger indicates damage to the parietal lobe part of the brain and this itself may bring on the sensation of the presence of another. The damage may be caused by strokes or other brain injury that does not manifest itself in another way.

Sacks' main proposition is that hallucinations have influenced all cultures and in extreme forms can provide explanations for religious experiences such as hearing or seeing god as well as seeing a ghost. Sam Harris in *This Will Make You Smarter* (edited by John Brockman, Edge.org, 2012) points to the universality of these phenomena in all religions, thus refuting "the sectarian claim of any one religion and, given that contemplatives generally present their experiences of self-transcendence as inseparable from their associated theology, mythology and metaphysics, it is no surprise that scientists and non-believers tend to view their reports as products of disordered minds, or as exaggerated accounts of far more normal mental states like scientific awe, aesthetic enjoyment artistic inspiration and so on".

We have learned a lot about how common hallucinations are, and brain imaging studies over the last few decades have taught us that they are associated with brain activity in the same parts of the brain as those involved in normal conscious vision or hearing, for example. A single hallucination may have a life-long and life-altering effect on those who experience them, but what Sacks explains is that they are all in the brain and not manifestations of god(s), although they are experienced as religious or mythological events or even sometimes as alien abductions. □



Film

Andy Barr

Jimmy's Hall

Director Ken Loach



KEN Loach (above), the 77-year-old legendary director of such classics as *Poor Cow*, *Kes* and *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, has done it again. His film *Jimmy's Hall* is a moving and inspirational portrait of Irish communist and activist Jimmy Gralton. It was selected for competition at the 2014 Cannes film festival.

Jimmy (right) was born in County Leitrim in 1886 and, after doing a series of jobs in the mines and docks, he joined the British Army as a young man, but deserted after refusing to serve in India and settled in New York in 1909. Following the 1916 Easter rising and after reading the writings of James Connolly, he established the James Connolly Club in New York.

He returned briefly to Ireland in 1922 and, after the Parish hall in his home town was burnt down by the British Army, he organised the building of a new hall and named it the Pearse-Connolly Hall. It was then taken over by the Free State Army and closed down.

During the civil war he returned to New York, but again returned to Ireland in 1932 to work on his mother's small holding. He was persuaded by the local people to reopen the hall, and that is the storyline of *Jimmy's Hall*.

Working with Paul Laverty, his regular screenwriter, Loach has adapted a play called *Jimmy Gralton's Dancehall* by Donal O'Kelly, who has a small role in the film as a Roscommon IRA activist involved in resisting evictions. Loach has that great ability to combine anger at injustice with eloquence and common sense and he shows how the Catholic Church and local landowners made Jimmy Gralton, played by Barry Ward, public enemy number 1.

Jimmy's crime was to build a hall which served the local people. Community dances, boxing lessons, poetry appreciation classes, singing lessons and debates on worker's rights were held there. To the authorities this was dangerous stuff. Loach had previously tackled the Irish independence struggle in *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*; now he takes on clerical power in the Irish Free State. As the *Guardian* puts it, for the Church, the hall and the man who built it represent something dangerous and subversive – the fact that the people were beginning to think and act for themselves.

Jimmy then becomes involved in the struggle against landowners evicting their tenants. One of the highlights of the film occurs when he stands aloft on a hay cart loaded with the furniture of a tenant farmer who has been evicted by a ruthless landlord. He delivers a rousing address to the assembled hordes, drawing on his own experiences in America, witnessing the vast chasm between rich and poor in the run-up to the aftermath of the great depression. "I saw the wild speculation and greed...I saw the bubble burst". It is a speech that is rather pertinent in the current economic climate.

Of course the whole thing ends in tragedy and Jimmy Gralton remains the only Irishman to be deported from his native land, deemed to be 'an undesirable alien'. Back in New York, Gralton became a trade union organiser and member of the Irish workers club. He reprinted James Connolly's pamphlets, raised funds for the International Brigades in Spain and for the remainder of his life was an active member of the Communist Party of the USA. He

died in New York in 1945.

Ken Loach will have you cheering and clapping at the finish. □



Nicolas Johnson

Humanist Chaplain at the National Famine Commemoration

JOE Armstrong, Humanist Chaplain and Celebrant, represented the HAI at the National Famine Memorial Day Commemoration in Strokestown, County Roscommon, on 11th May 2014.

This event was attended by the Minister for Arts and Chair of the National Famine Commemoration Committee as well as other politicians, several members of the clergy and An Taoiseach Enda Kenny.

A musical interlude followed the readings and prayers were offered by the clergy. The program then called for 'Reflection by Mr. Joe Armstrong of the Humanist Association of Ireland.'

Joe read a poem entitled 'Famine' which he wrote specifically for this event. As soon as Joe had completed reading his poem, Enda Kenny made his address.

Below is Joe's poem and, opposite, a photo of him and his wife Ruth embraced by Enda Kenny. Joe was complimented for his poem by several members of the clergy as well as by Enda Kenny himself.



Famine

By Joe Armstrong

*Famine. Famine. Can I imagine it?
Famine. Either a feast or a famine.
Feasts I know. But famine?
Work drying up, the closest I know. Money tight. Or doing a fast, perhaps.
But famine. Famine!
Hunger. I've been peckish for a meal. But everyday persistent aching hunger?
Hunger. Countrywide hunger. A nation on its knees.
Beggared. The shame of hunger. Unasked for. Not chosen.
Crops fail. Shock. Fear. Courage! We are strong.
Crops fail again. And again.
Soup kitchens. Food parcels. No money for rent.
Disaster.
Bodies shrink. Tall emaciated figures on Custom House Quay in Dublin: our ancestors.
Children dead. Relatives dead. Neighbours dead.
The boat to England, America, anywhere away from this godforsaken land of hunger and famine.
Famine.*





Humanism and Sexuality

All-Ireland Humanist Summer School

Carlingford Heritage Centre,
Carlingford, Co Louth (picture below)

29th August - 31st August 2014

Jointly hosted by
Humanist Association of Ireland
Humanist Association of Northern Ireland

SPEAKERS

DIANA BROWN

Co-founder of World Population Forum

ROY BROWN

IHEU Representative at the UN

TOM INGLIS

Author of *Moral Monopoly* and
Lessons in Irish Sexuality

PETER TATCHELL

Political campaigner and gay rights activist



PROGRAMME

FRIDAY

20.00 Informal Gathering: Carlingford Arms

SATURDAY

09.15 Registration

10.00 Welcome from the Chair: **TERRY MOSELEY**

10.10 *Religion, Humanism and Morality*: **ROY BROWN**

10.30 *Love and Sex*: **TOM INGLIS**

11.15 Q and A

11.30 Tea and Coffee; sale of books, CDs, DVDs

12.00 *Gay Marriage as a Human Right*: **PETER TATCHELL**

12.45 Q and A

13.00 Lunch in the village

14.30 *Workshop: Devising a Humanist Ethic in Sex Education*

19.30 Dinner: Four Seasons Hotel (paid in advance)

SUNDAY

10.00 *Who Owns Women?* **DIANA BROWN**

10.45 Q and A

11.00 Tea and coffee

11.30 Panel Discussion on *Humanism and Sexuality*

01.00 Formal Close

14.00 Talk by Alison Henderson and Wills McNeilly,
followed by walk up Slieve Foye

Send your application form/cheques payable to
relevant group below:

HUMANIST ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

Kilda Taylor, 34B Royal Terrace West,
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
Tel: 0860887744

info@humanism.ie www.humanism.ie

HUMANIST ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Brian McClinton, 25 Riverside Drive,
Lisburn, BT27 4HE

Tel: 028 92677264 brianmcclinton@btinternet.com
www.humanistni.org

APPLICATION FORM

NAME/S: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TEL: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please tick appropriate box	Cost per person	
<i>I/we wish to attend on Saturday</i>	€30/£24	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>I/we wish to attend on Sunday</i>	€15/£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>I/we wish to attend on both days</i>	€45/£36	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Concession rate for unwaged: half above rates</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Dinner on Saturday</i>	€30/£25	<input type="checkbox"/>