

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK 3
United Nations Environment Programme. ISBN 1-85383-845-4
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This large book and accompanying CD ROM is a compendium of facts, graphs, satellite pictures highlighting the environment and the problems we face. It gives an overview of the present, and projections for the next 30 years. The book is written from a UN / NGO point of view, and so we might disagree with its ideology. In its factual approach and clear presentation, however, the book has a great deal to offer.

There are many aspects to the ecology problem; pollution, poverty, multinationals, governments - this book covers them all in detail, but this review will concentrate on just one - climate change. Global warming is speeding up, with predicted temperature rises ranging between 1.4 C and 5.8 C over the 21st century.

Facts pile up

Back in the 1970s, we had acid rain. Stories about ozone depletion were dismissed as scare stuff faked up by the 'Moral Majority', because they opposed aerosols. Now we all know about global warming and few people doubt it. The Greenhouse Effect began to be studied from the 70s onwards, and now fact piles up on fact, weather record on top of record. Deforestation and desertification run unchecked. Remedial action is all but non-existent. By December 2001, 84 countries had signed up to the Kyoto Protocol, but not the USA. America has 5% of the population but produces 26% of the CO2 (1998).

Concentrations

Extreme weather, cyclones, rising sea levels, floods and droughts, forest fires, all offer evidence of global warming. Climate change affects plants, animals and habitats, for example, the bleaching of the coral reefs when sea temperatures rise. A graph taken from recordings made at Hawaii between 1959 - 2000 shows atmospheric CO2 concentrations rising from 320 - 370 ppm. This is a rise of 30% since 1750. The 1990s were the warmest decade on record. Species are becoming extinct, but people consume and burn fossil fuels regardless.

Extremes

The 1997 - 98 El Nino event is frequently referred to, and many statistics about this are given. It cost the US \$1B per week. Africa produces less

that 3.5% of global emissions, but it suffered terribly. There were droughts in 1973-74, 1984-85, 1987, 1992-94, 1999-2000, and the continent bears many of the consequences of global warming. Cars and industrialization bring respiratory diseases in cities like Lagos. Floods caused by El Nino result in water supply contamination, which in turn starts cholera outbreaks, the displacement of populations. Extreme weather hits the poorest people hardest, for example the frequent floods in densely populated Bangladesh. Europe itself is not immune; Hurricane Lothar in December 1999 causing \$10.6B damage. Forest fires along the Mediterranean, all add to the situation. We have hardly begun to count the real costs of global warming.

Global warming is speeding up, with predicted temperature rises ranging between 1.4 C and 5.8 C over the 21st century.

Evidence

Vehicle related pollution is part of it. Power stations burning coal, smelters, refineries, smokestack industries, air conditioning equipment, airliners, the burning of the tropical forests all contribute. We see evidence of warming in the calving of large glaciers in Antarctica. The most serious floods in decades have come to Central Europe. The 7 metre flood defence level on the River Rhine was reached once every 20 years between 1900 - 1977. From 1977 onwards it has been reached every other year. El Nino as yet remains the most powerful of all the global warming events, knocking 12% off the GDP of Peru, bringing cholera, gastro-enteritis, 60% crop losses, thousands of deaths, millions of pounds worth of damage. The Pink House Keeps on Sliding.

Overwhelmed

The book divides the world up into colour coded regions - Europe, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia Pacific, North America, West Asia, the Polar Regions. This helps keep the problems in slightly more manageable portions, but there is still this sense we are being overwhelmed. A graph in the North American section [p 231] shows, not just that the temperatures are rising, but also that the extreme peaks and troughs of hot and cold diverge wildly

from the centre of the trend. The climate is less stable.

Disasters

A section deals with disasters, which have increased threefold, while costs rose ninefold, since the 1960s. Some are natural. Some are caused by human activity - Seveso, Bhopal, Sandoz, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Exxon Valdez, the Baia Mare River Danube cyanide spill in Romania. The spectacular, headline grabbing events - hurricanes, mudslides, earthquakes, tend to mask long running problems like over-intensive fishing, deforestation, the burning of the tropical rain forests, and desertification. Perhaps the world's worst single ecological man made catastrophe has been the drying up of the Aral Sea; startlingly illustrated in satellite illustrations reproduced on page 296.

Prognosis

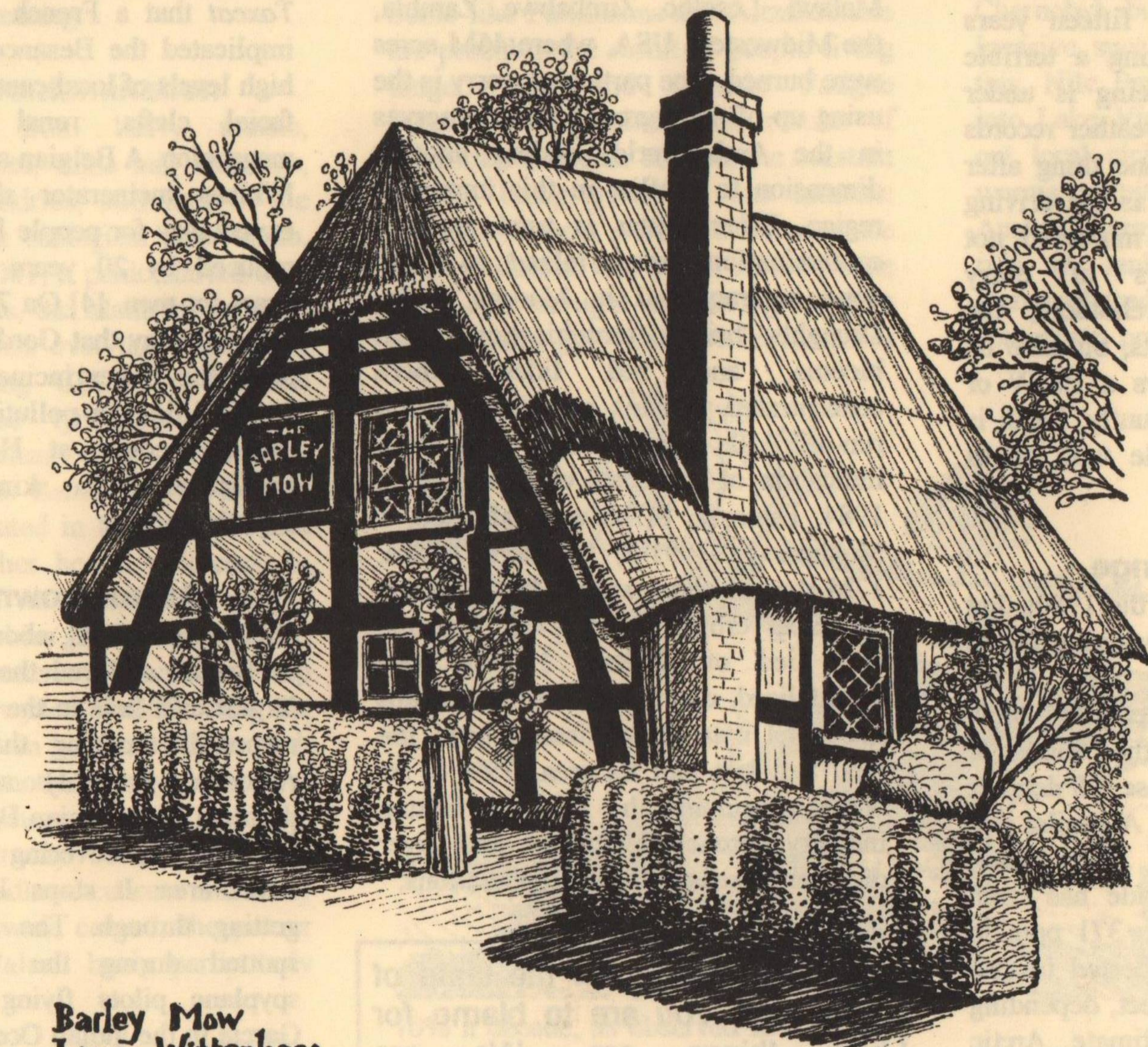
The book sets out the future for the human race, under four sets of assumptions: Markets First, Policy First, Security First, and Sustainability First. 'Markets First' is basically the Global Thatcherism, Neo-Con agenda we all despise. Burning off more and more fossil fuel pollutes the atmosphere, climate change speeds up. Poverty and inequality grows, progress slows. 'Policy First' is an NGO type agenda, everything is regulated by the UN and NGO type bodies. Even the IMF and WTO become benign. Concerted action through civic society slows the rate at which things get worse. With 'Security First' we get the George W Bush, racist, military-industrial complex agenda; multinationals, Enron style corruption, Mafia, private police forces, ID cards, totalitarian, authoritarian states, gated communities, unregulated, sanitation-free mega cities, pollution, xenophobia, wars, gmos, toxic waste dumps. With 'Sustainability First', a new sustainability paradigm takes hold everywhere, moving away from consumerism, towards simplicity, co-operation and community. The internet, more access to the facts, and better analyses enable timely action. Obviously, it is in these four scenarios that the ideological assumptions of the authors are most laid bare. In my opinion the scenarios are the weakest part of the book, but even so throughout, the presentation and the sheer quantity of facts marshalled make this book well worthwhile and a compulsive read. Unputdownable.

GREEN ANARCHIST

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Unpopular truths and uncomfortable facts



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Long Wittenham

There are many unpopular truths and uncomfortable facts. In this issue, I make no apology for concentrating on the seriousness of the situation humanity as a whole is in, and we ourselves as individuals face. Global warming threatens us. In just a few short years, oil, a commodity which most of the global economy depends upon, will run out. The effects of this will be catastrophic. The 'War on Terror' is in reality a war against Islam, an imperialistic US Crusade, but has also been used as a cloak for the wholesale abolition of freedoms. ID cards, biometrics and other unacceptable intrusions will soon follow. The state aims to annihilate us, its world has become a global Auschwitz. Multinational corporations harden their grip, global debt and exploitation are endemic. Racism against asylum seekers brings disasters like the 5th February 2004 drowning of

the cockle pickers in Morecambe Bay. Gambling, drugs, tabloids, soaps, the media, Europe, the social collapse all destroy individuals. The total effect of this is to deny the individual meaning. The problems are endemic, structural, systematic. They have an ethical and an aesthetic aspect, but are more than this.

Global warming is a reality and our lives continue to be shaken by droughts and heatwaves, floods, forest fires and broken weather records. In January 1998, satellite pictures showed 22,393 square miles of Brazil rainforest were destroyed. George W Bush refuses to ratify the Kyoto treaty. Yalding in Kent, at the confluence of the Rivers Beult, Teise and Medway, suffered 7 floods in 4 months (February 2001). In March 2001, the wettest year on record was reported at 51.14 inches rainfall. Bird migration patterns have altered (*Nature*, March 2002) A 26 Billion car miles

increase since 1997 was reported on 9th July 2003. The increase in UK airliner flights has wiped out all other cuts under Kyoto. In August 2003, 10,000 people were evacuated from forest fires in Western Canada. The August 2003 heatwave broke the English temperature record 37.9 C at Gravesend, while 15,200 people died in France. The south west reported the driest August and September since 1873. 2003 averaged 10.49 C, one of the hottest on record. Serious storms have doubled in the last 50 years. Again in early 2004 there were floods, 70 river flood alerts by 3rd February, the River Dee flooding in Cheshire, Llanwrst in North Wales, when 2 months rain fell in 5 days. Tropical rain forests are 20% smaller than previously thought. On 9th March, Sir David King, the government scientific adviser was gagged when he said "climate change is more of a threat than terrorism."

Green Anarchist magazine has now been going for 20 years. During this time we have seen a considerable deterioration in the environment, and the condition of our political and social lives. It would be wrong to celebrate the anniversary because so much of the history of the magazine has been a catalogue of bad decisions and failure. In this, it is not untypical of the radical milieu as a whole. One false belief lying behind much radical history is that the end justifies the means. Rather, the means we use sanctify or sully the end sought. The way we treat others is the way they will treat us.

Our dying planet

When you study the environment, it is difficult to be optimistic. Political and economic forces are out of control, society lacks the collective will to reign them in. The problems feed off each other and multiply. Crises are ahead, particularly with the threat of the Great Oil Crunch, in perhaps fifteen years time. The planet is taking a terrible knock, our own well being is under attack. Each year, new weather records are being broken. It is one thing after another, with capitalism as the driving force. The planet is being murdered, not just by the directors of every multi-national, the shareholders, the politicians and bureaucrats, but also by every customer who buys a BMW or goes into McDonalds. Bluntly, Earth is dying because the people with credit cards choose to kill it.

Climate Change

It was towards the end of the 1980s that the possibility of global warming began to be taken seriously. The Great Hurricane of 16th October 1987 blew down many trees in the south of England. Temperatures rose 0.6 degrees in the Twentieth Century. A similar rise is expected in the next 30-40 years. Atmospheric carbon dioxide has risen from 279 ppm in 1663 to 371 ppm in 2001. [1] The sea is expected to rise between 4 inches and 3 feet, depending on who makes the guesstimate. Arctic pack ice was 113 inches thick in 1960, down to 70 inches in the 1990s. To illustrate polar ice melting, the Guardian published two disturbing pictures. The first showed the Bloomstrandbreen Glacier, at Svarilbard, taken in 1918. Two craggy peaks jut out above a huge wall of ice. The second, taken in 2002 by Greenpeace, shows a muddy, melted little glacier, and a lot more mountain. The glacier shrunk 36 yards a year in the 1960s, since then the pace of melting has accelerated. [2] Switzerland ski resorts are melting, \$1.6B losses in tourism are expected.

Global Warming

In 1998, a UN resolution recognised concern about Global Warming. By the 1990s, scientists took it more seriously. The Rio and Kyoto conferences were held. 1998, with El Nino, was the hottest year of the Millennium. 2002 was the second warmest in 350 years of

weather recording. This cashes out in droughts and floods, more extreme storms, damage to buildings, infrastructure, power cuts, injuries, deaths. On 6th December 2002, Australia reported the worst bush fires for 30 years. 430 people died in the India heatwave [3] Droughts afflicted Malawi, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Zambia, the Midwestern USA, where 46M acres were burned. One particular worry is the using up of underground water reserves in the Arab world, adding another dimension to conflict in this important region. When water is used up, salt contamination spreads inland, as it has done in Iraq, and in Madras, India. Droughts bring eutrophication, algal blooms, and 'red tides' where concentrated waste and agricultural run-off kills marine life. As some indication of the costs of droughts: In 1984, Ethiopia, 8.7M were affected, 1 M died. In 1991-2, Southern Africa, 17M starved, there was a 54% reduction in cereal crops. In 1997-98, Uganda, 500 died of cholera, 11,000 were hospitalised, due to El Nino. In perhaps the worst man made disaster ever, the Aral Sea lost half its area, 75% of its volume, bringing the ruin the fishing industry, bronchial, kidney and liver diseases increased in local populations.

I am responsible for the state of the world. You are to blame for how things are. We are collectively responsible for the conditions that prevail.

Floods

The other side of water shortages is flooding. Instead of no water at all, you get many weeks or month's rainfall, all at once. In Venezuela, December 1999, mudslides as a result of deforestation took buildings down slopes, destroying homes. The Mozambique flood, where people sought refuge in trees, or on roofs of houses, is another. We can perhaps remember the Seine floods of December 2002, Prague, or floods in Bewdley, the Vale of Evesham, River Medway at Yalding, Uckfield, the River Flit near Bedford, floods in South Wales, and many other places, all within recent years. 2003 began with 136 English rivers on flood alert.

Air Pollution

Sulphur Dioxide from coal burning in power stations causes acid rain, killing forests. Of particular concern in recent years have been the Europe-imposed Dioxin spewing incinerators, which burn industrial, hospital, domestic waste, and sewage. We learn from *Toxcat* that a French study by CNIID implicated the Besancon incinerator in high levels of local cancer, birth defects, facial clefts, renal dysplasia and megacolon. A Belgian study of their Sint Niklaas incinerator showed that life expectancy for people living in the area reduced by 20 years for women, 17 years for men. [4] On 7th January 2002, the same day that Gordon Brown's baby died, the Byker incinerator received a 'piffing' fine for polluting. A study into the incinerator at Hamilton Canada implicated it in skin problems and hypothyroidism.

Asian Brown Cloud

On Sept 6th 2000, about the same time as Britain suffered the fuel strike, the largest ever hole in the Ozone layer was recorded, touching the tip of South America. Probably as much of a problem is the Asian Brown Cloud, 1.8 miles thick, covering a 10M square miles area. It stops 15% of sunlight getting through. The cloud was first spotted during the 1980s, by US spyplane pilots flying out of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. The cloud is a dense soup of vehicle exhaust, emissions, factory pollution, deliberately started tropical rain forest fires, and cooking stove fumes. The cloud is thought to be responsible for droughts and serious tropical storms. Cambodia, for example, suffered its worst crop for 20 years when the rains failed. Floods in Bangladesh, drought in Australia, the smog in Malaysia, are all part of this. [5] We should bear in mind that in 1999, the Asia Pacific Region consumed 19,920K B/day of oil, or 26.9% of world oil production. [6]

Water Pollution

The Romanian Australian owned gold mine cyanide spill in the River Danube, 30th January 2000 is a fairly typical pollution example, business as usual at the start of the new millennium. Untreated sewage, nitrates from agricultural run off, mercury in the River Yare near Norwich [7] are others.

The Soviet Navy dumped nuclear reactors in the Arctic Ocean, the Irish government sued UKplc for allowing arsenic from dumped WW2 chemical weapons to get into Irish Sea plaice. [8] Coral has been damaged by pollution, rising sea temperatures. Land based water supplies can be contaminated with agricultural nitrates or cryptosporidium. North Sea mackerel have been contaminated with discharges from oil rigs. In the third world, water borne diseases like malaria, dysentery and typhoid are increasing.

Land Contamination

Old residues from heavy metals, chemical factories, mine tail workings, gas works, foundries, still lurk in the environment, an ecological time bomb. In November 2001, a panic started over fridge mountains, the Montreal Protocol placed restrictions over the disposal of ozone destroying CFCs. A previous scare concerned tyre mountains in Yorkshire. Nuclear waste disposal is another concern. Landfill sites are yet another, implicated in birth defects and cancers and other health problems. In the mid 1990s, we reported on eyeless and limbless babies [9] *Toxcat* reported on the Environment Agency cover up over the Nantgwydon landfill, after the whistle was blown by local GP Dr Dick van Steenis. Another study looked at Walsall tip, where arsenic, cyanide, mercury, antimony were dumped. Leukaemia, childhood cancers and many other diseases were caused, the poorer residents of Walsall being particularly hard hit. [10]

Food

Much of the world, especially in Africa, lives in a condition of 'chronic food insecurity'. World trade compromises basic social needs. Periodically there are chemical scares about US BST growth hormones in meat, or pesticide residues in food, salads, baby food, breast milk, being recent examples. [11] Methomyl was found in Spanish spinach, 150% over the supposed 'safety' level for adults. Aldicarb was found in chips, sold in Telford and Carlisle. With sedentary life styles and the 'McDonaldization' of diet [12] there has been an increase in obesity and diabetes, both in the west and elsewhere, particularly the Pacific. 77% of Western Samoans are obese, 65% of Nauruans grossly overweight. [13]

Plagues

Ecology is a delicate balance. Insect species keep each other in check. In

1979, adverse weather affected the ladybirds, so there were not enough ladybirds to eat the greenfly, clouds of which swarmed everywhere. GMOs threaten bees, but if they became extinct, humanity would perish in two or three years. Like insects, diseases also respond to environmental imbalances. With car pollution, changing weather patterns, chemicals in the urban environment, the industrialisation of food production, antibiotics, and other such factors, new diseases are rife. Some like Parkinsons and Alzheimers are probably the result of people living longer. ME and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and others, the results of chemicals in the air or food, the constant knocks being given to our immune systems. Asthma is often a consequence of air pollution. Our attack on the Ozone layer has brought a trebling of skin cancer rates. [14] Ultra violet increases



10% a decade, as observed in Australia and New Zealand. BSE / CJD is an incredible own goal by the food industry, feeding diseased dead animals back into its own food chain. Some, like Legionnaires and Norwalk virus are consequences of modern environments, air conditioning. MRSA and Necrotising Fasciitis breed in hospital environments. Our attack on the ecology of the planet means that new plagues like Aids, rare diseases like Ebola, Rift Valley Fever can spread, as well as traditional sicknesses like TB, Malaria, Dysentery, Typhoid. Plagues of locusts were reported across Asia and the US. [15]

Species Extinctions

Thanks to Europe, thanks to capitalism, the seas have been overfished. Alert spread when the Grand Banks fishing grounds closed in 1992, 40,000 jobs were lost. 70% of the world's fishing stocks are deemed threatened. Cutting down the rainforests has a serious impact on habitats. Drying out of

wetlands affects bird life. Freshwater, dry forests, areas affected by desertification, coral reefs, are all threatened habitats. A quarter of all mammal species and an eighth of bird species are at risk of extinction. [16] In Rwanda, mountain gorillas are under threat from poachers. On the high seas, whales are hunted by the Japanese. 58 fish species, 1 mammal, 9 bird species are reportedly extinct since 1970. One particularly disturbing area of threat is genetics. We have yet to see the GMO Chernobyl, but it is certain to happen. Invasive species are another aspect of this, Nile Perch for example, released into Lake Victoria about 1970, wiping out local cichlid fishes. New Zealand worms, termites in Cornwall, rabbits in Australia, crayfish, shell fish hitching a ride in tanker ballast water, with increased trade and movement between continents, problems look set to worsen.

Transport and the built environment

The tendency is for population densities to increase, putting more stress on the environment, and psychological stress on the people. One fifth of the world's children are said to have mental problems. [17] In the Third World, rural populations migrate to shanty towns with poor water supplies and sanitation, on the edge of cities. Urbanization spreads, with more housing estates, motorways, more high rise flats. Increased tarmac and concrete areas, plus drainage equals higher river levels and floods downstream. Cars fill up the roads, public transport creaks, councils introduce measures like congestion charging. The landfill sites build up at the edge of the conurbation, like the mountain seen at the junction of the M5 and M4 near Bristol. Little consideration is given to the ugliness of urban sprawl, it simply spreads out, dull and foul, shopping malls, fast food

outlets bring vandalism, and alienation, while street lamps give out light pollution, shutting out the stars at night.

Signposts

Standing on the edge of this landfill site, I reflect on the contributions I have made to this pile of rubbish. *You* are responsible for the state of the world. I am responsible for the state of the world. *We* are responsible for the conditions that prevail. It is no use our blaming Tony Bush or George W Blair, or abstractions like 'global capitalism', 'the state', or 'the class struggle' for the way it is, in an attempt to deflect attention away from my own personal responsibility. The abstractions may be useful as explanatory tools, but they are also dangerous because they are seductive. Everything comes back to the particular, to the individual. I have driven my car 14,000 miles this year. You have dumped 140 tons of waste into that landfill site. Together, passively, we have supported the elitist, racist society, and have not fought enough for justice and equality. Our individual actions have consequences. We are all well aware of these consequences. We know that other types of actions are possible, indeed desirable. We do not choose to act differently. Our problems build, one on top of the other. They condense, they coagulate. This is our responsibility. This is our guilt.

Individuals count

There are two aspects to this matter of responsibility. The first belongs to the individual. I choose to look the other way. The second is collective. We conspire to create a climate or culture where 'looking the other way' is condoned. These two feed into each other in a circle, but by far the most important part of it, and the key to breaking the cycle is the individual. The individual chooses the life he or she leads. The individual chooses to be an accountant or a sales rep, with the commuter lifestyle, the office, the journey into town by car, chooses the materialism, the shopping mall, the brand names. The individual chooses the fast food restaurant, the cultural icons to idolise, the political parties, the bank financing that oppressive regime. This is how it is - that vast mesh of competing individual choices adds up to the whole.

Choose otherwise

The key is that the individual could choose otherwise. If nobody went to the fast food restaurant, it would not have

the money to chop down the tropical rain forest. Now, many of these choices are made passively. People drift into it. Nothing better came along. They haven't really questioned it. To the extent that these decisions are made passively, by omission, people are diminished; till in the end all we are left with is the oblivion of a kind of shell suited slug-like moronic consumption unit slouched in front of the TV set.

Apathy and sneering

Allied to the passive character of some decisions are cynicism and apathy. The individual chooses apathy, because it is a softer option than actively getting up and trying to change things. It is always easier to sneer than to construct.

Under the 'Garstang Market Test' if the people on Garstang market won't accept an idea, then it will never work.

Personality

Responsibility is not just causal, it is also moral. In a cold Utilitarian, mechanistic sense, some choices promote well being, while others lead to its annihilation. Responsibility is not neutral, because wrong choices taint and warp the personality. Lies, crime and immorality do not bring psychological wholeness. Cause and effect are included, but also warmth, friendship, honesty, the soul. Values transcend mere pragmatism. It is a matter of self definition, in just the same way as a driver must take a firm hold of the steering wheel to direct the car, or a soldier must point the gun in exactly the right direction to hit the target. Our actions and choices define who we are.

Involvement

We could choose otherwise ... In analysing the situation, I should never leave behind the fact of my own involvement. I could choose otherwise. I am responsible. I am to blame for my cynicism, apathy, my silence, ineffectiveness, the luxury of my own materialistic lifestyle. Yet there is a collective, a social aspect to the question of responsibility. Coming into the social situation afresh, the young person is surrounded by the political culture, assailed by images of lifestyle choices, constrained into certain channels by propaganda, education and economics. We are drawn in, implicated. The social structure exists prior to my involvement, it functions outside what I think or feel about it, yet even so, I have no option but to share in its problems.

Climate of Crud

This is not the whole story though. Can I value that social context? Is it not possible to think of a better? Here I think of culture, and the responsibility of writers and publishers to create a better climate of thinking. Here is a metaphor for that cultural climate: Tabloid papers and TV scours every low point of life; cancer, drug taking, thieving, domestic violence, child abuse, adultery. News programmes vomit forth a continuous splurge of politicians' lies. American films show shoot ups, serial killers torturing their victims, rape, murder, prostitution, ads for high-tech American weaponry, car chases. What kind of climate does this create?

Chicken and egg. The impressions left by culture lead to the fact of social decay. A famous recent Gerald Scarfe cartoon shows John Logie Baird being drowned in a raging torrent of excrement gushing from his own invention. This is extreme, but expresses an important truth. The TV schedules and newspaper agenda are handed over to the likes of the Enron Directors and Blairlusconi to decide what we read, how we think.

Superficial junk politics

How far have we gone along with this, or sold out? Collective political movements and campaigns suffer from similar problems of corruption. The internet has many benefits, but is not the panacea many hoped for. It saps energy and becomes an excuse for inactivity. There is a superficiality there, and the rest is viagra ads. Postmodernism leads to absolute scepticism, open corruption, the belief that beauty, truth and justice do not matter. They have created an urban landscape full of ugliness, lies, and sadistic cruelty. But we allow this. I am responsible for it. First of all, I could reject it in my own thoughts, aspirations, choices and actions. Secondly I could join with other people who feel the same way, and participate in coordinated actions directed towards changing things for the better. The individual needs to stand on a firm island of hope rising above all this corruption. We need somewhere 'outside'.

We need to be quite ruthless about this, and root out all tendencies which cause us to lapse backwards into conformity, collusion, apathy and inaction. We are responsible for the state of our world.



Choices

How much I am implicated, or how much is external to me, imposed over my wishes? We are all involved, but with knowledge comes guilt. Shall I try to change it or look the other way? Choices. We are faced with the awesomeness of this responsibility for making our decisions. The individual versus the landfill site. Which way we go legislates our world into being. Can we find impartial, accurate external advice? If we can, is it useful? Signposts tell us where each road leads, but not where we are now. And do I want to get to Haringworth?

Slime

Examining this matter of our present location and future destination, the question has both an internal and external aspect. Ultimately though, the loneliness of that decision presses in on me. We stand isolated at the cross roads. Faced with present conditions, individuals ignore the question, or take flight, evading it in materialism, irrelevance or hedonism. Society as a group refuses to take stock of its own awfulness, refuses to reform, clean up the landfill. Memorably, Sartre wrote about slime as the symbol of negativity. Slime is an indeterminate state between solid and liquid, with its threat to cling and absorb, compromising the For-itself, like a wasp stuck and drowning in jam. Slime brings connotations of displeasure, condemnation, repulsion. [18]

Wasp and Jam

Finding how the personal and the communal aspects of our condition are interconnected, not easily separated, we may feel like the wasp stuck in the jam. The state presses down on us. Capitalism presses down, peer pressure,

the coercion of social norms. I am implicated, but in what way does it cling to me, stain me? How do I find myself being sucked into it? Individual or landfill? We drive down it ourselves often enough, but as we stand and watch the vehicles race along the dark motorway, does any of this world seem to have conscience or consciousness?

Drowning in mud

Perhaps it was T S Eliot who first opened up the theme, linking modernity with wasteland, back in 1921 - 22, in the immediate aftermath of WW1. A whole generation of young men were wiped out in a war brought about by the imperialistic rivalry between Britain, Germany and France. Millions perished before the mud and Maxim guns during futile attacks. At the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) July - Oct 1917, half a million died. The land turned to swamp, men and horses drowned. A senior Army officer famously remarked 'Good God, did we really send men to fight in that?' [19]

Incidents

After the slaughter, few much believed in progress. Nineteenth Century style optimism became a dead letter. T S Eliot in his effete and withdrawn ivory tower way, rather considered the bloodiness of ordinary life as *his* wasteland. His poem is weighted down with literary allusions - Sophocles, Donne, Webster, Conrad, Frazer, Jessica Weston, James Joyce. These get in the way of the incidents - women talking just before closing time in a pub 'What shall we do tomorrow? What shall we ever do?' Or the typist, her stockings drying in the window, that mechanical, loveless, passionless assignation in her lodgings. Or Phlebas the drowned sailor bobbing in the sea, swirling in the

current. Or the locked door in the dark castle tower. 'We think of the key, each in his prison.'

Water

Water, and the lack of it are metaphors for our condition. The River Thames runs through the poem, representing time, the idea of a river linked with time a motif found in William James, but also Henri Bergson, but also of darkness, and Joseph Conrad. 'The horror! The horror!' We find ourselves in a desert, 'a dry sterile thunder without rain'. Empty cisterns betoken emotional and spiritual sterility.

I was neither living nor dead, and I knew nothing.

Looking unto the heart of light, the silence.

Desolate, I empty the sea. [20]

'Giving the Void its Colours'

That culturally and politically today we live in a wasteland seems to be a truism which barely needs stating. We begin, not as many do, with the working class; but with *ourselves*, facing this condition of existential annihilation. People feel like beetles, grubbing across some vast, impersonal dung heap. If Eliot wrote of the wasteland, Albert Camus writes of absurdity; finding it in Kierkegaard, finding it in Kafka, Lear, Hamlet, in Dostoyevski, through the character of Kirilov of 'The Possessed', in Nietzsche and the Death of God, and in Heideggerian anxiety. 'I am unhappy because I am obliged to assert my freedom.' Camus finds this absurdity in ordinary life; on street corners, in doors, trams, offices, the mechanical routine, our own image in the mirror, and in time itself.

Sisyphus

Just for a change, it's Groundhog Day again! The gods condemned Sisyphus to all day long roll a rock up a mountain, whence by night, the stone would roll back down again. Sisyphus is the absurd hero, his task futile, repetitive, soul destroying. This absurd world crushes man. 'The individual can do nothing and yet he can do everything'. [21] Perhaps he seeks refuge in art, in remaking the world. 'He must give the void its colours'.

Where we are now ?

Because of his relationship to Postmodernism, Heidegger remains a pivotal figure in this; attitudes towards mass society are often indicative. Aristotle called it the 'multitude'.

Kierkegaard famously said 'the crowd is untruth'. Nietzsche wrote disparagingly of the herd. These negative opinions come to a head (in the sense of a spot about to burst) in Heidegger. The crowd - 'Das Man' - the 'they' are understood as anonymous, indefinite, a levelling down (or up) to the least common denominator. Crucially, 'They' are inauthentic, a uniform mass travelling on the tram, or responding to advertising. Choice, responsibility, individuality, is taken away. Man is 'fallen' (*verfallen*) and 'handed over' (*Jemeinigkeit*) to his own being. Disturbingly, conscience is disparaged as the voice of the 'they' [22] It has to be said that there is some truth in such a view of the mass; this is its danger, and also its power. Such a view stands in contradistinction to the middle class leftists' idolization of the working class, but there is also grave risk of such a view leading to elitism. Kierkegaard's rejection of the herd becomes inverted, in Heidegger's identification with the Nazi state.

Against such elitism, it has to be said that the individual counts. You are of immense value. This has two related aspects; the first is about the internal environment, the atmosphere within which the individual functions, lives, breathes. The second aspect is outward and social, including culture, justice, the way individuals act together and put into effect aesthetics and ethics. The one affects the other, there is a relationship of cause and effect, of planting and reaping. People usually bring to society what they have inside their minds. People take into their thoughts what society puts there. If culture is foul; pornography and violence, their aspirations will be evil; sex crimes and murder. What of the crowd when they decide to do good though? People used to talk of the 'Dunkirk Spirit'. One recent example is motorists giving pedestrians lifts during the September 2000 petrol crisis. One thinks of the people supporting 'Live Aid' or other big charity events like Red Nose Day. What of the firemen and rescue workers clearing away the rubble after an earthquake?

Present conditions

Even so, we find evidence about that internal environment by looking at the way people treat themselves: Smoking themselves into lung cancer, drinking alcohol to excess, eating themselves into obesity. [23] Obesity now affects 40% of Europe, doubling in a decade. 15% -

20% of men, 17% of women in the UK suffer it, as against 6% men in 1980. [24] Higher figures, 20 -25% have been quoted. The Denmark obesity summit in September 2002 claimed it results in 30K deaths per year, and brings £2B costs. The flip-side of obesity is anorexia, the cult of the thin. People cover themselves in tattoos, put iron mongery through their faces. Just as their physical bodies are mutilated, so too are their minds, with drugs. These tendencies are indicative of a deep rooted existential sickness. Such trends are not the disease itself, but rather symptoms.

Ignored

If you want an indication of present conditions; there are increasingly common reports of heroin addicts who overdose and are found dead several months later. These are not people living in remote farm houses, generally this happens in cities and towns. The addicts lie dead, the other people around them in their flats or streets just pass by, the smell, the buzzing flies, the bills in the letterbox are ignored. In death, as in life, they are cut off. Take a good look at your society here...

It's the social currents - when a tide is running, it is all too easy to be swept along...

Asylum

If you want a second indicator, look at the way asylum seekers are treated. People from the third world or eastern Europe want to come to Britain, either as a result of political oppression, wars, or crippling third world debts. Many of these reasons follow as a direct result of New World Disorder policies. Some of these people flee for political reasons. Some are economic migrants. Some seek refuge from ethnic persecution. People want to flee so desperately, they cling to lilos and inflatable dinghies to try to cross the English Channel. [25] Yet, they find when they arrive here a racist, tabloid hysteria. Would a different mood expressed in the media bring about a better attitude? Attempts have been made to set up concentration camps at disused airfields, RAF Newton, Nottingham, Hemswell Lincoln, and Throckmorton near Evesham. Yarl's Wood, near Bedford, burned down. Wherever the camps are mooted, residents are soon up in arms against them. As a way of keeping the refugees out, there is even talk about

establishing Sangatte type camps in Eastern Europe. [26] Shameful.

Our treatment of the old

If you want a third indication, see our treatment of old people. The elderly are generally ignored, brushed aside impatiently. They move too slowly, clog up the supermarket aisles. We force them to leave their own houses, sell them off to pay for poor quality residential care, dump and disregard them. We drug them, abuse them. Some are fighting back, for example 90 year old Thora Falkingham went on hunger strike against her Bradford OAPs home closure. [27] One advert on TV showed a meals on wheels delivery driver ignoring the old people, eating a chocolate bar slowly. The society is sick which regards such cruelty as amusing.

Poverty

If you want a fourth indicator of where we are now, look at poverty. Even in Britain, 24% of households live in poverty (1999), 900,000 are in serious debt, 9M have no bank accounts. [28] The Fat Cats get fatter - 4 days after the 2002 election, Blair gave himself a £50K rise. The Barclays Bank Chairman got £1.75M as branches closed in March 2000. The Arriva trains chairman got a £200K bonus 9th April 2002. [29] Poverty also follows from the illegal underpaying of women workers, ageism, or from race discrimination. Pension investments are lost when stocks fall. In 2002 there was an 11% rise in births out of wedlock, a year earlier £5M was unpaid to the CSA, 17% of children have neither parent working. Single mothers are one scapegoat group, school truants and parents another. Patricia Amos became the first truancy parent to be jailed [30] and other groups such as travellers, refugees, 'neighbours from hell' etc are also scapegoated. A 13% rise in single occupant houses in 15 years also indicates our alienation.

Lottery

Some indication of the level of despair could be seen with the hysteria around the Lottery, particularly when it first started, and huge jackpots were offered, while victims crowded round sales points. 'Stupidity Tax' sales figures have suffered a long decline. From April to November 2002, a 5% drop to £39.2B was seen. Christmas sales went down £12M. A new low was registered in 17th Feb 2003, a 12% slump by 28th May. These falls are not enough. Similarly, hysteria surrounds the causes helped. The Daily Mail ran a 'vent your justified anger' campaign which resulted

in threats against Lottery authority staff, due to their support for asylum seekers and similar groups [31]

Sexuality

The sexual is another way in which people treat each other badly. Sex crimes, rapes and paedophiles are obvious aspects of this; but the whole dumbing down of sex, the sexualization of all aspects of society are also wrong. Advertising becomes more pornographic while people become inured to it all. Women's fashions are fit only for tarts. TV soaps propagandise that promiscuity is the norm. With this ethical hyperinflation, sexual relationships are cheapened. Divorce rates have increased, love is abolished and all we are left with is something coarse and animalistic, physical exploitation without commitment or responsibility; or just the monetary exploitation of prostitution. Who can forget those disturbing images of the corpses of dozens of tiny babies born of crack addicted teenage mothers, being put into cardboard shoeboxes and buried in a deep collective grave? Men have no obligation to become fathers to the children they spawn, mothers on their own cannot cope. The whole sex thing comes to resemble a depressing compost heap full of worms and wood lice, rotting matter all twisting and writhing together. Some believe we need a new kind of militant Puritanism.

Third World Debt

Blair portrays the UK as an economic powerhouse, even so there were 43,500 bankruptcies in 2002, up 7.2% and 18,926 companies failed, a 10% rise. Poverty in Britain is relative, but in the Third World it is absolute. 1.2B people world wide live on less than \$1/day. The UK gives a derisory 0.28% of its GDP in aid, as against Denmark, for example, 0.97%, or Norway, 0.81%. At the Johannesburg Summit [32] an anti-poverty protest drew attention to the 12M people facing starvation in Southern Africa. Crops failed due to droughts, while 20% of people are dying from Aids. For each \$ received in aid \$14 are lost in unjust tariffs. 29% of Malawi government spending is in debt servicing. Malawi is one country where IMF policies led to chronic food insecurity. [33] 4M Kenyans starved in the April 2001 drought.

Financial Crimes

After the 16th May 1998 Birmingham G8 human chain protest, and 24M people signed the Jubilee 2000 petition,



much was made of the plan to cancel \$375B of debt. Only eight 'Heavily Indebted Poor Countries' (=HIPC) countries - Benin, Bolivia, Burkino Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda - received \$36.3B of relief. Some countries' debts are increasing; Senegal by 61%, Nicaragua 60%, Honduras 93%. There are too many strings attached; IMF / WB 'structural adjustments', wholesale privatization of local economies. Ruin. In Malawi, the government food distribution agency was sold off to the IMF wide boys. People starved. GMOs were dumped as aid. Aid budgets often boomerang back to the developed world as interest payments, or dam contracts. Between 1980 and 1990 Third World Debt doubled. Between 1990 - 95, it doubled again. The IMF programme completely failed the HIPCs. [34]

New World Disorder

Society is sick, but the paper Primitivist bullets are no cure. The spectre of insanity haunts the high rise flats, just as it broods over the housing estates. Through the pressure of school tests, even little children learn stress, and keep it for life. They / we live in a 'toxic psychological environment' [35]. Depression, mental illness, apathy, cynicism, boredom, anger festers everywhere. Asthma, cancer, heart disease, Alzheimers, Parkinsons, Norwalk Virus, MRSA, Legionnaires, Sars - the urban environment is spiked, a minefield of diseases. Even children are presenting with Type 2 diabetes. Mobile phones intrude in every public space. 'I'm on the train!' Advertising billboards are everywhere, the internet overloads with offensive emails. Advertising is a plague. Dystopias hover, 'The Matrix', 'Minority Report'. More and more digital TV clutters up the frequencies, and their time, not a single bit of it worth watching.

Materialism and be-logoed designer tosh swamps their attention. Crime, state corruption, sex, sleaze, noise and light pollution are everywhere. Violence, offensive language, lack of respect for people, CCTV cameras pan across the streets, pointless car alarms destroy the silence. In the offices, streets, railway stations, in the cars standing on the motorway, in the houses, there is a terrible, sad kind of loneliness.

Logic

Much of this is a logical outworking of the consequences of capitalism. People have voted for it with their credit cards, mortgages, money, cultural allegiance. The people drive the cars which give their own children asthma; have smoked the cigarettes which give themselves lung cancer. No one can breathe, in such a toxic environment. They have voted for Blair and Bush, the BNP and the 'Big Brother' house. This world is their own creation, though doubtless an unintended consequence of their thoughtless actions. Where are we going with this? What sort of world are we creating?

The tide of Fanaticism

The Great Crusade against Islam is about control of oil. In doing this, the USA and Capital have come into intense ideological conflict with Islam. In some respect this is a replay of the Cold War, but much more unpredictable, hence dangerous. If the Americans have high-tech weaponry, the Muslims have sheer naked fanaticism. Which will win? America is vile, [36] yet we can see Islam in all its horror; the stoning of women in Nigeria, the taking of hostages in Yemen, decapitations by sword in Saudi Arabia, hand amputations under Sharia law. We see Islamic beatings, hangings from cranes in Iran, the continuing suppression of

education for girls in Afghanistan, executions in a football stadium, Kabul, copies of the Salman Rushdie book burning. We see the bombing of Catholic churches in Pakistan, riots in Bradford, we see Islamic torture, bombings, murder, fanatic beating themselves on the head with wooden clubs, suicide bombings, hatred against westerners from out of a mosque in Finsbury Park, British Muslims joining Al Qaeda, or blowing themselves up in Israel. We see airliners crashing into the twin towers. These are the details of what Islam is, and incidents arising from that conflict. Yet this also gives rise to a fanaticism all of our own as the US Crusade plays out. The same evil hatred and xenophobia in ourselves gives rise to a quarter of voters choosing the BNP in parts of Burnley and other places. When a tide is running, it is all too easy to be swept along.

Europe

If America is a Machine, then so is Europe. The UK scoring nothing in the Eurovision Song Contest ought to teach us something about the way business is done in the rest of it. The Euro currency is a vehicle to unify Europe into a single state, or this new European Constitution might be another. Fishing quotas banning British trawlers from our own waters, metrication, European regulations about straight bananas, bans on leeks or parma ham slicing, or yellow ambulances. Demands for Waterloo station to be renamed. Steve Thoburn the metric martyr, Gibraltar, European attempts at censorship, Euro-corruption, farmers paid money to 'set aside' land while people in Africa starve. A Northallerton farmer made to dump milk into the ground. Europol / Schengen / Trevi, 20 tons of Bank of England gold sold off to prop up the Euro. The many companies closed down or asset stripped by Europe, with millions of jobs lost: Leyland, Rover, British Steel, Coles Cranes Sunderland, Nestles and Kit Kat bars made in Hamburg, Soap, BTR, Stoke on Trent tyre factory, OKI computer printers, panasonic Cardiff, Glaxo Speke, Vauxhall, Cuddington yoghurt factory, L G Phillips beef, Nestles Aylesbury, blockades, Roche and BASF price fixing. The rise of Euro-fascism; Le Pen, Haider, Pym Fortuyn, Blairlusconi.

Totalitarianism

Hanging over everything the individual does is the state. Here powers of surveillance and arbitrary arrest are already infinite. The details of the methods used are well known. It is not

as though the cameras on the streets or motorways are hidden. Telephone and internet tapping, dataveillance, Echelon, DNA databases, Enfpol 19, retinal eye scanners, compulsory drug testing - the state becomes ever more what it is. At the same time, the moral depravity of the fuhrers deepens, their lies more obvious. Two million people protesting on the streets of London against the Iraq war on 15th February 2003 did not stop the war. The robotic leaders have nothing but contempt for the people. This gap grows ever wider. The Machine runs on regardless. Bureaucracy is out of control, the restraints on it do not work. Change might come about through an alteration of ideas about how we work as a society, a growth in the culture of anarchism. Change might happen through a violent revolution, but few believe in this. Change might come about as a result of the internal corruption and stupidity of the leadership.

Protest as an embodiment of the wasteland

The radical movement embodies many of the features of the wider society. Within the protest milieu we find fearsome little cliques, hierarchies, in-fighting, authoritarianism; often equally as bad as those in the mainstream. We can criticise radicalism for its ineffectiveness. This is one type of judgement we might make - as to our practical effects, our consequences. Another approach could look at morality. Sometimes there is the false belief that ethics does not matter, that we need not be any better than the thing we oppose. Elsewhere, it takes the form of a belief that we do not need to tell the truth, either to each other or to the wider world. Postmodern attitudes infect and contaminate. The failing may also be aesthetic, or existential.

Stasis

This perception that radicalism could be part of the wasteland may come as a shock. In so far as the protest movement does good and makes real progress, this is worthwhile, and needs celebrating. What I am writing about here is more of an atmosphere, a climate. Some say the 'movement' is misnamed, and ought to be called a 'stasis'. If there is truth in the gibe, then this needs to be explored.

Disturbing

The location of radicalism *within* the wasteland rather than opposing it is a

disturbing theme, but has to be taken seriously. Something horrible is going on, something is twisted. It might be the smug self righteousness of a certain type of peace protester, or the impositions loaded on people by the vegan police or political correctness brigade. It might be the manipulation of activists through guilt. It might be tolerance of dishonesty. In the face of its annihilation radicalism is often passive - the activities of the state; blacklisting, spying, tapping, entrapping, media propaganda, infiltrating, manipulating, murdering - go unchallenged. Too much of the real agenda is what they are doing to us, rather than what we are doing to them.

Separately, each problem does not seem much, but when put together, people see the protest movement as a joke ...

Diversion ahead

We have to think about what the radical protest movement *is*, what it *does*, how it *thinks*. What is radicalism *for*? Focus your attention for a moment on Earth First! - once a movement showing so much promise. Around 1998, they could have switched away from roads into housing development protests. [37] All over England, rip-off developers were busy carving up the countryside, building naff estates and retail parks. If EF! had made this their primary focus, their movement could have broadened and deepened. Housing estate developments everywhere were potentially sites of protest. EF! could have tried to make a real difference to the urban environment, and the quality of life. They would become relevant. Instead, they narrowed and got shallower. It was easier to defend an irrelevant pagan stone circle in Derbyshire. I talked to some EF!ers about this and the bottom line is they just couldn't be bothered to put in the effort.

Deserve victory

Earth First! are just an example - no better or no worse than many other groups, but will there even be an EF! group in five or seven years? Does there deserve to be? The stone circle campaign fails the Garstang market test. In this way, radicalism itself becomes an unhappy hunting ground for drifters, lunch-outs, and failures. It refuses to apply clear criteria of success and

failure, or even to acknowledge the facts. It is incapable of correction, it is just like fungus or the weather. This protest world stumbles on from one thing to another. People walk in and out. Do they have goals?

Fear

To take a hard look at the lack of radical effectiveness is to make one type of criticism - of *practice*. On 15th February 2003, two million people protested on the streets of London, against the pending attack on Iraq, but they failed to stop the war. There is a sub-conscious fear of success. 2M people acting together in a serious, concerted way could achieve almost anything. Even when the people turn up, the organisers don't know what to do, though it was quite clear in this case that the crowds were not up for it. This sub-conscious fear of success prevents us from moving beyond the glass ceiling. Why? To any established group, real social change is a threat to the status quo. The more powerful the group, the greater the threat, the harder the subconscious wish to undermine it. The question is asked, how many campaigns have been sabotaged by this psychological block? Why are successful groups ostracised? Why are sincere people who want to change things for the better marginalised while con men and rip-off artists are tolerated? The movement is corrupt. Radical politics can become like a witch hunt, McCarthyism and guilt by association are rife; we can think of the Neoshit 'Green Apocalypse' stuff of the mid 1990s, for example. Such an atmosphere shows disturbed minds searching for ideological purity. The radical movement may be like Lady Macbeth, forever, compulsively washing her hands to remove the taint.

Keep on the tramlines

Radicalism, in many quarters, does not even want to break out of the ghetto. It becomes an esoteric cult, the political equivalent of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Picture the world as it is - this mad Macdonalds, Bush, Blair, Euro-Microsoft wasteland where all the processes, as described above, really are going on. Somewhere in the middle of this there are good people trying to oppose this evil. Collectively, they have all the ideas, resources and capacities to really make a big difference - perhaps even defeat it. Yet almost every time they try, they trip themselves up. 'Activists' stay in bed, people don't turn up. They waste their time and energy in faction fighting. They get drunk or stoned, get jailed for credit card fraud,

become chemical casualties. Radicals burn out, or convince themselves that 'resistance is futile'. They get drawn into the mortgages and materialism kick, and all the baggage of that deflects them. Known agents of the state are allowed to sabotage or even run campaigns. Resources are wasted or stolen. This climate of failure continues, again and again, until we are forced to revise our judgement that these activists are good people. Consciously, deliberately, they refuse to put their intentions into practice, they refuse to apply their capacities of analysis and self reflection.

Choose success

This gulf between intention and deed is all the more of a torment because of the knowledge that we *do* have the resources and capacities to make a big difference. The failure is chosen. Knowing that we *can* win is frustrating because the cause of our failures lies within ourselves. The worry is not just about the failure (we are all human and fallible), but more that people lose the capacity to see the difference, lose the ability to even care. If the thought that the radical movement is part of the wasteland upsets, then how much more disturbing is this indifference? Activists no longer care about truth and falsehood, right and wrong, no longer care whether their actions have an effect. The movement becomes an end in itself, a treadmill going nowhere. Even when the absolute abyss between their supposed intentions and the consequences of their activity is pointed out to them, they keep on running. It is not just that they become automata, but rather with their inability to tell good from bad, better from worse, they die ethically, spiritually. How far is the movement dead like this?

The prison house of theory

It has to be said - not all are dead though. Some good work is being done. Celebrate it. Question radical political theory: the Class paradigm, Primitivism, Deep Ecology. Have we been well served by it? Political theory is a straight jacket to restrict our movement. Theory is also a fence, to keep out the others. Non-members are non-intellects because they lack our critical insights. Theory is an issue of prestige, it confers value, kudos on the adherent. Theory is a negation, 'justifying' my refusal to acknowledge the good work of outsiders. Theory is a stockade. Ideologies may well be inadequate or false descriptions of the world. They are also irrelevant, in terms of fixing our problems.



The prison house of image

Imagine what it must be like to be held prisoner inside Primitivism or Marxism, to try to hold these value systems, to define your personality within them. We might laugh at the followers of Bagwan, or pity them, but some political groups are likewise cultish. How can they escape? How can they be deprogrammed? At the same time, we have to think about this imposed, identikit image of a protester, as a figure who conforms to a certain pattern, with that set of beliefs and norms, of political correctness and a certain shallowness. The radical too, is a victim of fashion.

'I didn't mean it, man...'

Just playing games

So it comes round to the idea that perhaps the radical movement is not really about changing things for the better. Perhaps it is not about the external world at all, but about playing games with internal, intellectual states and processes. Back in 1992 [38] and later in 1996, I wrote about politics as an ethical void. How far, and in what way, is radical politics itself an ethical void? People come into this with the intention of changing things. Where they succeed, this is good. Yet frequently, and frighteningly, their good intentions are lost in gesture politics or egotism, ritualism, self promotion. Taken separately, each problem might not seem much, put together, people come to think the movement is a joke, a game, a fake, a simulacrum, a decoy. We can understand such a movement, and firmly place it within the register of deception.

Postmodern

Think for a moment how a lie left unchallenged undermines all truth. When we study the wasteland, we know it is deficient. Postmodernism too, is a wasteland. One type of enquiry about po-mo asks what are its beliefs? Another approach looks at its consequences; intellectually, socially, economically,

culturally, existentially, politically. In my *Primitivism: An Illusion With No Future*, I have already written at great length about the pseudo-radical political cult of Primitivism, and the way in which the Primitivists subordinate themselves to Postmodernism. [39] Alan Sokal, for example, understands po-mo in a political context, in terms of the neutralisation of the left. [40]



Five themes

Postmodernism has five main themes. (1) The rejection of truth as a social construct, and the repudiation of reality in favour of the primacy of texts. 'All is text. There is nothing outside the text.' (Derrida, Kristeva, Barthes, Foucault) These are seen endlessly circulating, parasitic, incestuous, feeding off each other. The Simulacrum, Baudrillardian Hyperreality.

(2) The denial of meaning, its replacement with a kaleidoscope of transient impressions. We find ourselves in the middle of a carnival of fragmentation, flux, the instantaneously obsolete. The past, our sense of history, is wiped out. Who we were is trashed, bulldozered, or theme parked. Philosophy is brought down to product placement, advertising, a branch of capitalism.

(3) The assault upon reason, through the assertion of arbitrariness, chaos. The Enlightenment is understood as a 'Project' which must be overturned or transcended. The status of science as a 'Metanarrative' (Lyotard) is questioned, deposed.

(4) The wiping out of belief in the self (Heidegger, Lacan, Derrida) Instead we find a schizophrenic disjunction of images. 'Anything goes', and with this all values are emptied. In accepting this,

there is no one left to look. Ridiculously, language itself is alive, language thinks, and is active. (5) Postmodernists accept the dogma of relativism. (Moral relativism, epistemological relativism ...) They refuse to make distinctions, draw boundaries, evaluate. Without better or worse, true or false, the whole of life is emptied, rendered void, valueless.

Crisis

In addition to the above themes, there are a number of characteristic postmodernist approaches or methods. We find eclecticism, playfulness. Postmodernists often fall for the fallacy that to give an account of origins is to explain. Consonant with the doctrine of the primacy of the text, there is the Rumpelstiltskin fallacy that to name is to control. We find the error of the plenum. Following the Nietzschean theme, the death of the real "The 'real world' - an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer - an idea grown useless, superfluous, consequently a refuted idea: Let us abolish it!" [41] we find the questioning of 'Metanarratives,' a 'Crisis of Representation'. Postmodernism cannot create, it can only rip-off images and rework them in this eclectic collage. We find the techniques of parody, pastiche and irony. Postmodernism is not so much a reaction to the sickness of society as the full blown disease itself.

Resistance is Futile

Because there is no truth, no objective reality, it doesn't matter what form your ironic, cynical pastiche of a protest movement takes on. All real resistance is futile - so the Postmodern liars will tell you. Postmodern beliefs are false,

but to hold them brings consequences. We can understand from this that the prisoners are unwilling to leave their cages, even though they know that the doors are open.

Abstract versus Particular

Are you sick of all the sectarianism and faction fighting? If the condition of our protest movement is what happens to the best, what hope is there for the rest? There are two directions our discussion on ethics could go at this point. The first is to look at morality in an abstract, theoretical sense; but this really will not serve because it ignores the individual. This points to the second direction; to particularise our discussion around the individual. We can talk about whether Tony W Blair or Mrs Jones the nurse are good people. Ethics comes down to individual character. It is through the choices and deeds of *individuals* that the world is changed. We could take the preceding description of the situation, our inadequate responses, and say 'this is why we need a stronger, more ethical political protest movement'. (Remember Robin Cook's 'Ethical Foreign Policy?') On one level this response is true, but as things stand, we won't get it. This is a large part of why the protest movement leads to despair. If our movement gets politically stronger, without deeper ethics, it will be drawn into the ethical vacuum of politics. [42]

Where is all this going?

We have seen our actions and their character. We have seen the world we have created for ourselves - violence, murder, depravity, theft, propaganda, pollution, authoritarian states, the existential wasteland, sex-crimes, lies, the devaluation of individuals. We have also studied the protest movement, and it is not much better; even those who are acting out of the best motives are often riddled with corruption, falsehood, and a chosen, deliberate, practical ineffectiveness. We have to ask ourselves where is all this going? Eastern European babies are deliberately bred to provide organs for transplants. There is a word for the character of all this, and where it is heading, and that word is hell.

Moral entropy - ethical death

The character of this world and where it is heading, is hell. We can see it clear enough in all the descriptions above. If people believe that the individuals are responsible for creating the world as described, and as we know it, then what will the world be like in 10 years, 50 years, 100 years, 1000 years from now?

What will they be like as people? We have studied the character of it as it is, and this is bad enough, shaped according to our human wishes. Thinking longer term, suppose we were to get what we want, completely, in an absolute sense? It is possible that the universe might blow up and all existence come to an end, or a giant meteorite hit the world and put an end to us. If so, this would be no less than we deserve, and a mercy, perhaps.

Immortality

But rather, it is more likely that we shall go on as we are, sinking deeper and deeper into our sin. Many people believe the human soul is immortal, that death is not the end of us, and that somewhere, outside this present universe, we continue, forever. If this is true, have they considered the implications of immortality? Would such an existence be worthwhile though, based on the present ethical character shown by humanity? If we continue in our present ways forever, if there is the possibility of a continuation of human existence beyond death, then, under this different, religious understanding, it would be hell. What other word fits?

Mythological and cultural representations of Hell

The early Hebrew concept of hell was the realm of the dead, a neutral place of shades, a 'land of forgetfulness' Psalm 88:13, a 'land of silence' Psalm 94:17. It was not thought of in a punitive sense, though in Genesis 37:35 and 42:38 it is associated with mourning and loss. *Sheol*, from the Assyrian meaning 'chamber', was a place of darkness and dryness. A shift of meaning comes with its association with Ge-Hinnom (Gehenna) the Valley of the Hinnom, possibly the place where Molech and Tammuz were worshipped. King Josiah cleared out all the instruments of Baal worship, defiled their sacred places, and dumped the remains in the valley, just south of Jerusalem, which then became the city rubbish dump, where household waste, dead animals and the bodies of criminals were burned. [43] *Sheol* was linked to prostitution [44] and in line with the rubbish dump idea, also termed 'the pit'. Hell became bottomless, and guarded by an angel called Abaddon [45] = 'destruction'. The Pit is contrasted with wisdom, as life is against death; along with vices, falsehood, treachery, arrogance, greed. [46] The Judgement of God is executed against Israel, termed 'Egypt' for its apostasy. [47] Again, we

return to the spiritual wasteland of T S Eliot.

Zoroastrianism

Around the 6th and 5th Centuries BC, cruelty and punishment became more closely linked with *Sheol*, under Babylonian influences. The Israelites were taken into captivity under Nebuchadnezzar (586 BC). The Persian Zoroastrians understood the world as a battleground between good and evil. Paradise was only for the rich. The abode of the dead, *hamestagan*, was understood as a place of mixture, as of impurities. They looked to the afterlife for the restoration - the dead were raised, but then had to pass through a river of molten metal to attain perfection.

In Greek myth, Hades was the abode of the dead, with a lower level, Tartarus. There were punitive elements to this, but these were limited to a duration of 12 months. It was under Christianity that the punishment became absolute, unending, eternal.

It is through the choices and deeds of individuals that the world is changed.

Hell in the New Testament

Various parables speak about the judgement; the parable of the talents, the wicked servant, the wise and foolish virgins, the parable of the good and bad fish being sorted out, and the parable of the weeds. [48] Common to many of these descriptions, we find that people are excluded, not recognised, are in the outer darkness, and they weep and gnash their teeth. The parable of the weeds is significant because it is later explained privately. The symbolic value of each element is painstakingly enumerated. "Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." [49]

Deeds not words

In Matthew 25, Jesus speaks about the Last Judgement as a separation - sheep on the right, goats on the left. People are judged on the basis of their actions towards others; the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, sick, imprisoned. Those accepted inherit eternal life, the rejected, eternal punishment. [50] In the same way, it is

not a matter of empty words but of actions - 'he who does the will of My Father.' [51] The justified know their Saviour, and are known by Him.

Exclusion

The motif of exclusion is common. Once the time limit has passed, the householder shuts the door, refusing to recognise those outside. [52] The foolish virgins are similarly excluded [53] The Lukan story of the the beggar Lazarus and the rich man is also instructive. 'Hades' is a place of torment, flame, dryness, anguish. (Indeed fire, darkness and dryness are common images) There is a great chasm between them. The rich man would do anything he could to escape, but cannot [54] In the marriage feast, it is a matter of wearing the correct garment. One man is caught without this, and excluded "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness, there men will weep and gnash their teeth. For many are called but few are chosen." [55]

Cut Off date

In a passage reiterated three times in two of the synoptic gospels; Jesus says that rather than sin, we must reject the parts of us which cause sin, and cut them off. It is better to enter life mutilated, than to be thrown into hell fire. In Mark it adds 'their worm will not die, the fire will not be quenched.' [56]

Light versus Darkness

In John, it is a matter of light and darkness. People hate the light, because they are evil. They love the darkness, do not believe, they do not obey. [57] They stand condemned. 'He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him' [58] The good go on to the resurrection of life, the evil to a resurrection of Judgement. Beyond the gospels, and on into the early church, Paul specifies the categories of people to be sent to hell. These include idolaters, adulterers, thieves and slanderers. (1 Corinthians 6:9, Galatians 5:21) John of Patmos, in Revelation, writes of the Lake of Fire, there the wicked are tormented for ever and ever. [59]

Origen

Among the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers, Origen of Alexandria (c185-254) questioned the eternity of hell, and whether it consisted of fire. Similar doubts were entertained by Gregory of Nyssa. Origen saw the punishment as curative, following Plotinus and neo-Platonism. Origen understood the progress of the soul as

cyclic, of moving away from its source, the World Source, The One, and returning, being restored. (*apokatastasis*) He seems to have believed in a transmigration of souls between angels and humans. Ultimately, in a general resurrection, all would be restored to God. [60] I say 'seemed to believe' advisedly; Origen remains one of those obscure figures about whom little can be said with certainty, fragments of what he wrote are only preserved through his opponents, and therefore may be misrepresentation. Origen questioned whether hell is literal fire, or remedial. He is hostile towards primitive, simplistic myths intended to stampede people into the Kingdom of Heaven through fear. Even the devils are not wholly beyond freedom and reason. The Atonement of Christ is incomplete until all are redeemed because 'love never fails'. [61] 'None is so evil as to be beyond the healing power of the Logos.' [62] Eventually, Origen's views were deemed heretical, and were condemned by Justinian in 553 AD.

Augustine

In Book 21 of the *City of God*, Augustine, (354-430 AD) argues against the belief that Hell is not eternal. Quoting Isaiah 66:24, 'their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched', he also argues against the opinion that the punishment after death is for purification. He is particularly concerned to attack Origen for misplaced compassion: this 'endless shuttling to and fro' between heaven and hell would make the saints miserable, there being no guarantee of eternal bliss. [63] Origen's heresy that the Devil will eventually be saved is sneered at. The words of Christ condemning the wicked, along with the Devil to eternal banishment and flames are cited as proof. Repentance is required *before* death, after death it would be sterile, void of fruit. 'so a man looks in vain after he has quit this mortal body, for something which he has not troubled to obtain while in the body.' [64]

Peter Lombard

With the Dark Ages, the idea of Hell became more prominent. War, famine and hardship made life harder. In 1348, a third of Europe died in the Black Death. Scholasticism had much to say on the subject. Peter Lombard (1100-1160) compiled the work of earlier theologians together in one place, the *Sentences*, Book IV dealing with the four last things. Here, Lombard depends on Augustine. The damned have bodies

which can burn forever without being consumed. They are confirmed in their possession of a bad will, intensifying in their own viciousness and demerit. The damned can feel sorrow and empathy for others' sufferings, although themselves morally blind. [65] Contemporary with this, one of the most popular Medieval images, the Vision of Tundale (1149) was written by an Irish monk in Regensburg, Bavaria. It employs images of pits, fire, mountains of fire and ice, valleys of fire, beasts belching flames and consuming the souls of the damned. Judgement is represented as a ladder across the abyss: 'A thousand paces long and no more than a single foot wide. No one except the elect could cross ... he saw many fall from it, and only one man, a priest on a pilgrimage, carrying his palm, managed to cross.' [66]

Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1125-1274) understood the fire of hell as eternal. Citing Job 24:19, he saw the pains of hell to include change 'they shall pass from waters of snow to excessive heat'. Hell is not a true eternity, but rather everlasting, enduring time. [67] Aquinas' account of sin is feudal, because God is infinite, any sin against Him is likewise infinite. In terms of images, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) sets the standard for depicting hell, as a series of concentric circles. This image was taken up and became a commonplace in subsequent representations, many of them of great complexity. Under the theory of *contrapasso*, there is a precise balance between offence and retribution.

Luther

As a young man, Martin Luther was terrified with thoughts about the damned burning forever in hell. In July 1505, he was hit by a bolt of lightning, which can only have intensified his fears. Luther sought refuge from his fears in monasticism, trusting in its special status. His pilgrimage to Rome disillusioned him, kissing Pilate's Stairs brought him to see that Rome was built on Hell. [68] Polemic on both sides of the Reformation divide often invoked images of hell. Luther's solution to the problem lay in the Reformation doctrine of 'the just shall live by faith'.

Calvin

John Calvin, (1509-1564) did not invent the doctrine of Election and Reprobation, 'double predestination', as is commonly supposed. Indeed, Calvin's doctrines are said to be similar to

Augustine's. Some people believe in the gospel, others reject it. Why? God is understood to have predestined some to be chosen, others to be damned, even before the foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:4). This opens up questions about the Problem of Evil, whether God is the author of evil; and doubts His justice in choosing certain people to be damned. Calvin is thought of as harsh - the cases of Bolsec and Servetus are cited. [69] However, Calvin acknowledges that we do not presently know who the damned are, it is open for those presently rejecting the gospel to subsequently be granted the grace to accept it. Calvin stresses the Sovereignty of God over the capriciousness of man.

Reason and Enlightenment

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) indicates a sophisticated vision about Hell found in the middle of the Seventeenth Century. The battle between Calvinism and Arminianism continued in the Eighteenth, in the conflict between John Wesley and George Whitfield. William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, (1729) perhaps represents the best work of this period. With the rise of Rationalism and the Enlightenment, belief in hell rather went into decline. The religious scepticism of David Hume, with his essay *Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State*, (1748) and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, (1776) are good examples of this stream. Contrasting with Hume, Immanuel Kant, though recasting faith in an ethical direction, was nevertheless sympathetic towards religious faith, being from a Pietist background. Kant reportedly responded to an attempt to contrast his own work with that of Jesus Christ by declaring the one to be holy, but himself a 'poor bungler' by comparison. [70]

Rationalism and the decline in the notion of Hell

Acceptance of the idea of hell seems to have been little challenged from the Reformation up to the Enlightenment. Goethe's *Faust* (1808, 1832) adopted the Medieval legend to the demands of Romanticism. Kant, accepted that hell implied the absolute separation of good from evil. [71] Deists and Rationalists made inroads into the traditional belief, as did the Unitarians, Hartley and Priestley. Coleridge and Shelley both rejected the idea. As views about the nature of punishment moderated, under the influence of Jeremy Bentham and

prison reformers, so too did belief in the need for eternal torment for the wicked. High infant mortality, made worse in the increase in population density from the Industrial Revolution, affected their capacity to believe it. The increase in missionary activity and the understanding that a large part of the world was not Christian also undermined the belief. Ethical objections to an infinity of torment began to be raised, tentatively, the use of the concept for social control served to discredit it further. Hell continued to engage the popular imagination, eg the London crowds viewing the judgement paintings of John Martin (1789-1854). Anglo-Catholics and the Tractarians sought refuge in the belief in Purgatory, popularised by Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*.

F D Maurice

The year 1853 proved pivotal, for on 11th November, F D Maurice was dismissed from his post at Kings College London, for denying the doctrine in his book of published essays. [72] If the doctrine of Purgatory provided one route to evade or water down the doctrine, other rival responses common in Victorian times were Universalism - the optimistic doctrine that all will eventually be saved, and Annihilationism, also called Conditional Immortality, the view that only the saved will live forever, while the rest either simply cease to be, at death, or after judgement. Maurice's argument rested on the word 'aionion', in Matthew 25:46, whether it should be translated as 'eternity' or 'age'. Despite Maurice becoming a Victorian cause celebre, opening the way to the later Colenso case (1864) Hell dismissed with costs' and the Mivart case (1892) George Eliot termed his work 'dim and foggy'. Ruskin called him 'puzzle headed, wrong headed'. Maurice was a social reformer, involved in the Christian Socialist movement, and is shown, standing next to Thomas Carlyle under the trees, in the Ford Madox Brown painting 'Work' [73]

James Joyce

'The Retreat' in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) gives us a very strong impression of the terrors of Hell, as laid before the young and impressionable minds of boys at Clongowes Wood school. The Retreat is modelled on the spiritual exercises of Ignatius Loyola, and lays it on thick: the great number of the damned heaped together, fire, smoke, stench, darkness;

the filth, offal and scum from every earthly sewer runs down there, the fire burns but does not consume. How the damned howl and scream at each other, blaspheme against God and are mocked and jeered by devils. The priest describes the pains of loss, separation, pains of conscience, the eternity of it. Every cloying detail is there, even down to the wet raincoats hanging in the lobby as the boys leave the chapel. [74]

Ethical objections to an infinity of torment were raised, the use of the concept for social control further discredited it.

Barth

The greatest of all Twentieth Century theologians, Karl Barth (1886-1968) was prominent in the German Protestant Church struggle against the Nazis. Barth it was who wrote the key May 1934 proclamation of the Confessing Church, the Barmen Declaration 'fortified by strong coffee and one or two Brasil cigars'. With Barth, Hell is understood as abandonment, 'outermost darkness', described as the profoundest rejection and greatest misery of the creature. Hell is torment, separateness, a place of shadows. Death is seen as God's forgetting of His creature. Hell is God's 'No' to everything He cannot be. [75] Barth makes a radical reassessment of the traditional 'Reformed' (ie Calvinist) theology about Election. The 'Yes' of God to His creation has another side, Barth terms it the 'recoil'. In passages, Barth tends towards Universalism, the idea that all are elected. On the other hand 'many are called, but few are chosen'.

Berdyayev

Interestingly, we find belief in hell supported in the work of the Russian Christian Existentialist, Nicholas Berdyayev. [76] Berdyayev declares hell an ethical outrage. Religion born of fear is not worthy of the name. Legalistic or vengeance aspects of hell are repudiated. The use of hell to manipulate and intimidate is rejected. Hell is linked to freedom 'to save man from being forced to be good and compulsorily installed in heaven. Hell is separation from God, absolute isolation. In Berdyayev, hell is understood as subjective and temporal, yet there seems to be no exit from it. It is a consequence of being self-centred, self-contained; an evil isolation. Aquinas and Dante are repudiated, linked to vengeance. Berdyayev shows how the decline of our willingness to commit heretics and

opponents to hell is a sign of moral progress. He sees no merit in assigning Nietzsche, Boehme or Aristotle to the flames. Everyone must be raised and liberated, we must work to free everyone from hell. In this respect, Berdyayev echoes Origen.

Taking it seriously

In some respects, Berdyayev's view about hell resembles Purgatory, in others Annihilationism. He at least takes hell seriously, unlike others he refuses to ignore or downplay the subject. Berdyayev redefines hell in a subjective, ethical, existential direction, while recognising our need of salvation through Christ.

Disbelief

*So the vulnerable body is stretched without pity
On flames forever. Is this not pretty?
Stevie Smith 1962 [77]*

Utterly representative of the period, the poetess Stevie Smith had a love-hate relationship with Christianity. 'Reject this Sweetness, for she wears / A smoky dress out of hell fires'. In the latter part of the Twentieth Century, the Established Churches and theologians began to be rather embarrassed over hell. In so far as there was any discussion of the topic, the debate has been over Universalism or Annihilationism. Such an attitude leads to theological indifference. Without the threat of hell, the Christian gospel is robbed of its urgency. Christ's sacrifice at Calvary is degraded. Churches rejecting the belief have gone into steep decline. Beginning in the 1930s, Rudolf Bultmann sought to 'demythologise' the New Testament, and reframe it using Heideggerian Existentialism. In 1963, the Bishop of Woolwich famously published *Honest to God*, which following Bultmann sneered at the 'three-decker' universe of Heaven above Earth, and then Hell below. Liberal theologians John Hick, in *Evil and the God of Love* [78] and Paul Tillich express similar disbelief. [79] For the most part, only the Evangelical Christians continue with belief in hell, even some of these were reportedly shaky, John Stott said to be an Annihilationist. [80] With 'theologians' following Nietzsche and proclaiming the Death of God, or subordinating themselves to Postmodernism, amongst such out and out atheism, the question of belief in hell is rather pushed to the background.

Ethics is necessary, but not enough

What does it mean though, this question of hell? The problem we are attempting to deal with here is one of the most intractable of all. What is the relationship between the spiritual and ethical? Is there some hidden spiritual, theological factor beyond ethics, which upholds it? Plato attempted to address this, in his dialogue *Euthyphro*. Socrates asks: 'whether the holy is beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved by the gods.' [81] No matter which way round you try to look at it 'Somehow or other, our arguments on whatever ground we rest them, seem to turn round and walk away.'

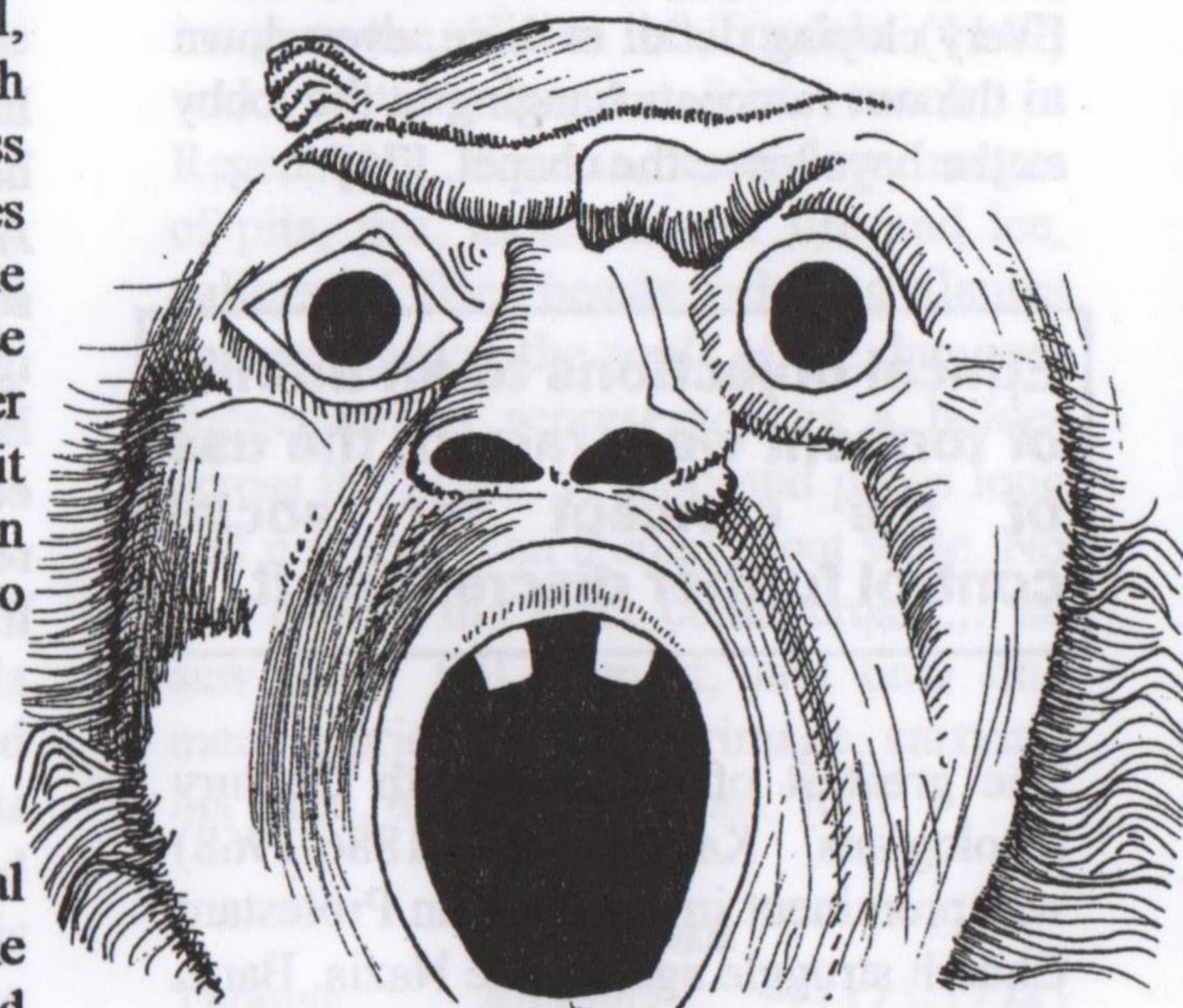
Blake

Here, I want to look at four radical thinkers, and how they relate the spiritual and the ethical. The poet and illustrator William Blake (1757-1827) may be taken as representative of one type or mode of approach, mysticism. With Blake, reason, progress, and incipient socialism, mix and conflict. Reason and science are understood as cold, mechanistic, lifeless. 'Urizen wept and gave it into the hands of Newton and Locke'. Ethics is associated with restraint, passion and creativity are higher goods. The virgin who lusts but does not act is condemned. Religion is shown through images of priests, chapels, graves, bibles, and is reactionary. 'As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.' [82] Blake's passionate life force prefigures Nietzsche and Freud, his estimate of the power of the sexual, that of D H Lawrence.

Antinomian

In the *Garden of Love*, Blake's innocent rural scene in the *Ecchoing Green* has been turned over. A chapel has been built, its iron gates shut. 'Thou shalt not' is written over the door. 'And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds, And binding with briars my joys and desires' [83] Much more complex, with many layers of allegory, is *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790 - 1793). Here, good is understood as passive, evil is active. Both are necessary to progress. The work owes much to Milton. It is also an angry, satirical commentary on the work of the Theosophist and mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg. We have difficulty in interpreting the work, for it is plastered with irony. Swinburn misread it,

believing it antinomian, Blake is wrongly thought to be like Milton's Satan, inverting good and evil. Certain types of radicals would be drawn to such a belief. Yet, on the contrary, Blake asserts a moral view, offering a commentary on the French Revolution.



'Contraries'

Blake anticipates Hegel, and dialectic. 'Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are necessary to Human existence.' Synthesis is sought. As with all dialectical thinking, the distinctions between the categories are smudged. This progress, veiled in mysticism, is Revolutionary, political, 'there must be an end to wilful famine'. Social progress is demanded today. 'With what sense does the parson claim the labour of the farmer?' Thomas Paine is declared 'a better Christian than the Bishop of Llandaff'. In one of the visions, [84] a Tory angel shows him Hell, the French Revolution, but Blake hangs on to an oak tree root over the abyss, eventually the nightmare visions cease, and he finds himself on a quiet grass bank, listening to a harp. Blake then shows the angel his hell; church, bible, crypt, workers chained, being devoured. Eventually the clouds clear, revealing nothing except Aristotle's *Analytics*, dry, empty of all threat to him.

Subjectivity

All spirit, subjectivity seems not to work. Blake has imagination, passion, vision, originality, courage. Value is recast in the subjective register. Hell is symbolic, identified with religion and the state. That 'God will torment man in Eternity for following his energies' [85] is an error. Blake appears to be a Universalist. At times sentimental, he is also stinging - the chartered streets / the cheating streets. Blake might be used as

a pattern, but lacking the creative force and originality, lesser minds take the subjectivity, the passion, and degrade it to arbitrariness and mere manic unfocussed energy. Something more coherent, ordered, less esoteric is required.

'No gods - No masters'

If Blake is all spirit, another approach could be to declare the spiritual empty. This is a common position. Many anarchists are also atheists. In the Spanish Civil War, churches were destroyed, tombs broken open, the bodies of nuns tipped out on the pavements to dishonour them. Much of this was a response to the injustices perpetrated and propped up by the Catholic Church. [86] My second thinker, Mikhail Bakunin represents the strongest expression of the 'no gods - no masters' tendency in anarchism. Parallel to Nietzsche proclaiming the death of God, Bakunin says 'If God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him'. [87] Satan is seen as a liberator and emancipator of humanity in the Garden of Eden. Jehovah is arbitrary and capricious, smiting his own creation. Without the tree of knowledge, man would have remained docile, bovine. Instead, humanity is handed over to the Napoleons, the Tsars, the incense swingers and religious swindlers. Religion is a product of ignorance, only really believed by peasants and slaves.

Bakunin's Circle

Bakunin believes in an evolutionary, Darwinian / Marxist type of progress. Humanity will triumph. The church props up the injustice of the state. Religion is the negation of justice. 'If God is, man is a slave; now man can and must be free; then, God does not exist.' [88] God, to Bakunin, is a type of Tsar or Dictator writ large, made much worse, and in fact unbearable, by being infinite. Power corrupts, and therefore, God, being omnipotent, must be infinitely corrupt. Everything that ought to be good about the church and the saints is, in Bakunin's eyes, transferred to science and people who pursue social improvements. The church by contrast is linked to the state, only there to fleece the people. 'Beware of shearers, for where there is a flock, there necessarily must be shepherds also to shear and devour it.' [89] Bakunin's idea of the spiritual is Manichean; mind is broken up and scattered, little points of light. He is dead set against Auguste Comte's Positivist Religion, which in that period

seemed a popular fusion of rationalism and faith, but which is now everywhere almost forgotten. Jesus, Bakunin has some sympathy with 'this was the first awakening, the first intellectual revolt of the proletariat'. [90] Yet, nevertheless, Christianity to Bakunin is absurdity. 'The shadow becomes the substance, and the substance vanishes like a shadow.'

'...and all of them, endlessly varied in their customs, minds, educations and positions, and in complete contrast to my ignorance, knew the meaning of life and death, endured suffering and hardship, lived and died and saw this not as vanity but good.' - Tolstoy

Implications

Some of Bakunin's criticism therefore, depends on ethics. The church, the priests *ought* not to deceive. God *ought* not to be a cosmic dictator. Some of this is straightforward rationalism. Part of it is prejudice. Some points are similar to Nietzsche on Christianity as 'slave morality'. As generalisations, political criticisms of the church for propping up the state are, to some extent, true, especially with state churches - (but not all churches, as some have mounted good criticisms, eg of slavery in the past, of third world debt, communism, apartheid in recent decades). But this ethical criticism of institutions does not touch on the beliefs, on whether they are true or not. A belief can be true, but my behaviour as a holder of it can be unworthy. The political case for anarchism is true, but the behaviour of the anarchists often betrays and undermines the ideal. If Christian beliefs are true, then they have profound, fundamental, far-reaching implications. If so, Bakunin's criticisms of churches, authoritarian religions and their politics are beside the point. Even Jesus Christ is somewhat in accord with Bakunin, for example in overturning the money changers' tables; in the parable of the wicked servant who beats the other servants and then is cut to pieces when the master returns - if we understand this as a parable about authoritarian churches. [91] If Christianity is true, then Bakunin's criticisms miss the mark by an infinite distance. Kierkegaard would make this same point. Bakunin's criticism are

against a flawed institution, but do not touch on the *beliefs*.

Tolstoy

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, a man persecuted under the Communist regime in Rumania, answered these types of criticisms by saying that it is not the healthy, but the sick who are in need of a physician. If you are perfect, you do not need the church. Nobody criticises a hospital for being full of sick people. [92] What is the relationship between cruel and despotic religions, and God, who is love? We know the answer of Christianity to this, and it is The Cross. The Son of God was executed through a conspiracy between a corrupt, dictatorial religion, and the Roman state. More sympathetic towards Christianity, though making similar points to Bakunin, is our third thinker, Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). Tolstoy wrote a great deal on religious matters, and his work has been very influential, particularly with the peace movement. *A Confession* (1879) *What I Believe*, (1884) *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1893) and *The Law of Love and the Law of Violence* (1908) are Tolstoy's principal works on Christianity. Tolstoy sought 'the religion of Christ, but purged of beliefs and mysticism, a practical religion'.

Tolstoy's Confession

A Confession is perhaps his best religious book. Tolstoy tells of his loss of childish religious belief, his earlier life of dissipation, and his understanding of life as a cruel and pointless, stupid, evil joke. He sought refuge in science, in seeking perfection. 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity' said Solomon and Schopenhauer. Yet, in contrast to the sophisticated and cynical, the world weary, there was something about the peasants, in the way they lived, and lived well, in their simple faith, despite the outward constraints on the material circumstances of their lives. 'and all of them, endlessly varied in their customs, minds, educations and positions, and in complete contrast to my ignorance, knew the meaning of life and death, endured suffering and hardship, lived and died and saw this not as vanity but good.' [93]

Non Resistance

Tolstoy was influenced by the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus Christ's entire teaching reduces down to this one point; Matthew 5:39 'Resist not him that is evil, but whosoever smiteth thee on thy

right cheek, turn to him the other also.' In *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, (1893) Tolstoy recasts Christianity on a purely ethical plane. He cites the examples of the Quakers, Peter Chelcicky, the Herrnhutters, Doukabors, and other pacifist groups. This ethical, Tolstoyan Christianity of peace and brotherhood is utterly set against the state, which is founded on violence - prisons and gallows. The state is necessarily abolished by Tolstoy's Christianity.

Chelcicky's Net

Like a dead tree, the state will wither, but will harden before it cracks. The evil of the state will not be got rid of through violence, but non-participation. Tolstoy cites examples of pious peasants refusing military service. The church itself, in defining heresies, comes to pervert and mask Jesus' original teaching, which is ethical. Similarly, the Emperor Constantine, in joining the state to the church, overturned the church. 'Christ, by means of his disciples caught the whole world in his net of faith, but the big fish burst the net and escaped from it, and through the holes they made, the other fish got out, so that the net has been left almost empty.' [94]

Falling Short

Tolstoy contrasts the 'law of love' with 'an eye for an eye'. If he has any spiritual conception, sometimes it seems Buddhist, but mostly it is Manichean, as with Bakunin. Tolstoy's spirituality is dualistic, a dialectic between man as an animal husk, and spirit as a divine spark. Man and God are one in essence, one in spiritual nature. God is a life force, man has 'inner light'. Tolstoy's idea of Christian doctrine is non-violence, universal brotherhood, the elimination of national boundaries and property. These are political, ethical and social objectives, not theological. As a moral case for anarchism, his ethics have much to commend them. Yet for all this, Tolstoyan Christianity is defective. God is evolution, a life force, impersonal. Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, not Lord, but only a great moral teacher. For this, Tolstoy was excommunicated from the Russian Orthodox Church. There is no life after death. Tolstoy believes that people have inner light, their task is to build the 'Kingdom of God' on earth. Man must save himself through his own efforts. There is no offence of the Cross. Honour where it is due, as ethics, there is much



to respect and admire about Tolstoy, but it has to be said that his beliefs only lead to an inwards, somewhat maddening, self-righteous type of ethical pacifism. They are not, properly considered, truly Christian.

Berdyaev

Some discussion of the thinking of the last of our four thinkers here, Nicholai Berdyaev, on hell was offered in Section 5. Again, Berdyaev is one who asserts the link between ethics and personality. Ethics is also prophetic. The individual is concerned with freedom. The way of freedom is a hard and rough road: the road of slavery is easy. [95] Freedom is connected with creativity, and opposed to emptiness, darkness. Death and non-existence are evil, our enemy, and we cannot accept death. Christianity is the overcoming of death, for Jesus Christ is Risen! Nietzsche, Bakunin and the Death of God bring about nothing but tragedy, despair and cruelty. A central concept in Berdyaev is 'soborny' - community, a word with spiritual, mystical overtones. 'We may be saved, only with our neighbour, with other people and with the world'. [96]

Collective

The collective, social dimension, interdependence, is stressed. In the face of modern totalitarianism, such a view is over optimistic. Yet this social dimension is Berdyaev's strongest feature. Democracy is 'inert', the bourgeois complacent, unjust, Bourgeois culture rejects the creative in the arts, in philosophy, preferring the balance sheet. Technics may be good or bad, but is not neutral. The state is capital punishment, anti-semitism, racism against black people, the class system. The church-state link is not acceptable, Constantine was wrong to merge the two, accommodating the church with, implicating it in, state violence. The choice is Caesar or Christ, not Caesar and Christ. Christianity is in crisis. The

Kingdom of God is opposed to the state, it belongs to a different world.

Christianity and Class War

Berdyaev demands that Christians engage with the political, not in any partizan sense, but must rise above battles such as Capitalism versus Communism. Jesus was a Carpenter. Socialism, he believes, is just the same old state, every bit as bad, concealed in new garb. Marxism is the 'absolute suffocation of a dungeon'. Communism is a religion, impersonal, a denial of love, and opposes Christianity. Marx is a false Christ, a substitute Christ. Dictatorship is linked with eroticism, symbols like the swastika are idols, worshipped by the masses. The good becomes falsehood in popular culture. Berdyaev rejects anarchy, as with chaos and disorder, but approves of anarchism. 'Anarchism is the ideal of a free harmony, determined from within, ie the victory of the Kingdom of God over that of Caesar.' [97]

Remorseless

This concludes our survey of the four thinkers. To criticise Blake, Bakunin and Tolstoy, is of course, to criticise the spirituality of the radical movement. For, as far as the protest movement has spirituality, these three thinkers exemplify it. (I set aside the paganism of groups like Earth First!) Berdyaev of the four above, achieved the best synthesis of faith, ethics and politics. Caesar or Christ? Christianity needs to engage with, but not be overcome by, politics. The Kingdom of God may be within us, but it must be sought *first*. When we study present conditions, as in the preceding sections, we may shudder when we think of Postmodern Titanism. We can also consider the hellishness of the reality of a protest movement predicated on the rejection of ethics; or alternatively, the hell of a movement consisting solely of absolute ethics; of feminists, pacifists, of armies of the

vegan police, the politically correct brigades, enforcing their doctrines on the rest of us. How relentless and inescapably awful such a thing would be, and how demanding. How hellish.

Lebenswelt

There also has to be room for the walk in the park. Once before, in a work of fiction, I wrote about how the world was falling in. In Germany, the Nazis were excluding Jewish people and Communists from intellectual life, and burning books in the university yard. No matter how hard, how bad the situation, there is always scope for action, for improvement. 'I may yet do some good here'. An elderly Jewish man and a young Communist woman sat on a park bench, no longer able to work at the university, talking between themselves, sharing their sandwiches. From that low point, they then went on to other work. [98]

The title of this section is 'Ethics is necessary, but not enough.' We cannot change things for the better without asserting or embodying values; right and wrong, good and evil. Yet we need more than this; we need the personal, the inter-personal. We need life, laughter, friendship, love and other spiritual qualities. If our movement cannot carry this, put it into effect, then it will not prevail. Life equals motion. We can imagine an awful, nightmare world, where we do not enjoy the capacity of action, movement, the ability to make a difference. That would be hell. There are some people already who have resigned their capacity to act, and to that extent, they are already there.

Corrosive

How do wrong actions corrode the character, taint the soul? We find evil circumstances, atmospheres, oppress the mind. At first, sins of commission, sins of omission grate against my conscience, burning it. There are practical consequences for wrongdoing, which alter the circumstances, until we end up in a situation where we feel the 'rewards' for doing wrong outweigh the penalties, making subsequent wrongdoing more certain. The perverse incentive persists, until the victim no longer *has* a conscience - it becomes 'seared as with a hot iron'. [99] The wrongdoer can no longer distinguish right from wrong. The victims are diminished, becoming non-people. The whole situation is in runaway, and the more and more people who participate in this, or passively allow the process, the more the innocent

are dragged down by it, too. The further and further away from the good they get, the faster it goes.

Consequences

Everybody gets what they want, but is what they want necessarily best for them? We might take a consequentialist view of ethics, that the bad state we are in today is the result of wrong decisions we made yesterday. We may admit that things accumulate and harden. The rottenness does fester, intensify. Where is all this heading? It was argued, speculatively, that if this process were allowed to continue indefinitely, the end destination would be hell. There are several serious difficulties with this line of argument. Such a view is meaningless to those who do not believe in life after death. The hellishness of the present is all they are left with - our incapacity to change it, the totalitarian course of anticipated developments. Another problem relates to the question of subjective versus objective. The ethical is about actions and choices between people. Hell on the other hand belongs to the individual. The individual is isolated, the individual is in a state of pain, anguish, a state of eternal torment. The present is not hell, but it is becoming more and more hell-like. From this side of the line, conditions approach that end point asymptotically, like a curve moving ever closer and closer to the axis. From the other side of the great divide, the process has been completed, that final gap closed. The terminus has been reached.

We cannot change things for the better without asserting or embodying values; right and wrong, good and evil. Yet we need more; we need the personal, the inter-personal. We need life, laughter, friendship, love and other spiritual qualities. If our movement cannot carry this, put it into effect, then it will not deserve to prevail.

Application

Ethics is the principal component in our evading hell, but we are not up to the task of applying it. To try to deflect blame away from ourselves, we might pretend that ethics itself is flawed. It is true that the application of moral principles must be tempered with something outside ethics, aesthetics

perhaps. Humour and joy. We should not be deflected by this fact. Ethics is not at fault, so much as the fact that we fail to apply it. More commonly, we fail to make the attempt; or hypocritically say one thing while doing the opposite; or either in part or whole, assert some form of hyper-enthusiastic over application of it. The standards are there, and intuitively understood, but we are not up to them.

Infuriating, disturbing

Perhaps we can best see this in the case of Tolstoy, who raised the principle of non-violence up on a monothematic pedestal. There is nothing there but ethics, and this is maddening. Similarly with the Vegan Police, or the politically correct, for the same reason that a perfectly symmetrical, computer generated portrait of a face is also disturbing. We can imagine a world where the politically correct got their way, in an absolute sense, and how bad this would be. We can concede that McWorld, Tony Bush World, George W Blair World are hell-like. To think of the Protest World in the same way is a strange and disturbing interpretation. How would we feel if the Primitivist view came true and was imposed on all? The absolute soul-death in the Palaeolithic silence of the Kalahari. This would be hell. In some ways, society comes to resemble a nightmarish M C Escher drawing, or something by Hieronymus Bosch. The same problem, sin, is found in the whole as well as the part. It is also an atmosphere, it is about the prior conditions, the externality, our history, as well as the present, what we are inside, and what we make of things, what we leave to others afterwards, how it continues. Like Sartre's wasp in the jam pot, the radicals are stuck. We cannot lift ourselves out. If this is true, then we can either surrender to the void, or we need something altogether more powerful, someone outside the framework to help. A merely ethical protest movement is ineffective as a means of evading hell.

The answer - a new direction

Humanly speaking, there is no hope. Perhaps this became clearest when we looked at the radical movement. Many parts of the protest movement retain a high moral position, and have become effective and praiseworthy, good examples of what can be done to make a stand against totalitarianism. All too often, though, the protest milieu becomes a snarling pit of rats and

snakes. If this can happen to the best of us, what must the worst be like? Popular images of hell - smoke, flames, cartoon devils with toasting forks are clearly meant to ridicule it. Even traditional depictions, for example, James Joyce's 'The Retreat', fail to put over the essence of hell in all its terror, they just aren't frightening enough, because they fail to do justice to the aspect of eternity. This pain, the intensity of the suffering will go on, for ever, and for ever, and for ever. Many people have been seduced by the Satanist / Occultist / Postmodernist lie that Hell is a place of pleasures. Perhaps more common are those people who ignore the question because, like the state, it is too difficult to deal with.

Loop

The present world is not hell, but it has a certain hellishness, and as the preceding sections show, it is heading in that direction. At one point I believed that the Judgement was a continuous process, ongoing in the present. There is some truth in that insight, but of far greater importance, and far higher certainty, is the fact of Judgement after life. The one opinion is an evasion of the other fact. In the *Four Brothers* book, there were various depictions of hell, for example as the cosmic isolation found in the 'Midas' world, where everything touched crumbled away to dry dust. Or imagine a place where people say much the same things over and over, commit just the same follies, tell the same lies - a loop world. People may even realise they are in a loop, but cannot escape it. In 'Medusa', morality is inverted, so that 'vice flourishes, virtue withers'. [100] Some of these sections can be found on the internet. Such stories are inadequate representations of the full horror.

No Exit

We can see clear enough where the vast bulk of humanity is heading, and it is not a pretty sight. It will be a world where people are fighting each other continually; snarling, clawing, gnashing their teeth, scratching each other. We can imagine the thirst of the rich man as he burns, in the bible parable. In 'Medusa', the case is particularised, one of the characters, Brenda, is thrown into the lake of fire: Dr Gobie asks 'Supposing Brenda couldn't be healed of the burns even if she could be dragged out of there, but suppose you had a rifle and you could kill her with it and end her suffering?' [101] It is clear, though, that none of us have the capacity to do

this. The soul is immortal, and therefore if reprobate, destined to burn eternally.

Alienated

To use a more immediate and applicable analogy, Hell might be like the world brought into being in negative types of radical politics; where the true believer started out in all sincerity, opposing the state, opposing the system, capitalism and injustice. Then he lost his way, started to attack his friends, people on his own side, and got sucked into the internecine vortex. Steadily he became more and more isolated, alienated, ranting, snarling, like a rabid dog, utterly cut off from the others, and ultimately from all possibility of good itself. What is really frightening about this, is not just his self-awareness, but more the fact that he has no way out. Hell has no exit.

Justice

Yet, though we may not like it, despite the Brenda example, there is justice in the fact they burn forever. They themselves have chosen this. In hell, there is no friendship, no fellowship, no real connection with other people. They are isolated, utterly cut off from all good. Augustine and Peter Lombard wrote of their sterile, unfruitful repentance [102] and this is exactly right. The pity of it is that in Hell, there is the full realisation of the glory of all they have rejected, all that might have been. Only now, it is too late, they cannot go back on what they have chosen to be. The need to repent is immediate and urgent - 'Behold, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation'. (2 Corinthians 6:2)

The Pit

There is a word for this condition, this sickness, this defect in our nature. That word is sin. Sin is an unfashionable and unpopular word, but as the crime rate, the suicide rate, Aids and Chlamydia infection rates go up, the depth of waste in the land fill sites deepens, as asthma rates, air temperatures and atmospheric carbon dioxide levels soar, we can see its truth. Sin. This destruction of the planet, this disdain for each other is willful and chosen. We have all participated in it. 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.' (Romans 3:23) Our sin is so great, our rejection of God is absolute, and it grieves God greatly. 'For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point becomes guilty of all of it.' (James 2:10) Just as we reject God, so too, He will reject us, come The Day. What a terrible

thing to happen to a person. Even so, it is obvious that I myself am incapable of rising up out of this deep pit I have dug for myself. I need outside help.

The need to repent is immediate and urgent - 'Behold, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation'. (2 Corinthians 6:2)

Holiness and Perfection

The problem is so great that there is one, and only one person in the whole of creation who is able to deal with this. Jesus Christ. As things stand, we are quite powerless. We can plainly see the predicament we are in. God, who will judge us, is perfect. God is pure. God is Holy. 'Who is able to stand before the Lord, this Holy God?' (1 Samuel 6:20) Stop and consider this holiness, purity and perfection for just a moment. God is the creator and sustainer of the whole world. His righteousness, holiness, might and majesty, His purity and perfection are absolute. 'Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts' The whole earth is full of His glory.' (Isaiah 5:3) When we set the Glory and Lordship of God, His Holiness, alongside my own imperfection, my sin, we see well enough the problem - the infinite, absolute gulf between myself and God.

Only One Way ...

God demands holiness, God demands purity, and perfection, and we know we haven't got it. There is only one path through. 'Jesus said I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, but by me'. (John 14:6) 'There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved.' (Acts 4:12)

Blind and Ignorant

As we stand, we are blind and ignorant of God. Our only hope is that He reaches out to us, in compassion. This, He has done. We understand ourselves as sinful. The next step is one which we must make for ourselves - repent. Repentance is not simply a matter of saying sorry in a shallow way, it is also necessary to turn away from our wrongdoing, to see it for what it is and to change our behaviour. We need to confess what we have done before God, and ask for forgiveness and cleansing. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and

cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1 John 1:9)

Good News

Forgiveness is only possible because of the Cross. 'Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.' (Hebrews 9:22) Only the perfect sacrifice of the sinless Son of God himself, Jesus Christ, would be sufficient atonement for my sins. 'For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God'. (1 Peter 3:18) A single sacrifice, valid for all time, for those who accept it. Today, now, I, you, we all need to believe that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins. We need to accept this, take it in to our souls, our minds and our lives. 'Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us.' (1 John 4:15) This truth needs to be accepted inwardly, as something more than just an intellectual acceptance of the facts, we must acknowledge Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour. We must believe in him, in every aspect of our thoughts, our minds, hearts and lives.

A new birth, a fresh start

Jesus did not stay nailed to the Cross though. His friends took Him down, and put Him inside the stone tomb; there to later find Him risen. Even 'doubting' Thomas later proclaimed 'My Lord and My God!' (John 20:28) It is not a dead and defeated Jesus that we worship, but a risen and living Saviour, as shown in power at Pentecost. In short, all this implies a new birth, a complete change of life. 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' (Acts 2:38) The invitation is there: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and eat with him, and he with me.' (Revelation 3:20).

The question is urgent. We need to repent, to admit our failure, and to change our behaviour. Jesus' invitation is there, but for how much longer?

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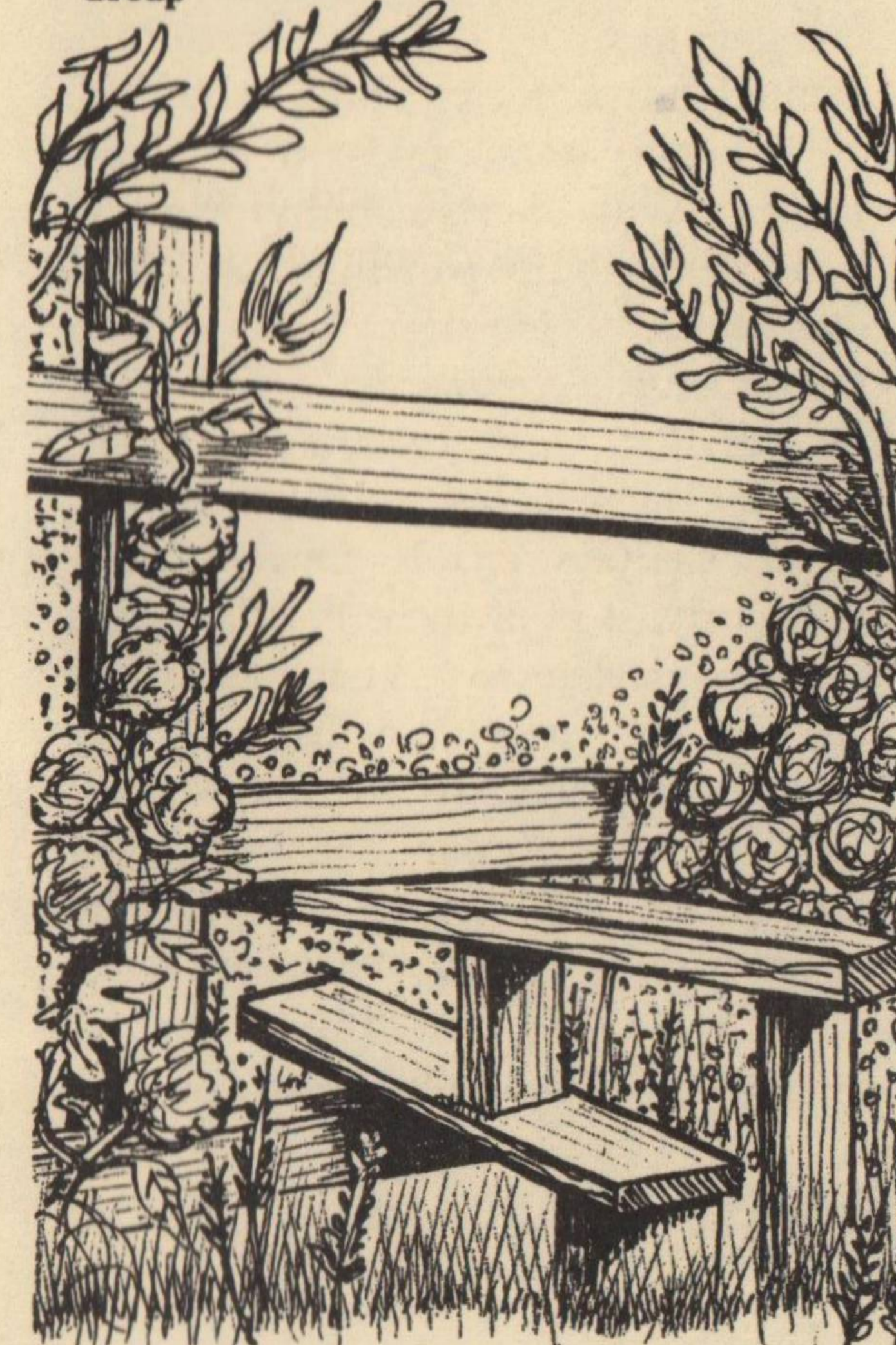
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