

# Nineteenth-century philosophy in Germany and Britain-twentieth century consequences.

---

Notes on a Lecture delivered by Rev Dr John Dearnley at the Tintern Philosophy Circle, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018

## Synopsis

How far were the cultures and actions of twentieth century Britain and Germany shaped by their nineteenth-century philosophers?

## Introduction

I want to talk this evening about what happens when philosophy is used to promote a code of conduct, or alternately to justify rules that regimes demand to be obeyed. Of course in all societies there are currents and cross currents of opinion. I'll be talking about the influence of philosophies on the behaviour of the governing regimes in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain and Germany. In particular I'll be talking about Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill in Britain and George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche in Germany. Though he lived for many years in London, Marx had very little influence on his British contemporaries.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the dominant philosophies of Britain and the German states couldn't have been more different. So, I'll be talking quite a bit about each country's historical background because it seems to me that philosophers are moulded and heard within their time and place. I don't think that Nietzsche, for example, would have attracted much attention in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain or Bentham in Germany.

## The situation in Britain

Following the violence of the civil war in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and the success of the Glorious Revolution of 1688/9, the 'grandsons' of the puritans, the Whigs and 'Low Church' men, won the final battle. The 'grandsons' of the Royalists, the Tories and 'High Church' men became for most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century their opposition in Church and Parliament but there was a great deal of tolerance between them. The United Kingdom settled down to a period of growing prosperity, though not without tensions. There were two Jacobite uprisings, in 1715 and 1745. Support for the Catholic Stuarts was weak in England but stronger in Scotland and stronger still in Ireland. The risings were put down and Catholics became even more strongly identified as potentially disloyal. Measures against them were not lifted until well into the nineteenth century. Non-conformists were viewed as challenging the authority and stealing congregations from the Church of England, and were harassed especially by High Church Tories. If not totally banned, they were mistrusted as challenging the social order.

Through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the influence of religion diminished among the governing and intellectual elites. However, a resilient nonconformity was joined by the Methodists, a reforming party within and then outside the Church of England. The chapels provided platforms for generations of working people. Harold Wilson and Morgan Philips, General Secretary of the Labour Party, both said that the genesis of the party owed far more to Methodism than to Marxism. It's worth pointing out that the Tolpuddle martyrs were a group of Methodists, led by a local preacher. (Marxists tend to go ballistic at the very idea the martyrs were Methodists).

Going back in time, I believe a vital contributor to the basis of the settlement after 'the Glorious

Revolution' was John Locke, who returned from exile in 1689 in Queen Mary's entourage. He spelled out the reconciliatory ethos of the new regime, arguing in his *Treatises of Government* and in his *Essay, Concerning Human Understanding* the individual's right to liberty and (of the greatest importance) the secure ownership of private property, coupling them with an ethical duty not to harm another person's rights. While respecting the authority of a monarch, Locke did not allow him or her arbitrary power. A style of regime was established which avoided absolute power and gave room for opponents to be respected. Yet Locke described himself as an 'undergardener' to 'the incomparable Mr Newton', 'the master builder', placing his own philosophising below Newton's science. To him, philosophers were 'underlabourers' 'whose task was to clear away the rubbish which lies in the way of knowledge'. This set the tone of philosophy as a practical business, social engineering rather than cerebral speculations. This regime that Locke helped to create was of course, seen as tyrannical by many Scots, most Irish, and eventually the American colonists. But Britain was rich and getting richer and with it came power.

Britain's Industrial Revolution and its wealth gathered pace throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its transformative power has changed and continues to change Britain and the world more than we, the people in the world we now live in, often fail to grasp. People selling their labour to industrialists and living in dormitory towns and cities, preferred the wages of the 'darkened towns' to an imagined Linden Lee of rural England. The new class of industrial workers frightened many people as it began to articulate its demands. The Peterloo Massacre of 1819 happened when a crowd in Manchester of perhaps 60,000, demanding parliamentary reform, was charged by cavalry. Fifteen died; over 400 were injured; the Duke of Wellington approved. (The founding of the *Manchester Guardian* was a by-product of the event). Probably the nearest thing to an actual armed revolution was the march on Newport in 1839 by Welsh Chartists from the industrial valleys. (Weapons the authorities claimed to have captured are currently displayed in the courtroom of the Shire Hall in Monmouth.) An example was made of the three leaders of movement, Frost, Williams and Jones, but their death sentences were commuted to transportation. Newport, the victim of this 'attack', was effectively outlawed from royal visits until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chartism, though, marked the establishment of organised movements representing working class demands that governments did not crush.

Britain dominated much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the richest country in the world, stable, with a free trade, laissez-faire style of government. Industry was free to develop as it wished and capital was available to do so. Markets were opened to Europe and the colonies, often to the detriment of those colonies' own industries. Bismark's government of the new Germany viewed Britain's influence and power as poisonous. Britain's political reforms were pressed for and slowly introduced. The franchise widened, beginning with the 1834 abolition of the 'Rotten boroughs but it was not until the 1930s that all adult citizens had votes.

An important point about British parliamentary government is, that since the arrival of the German kings, no first or prime minister has been able to survive without the support of his party. Victoria, for example, much as she very much liked Disraeli and very much disliked Gladstone, could not impose Disraeli upon Parliament. This was not the case in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany.

Suitable monarchs for Britain's style of government were imported. Sophia, mother of George I, was 54<sup>th</sup> in line of succession to Queen Anne, but a Protestant. She died just before Queen Anne and George probably over a hundredth in succession, was installed. Monarchs could be foreign, mad, morally reprehensible or all three and not shake the pattern of governments because their role was to be a sort of hereditary president rather than a hands-on ruler. Being German and hence not really

being British had its advantages until the First World War when they became the House of Windsor. On July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1917, the year they became the new Windsors, they were savaged by the *Church Times*: 'Our native Princes and Princesses will henceforth, we trust, find wives and husbands without any reference to the Almanac de Gotha, and without enquiring too closely into the number of quarterings on their armorial shields. The security of our Royal Family will depend, in the near future, on its contracting no new foreign taint'. Except for two ladies from the USA and a Greek the Royal family has stuck to what the *Church Times* had to say.

## The situation in Germany

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Germans endured brutal religious conflicts on a scale that makes the English Civil War seem like a skirmish. The Thirty Years War caused massive deaths and huge damage and left deep scars which took a century and more to recover from, if it ever entirely did so. Roughly speaking the northern German States became Protestant and the southern ones, Catholic. Significantly, both groups were anti-Semitic. Catholics did not allow Jews to convert. After failing to convert them, Martin Luther wrote in 1543 *On the Jews and their lives*. It contained the lines 'We are at fault in not slaying them'.

Theoretically the States were joined together under the rule of Holy Roman Emperor 'Germany' was divided into some 224 States, ranging from the minute to the likes of Prussia. Voltaire described Prussia as 'an army that owned a country'. Movement between the States was far from easy, both for goods and people. Yet the Romantic movement that was to sweep across Europe triggered a desire for unity among many Germans.

When Napoleon conquered the German States he reorganised them into 34 units. The philosophy of the French Revolution had a great appeal which French occupation quickly cancelled. After Napoleon's final defeat the Congress of Vienna, led by the deeply conservative Prince Metternich of Austria, broadly accepted the reorganisation of the States but did so in the interests of their autocratic rulers, and of neighbouring countries, Austria especially, who would not have welcomed a united Germany. The most powerful State, Prussia, preserved all the privileges of its 'poor but proud' Junkers, who exercised authority over its peasantry like the Russians and the French nobility before the French Revolution. Challenges against the new States, including the demand for a united Germany grew until in 1848 widespread confrontations were narrowly defeated. Probably the main reason that Bismarck united the German States in 1871 was to ensure that other German States, appearing to him to be vulnerable to liberal changes, were brought into line. The unification of Germany was more like their annexations by the Prussia that had defeated Austria and France. The king of Prussia became the Emperor of Germany.

The Emperors of the new Germany held great personal power. A problem arose when Kaiser Wilhelm II came to the throne following the brief reign of his liberal father. Wilhelm was an intelligent, troubled and angry man, with many grievances, first against his mother for 'causing' his withered left arm, then against many of his relations who shared a virtual monopoly of the other crowns of Europe. He was both fascinated and repelled by his English relatives. He felt a deep attachment to his grandmother Victoria and a deep dislike of his cousin, Edward Prince of Wales. The military tradition of Prussia, and the posturing, first of Bismarck and then Kaiser Wilhelm, caused Britain, France and Russia to forget their old hostilities and form defensive alliances against Germany.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany began to catch up and threaten to displace Britain as the leading European economy. Britain's liberalism and free-trade policy was perceived as a huge threat to Germany's conservative, aristocratic and protectionist regime. In a society where the Royal

household distinguished between 51 social gradations of the class admissible to the presence, Britain's relatively more relaxed social structures were anathema, if dangerously attractive to many Germans. Bismark, through his own newspaper and his manipulation of other publications set out to alienate the majority of Germans from 'English' ideas. Treitschke's violently anti-Semitic *A Word about our Jews* helped the claim of an English-Jewish conspiracy to dominate Germany. Wilhelm II in his anti-English moments talked about Judaengland.

Leading industrialists forged links with the aristocracy, thus accessing government support in hard-times, such as an industrial depression in 1873. A Social Democratic party was emerging and it could not be entirely suppressed. By 1914 a war to deflect attention away from social and economic problems might have had an appeal to German (and, perhaps, some British) politicians. There was no recognition of the costs and suffering a mechanised war would cause, though the American Civil War should have hinted at its violence. Both British Socialists and German Social Democrat leaders saw war as being against their peoples' interests. The conduct of war was seen by them to be the rulers of Europe asserting their power against the working classes. However, at the beginning, across Europe, patriotism seemed to trump class issues.

## The Enlightenment

At the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a new way of thinking about life began, first in Britain and then across Europe. The Enlightenment challenged religious beliefs and practices. Enlightenment thinking was free to flourish in Britain but its ideas, transmitted around Europe by Voltaire in his *Lettres philosophiques* and by other radical thinkers, was not to many rulers' tastes. Exiled in England, Voltaire publicised Locke's philosophy and Newton's science. 'The Augustan era' of the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the development among intellectuals of scepticism about the dictates of State and Church. The novel began to be preferred reading to the Bible. Satires written by Swift and others were used to ridicule those in power. The attitude to religion might be summed up in Pope's words.

'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,  
The proper study of Mankind is Man.'

## Romanticism

Romanticism developed as a counter current to the cold reason of Enlightenment thinking. It began by being radical, joining in the early enthusiasm for the French Revolution, praising the heroic and the emotional. In Germany Schubert's lieder and Friedrich's picture *Wanderer above the sea of fog* caught the mood of young men and women seeking change. After 1850 in Britain and in Germany it morphed into something more conservative and nationalistic. In Britain there was the reinvention of the medieval that medieval folk might not have recognised. It lingered in the Arts and Crafts movements, giving prosperous individuals a private life style away from the industrialised world they profited by. In the German States there was a promotion of a nationalistic folk culture.

## British Philosophy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

In relation to the philosophy of the times it is usual to distinguish between knowledge based on experience, (empiricism) and knowledge based on unaided reasoning, (rationalism). Empiricists believe that all we can legitimately claim to know about in the universe is based on sense experience, and on the ideas and association of ideas that arise. The rationalists would claim that truth can be identified by thought processes alone.

Following on from Locke and Hume, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill became the two leading

Utilitarians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They set out to promote wellbeing as the basis for morality and political practice. Bentham wrote, 'it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong.' He is usually described as a philosopher, albeit confined largely to moral philosophy and the philosophy of law. He also was also an eminent jurist with a Lockean commitment to the principle of human liberty and an early campaigner for animal welfare. Bentham's frustration with Parliament's unwillingness to reform a chaotic and inequitable law system led him to campaign for its reform. He campaigned for the abolition of slavery and the death penalty. His interest in practical issues such as prison reform led him to design a model prison, the panopticon, a building with cell blocks radiating out from a central monitoring point like spokes in a wheel. (Some were built in America but none in Britain.) When he died his friends, uncertain of the likelihood of his resurrection, had him stuffed and put in a glass case. I last saw him a few years ago in the main hall of University College in London. I believe he still attends meetings of its governors but doesn't vote.

Bentham's godson, Mill, worked as a political economist. His *Principles of Political Authority* advocated the principles of the laissez-faire, self-regulating economy. His essay *on Liberty* echoed Locke when he wrote, 'the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community against his will, is to prevent harm to others.' He and his wife promoted female emancipation and suffrage. He qualified Bentham's greatest happiness principle. '...better a Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied' because like Kant he devoted himself to an attempt to weave together the insights of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Unlike Kant he relied entirely on 'the school of experience and association'. While 'Socrates dissatisfied' and 'a pig' should each be given a vote there is no doubt about whom Mill favoured. He proposed that university graduates should be given more than one vote in general elections, though already, from 1613 to 1948 Oxbridge graduates returned two members from their respective universities, and from 1918 to 1948 other universities returned at least one MP. (The Labour government abolished the seats.)

In 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain the stream of philosophical thought, running through men such as Locke, Hume and the Utilitarians, was a powerful influence on changes to the electoral system which began the transition towards a universal suffrage.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in England there was a mood against the industrial and materialistic spirit of the time. William Morris and his followers attempted to recreate the craftsmanship of medieval England in the face of smoking towns. Tennyson created a mythology of King Arthur and his knights. This reaction was also an escape from the evidence of men like Darwin who replaced the idea of humankind as a special creation by convincing arguments that humans were an advanced form of apes.

A disaffection with empirical philosophy may have been reflected in the work of late 19th century academic philosophers such as F H Bradley, T H Green and Bernard Bosanquet. Perhaps hoping to make idealist philosophy respectable for Oxbridge, they were the revivers of a brief flowering of 'old' Hegelian thinking.

Bosanquet talked of the State as 'the flywheel of our life.' Bradley argued that the community should take precedence over the individual 'who gains his identity from that community'. This, Bertrand Russell claimed, saw freedom as the ability to obey the police. G E Moore's essay *The Refutation of Idealism* and Bertrand Russell's logistic atomism quenched the Idealists' importance. Moore's Common Sense philosophy and insistence on the value of using of ordinary language when talking about philosophy was aimed at the idealists. Russell placed emphasis on science and mathematics

and held that knowledge about the world is reducible to 'atoms' of experience, drawing on scientific ideas. Russell may not know that he has become the President of the Tintern Philosophy Society.

## German Philosophy

From the 1750s to the 1830s, the period spanning the active lives of Kant to Hegel, German philosophy enjoyed a major reputation in Europe. As Hegel built on and disagreed with Kant, so many of those whom Hegel influenced would develop their own ideas in disagreement with him. Karl Marx, for example, boasted that he had stood Hegel's philosophy on its head. Both Hegel and Marx were optimistic about their own views of the future. After Hegel's death his followers fell broadly into two groups, 'the old Hegelians' who believed his teachings supported autocratic government and 'the young (liberal/ 'Romantic') Hegelians' such as Marx who supported radical change. Such contrasting groups seem to be a testament to the opaqueness of Hegel's work.

Hegel, who may or may not have believed in God, argued that our existence and our capacity for reason shaped thought and being, and proposed a 'law', the science of logic, to which all sciences were subject. Yet, as the young Hegelians were to complain, the details of his law seemed prosy and full of mystical rather than scientific content. He posited that the meeting between two opposites in a duality of the mind, 'pure nothing' and 'pure being', produced 'becoming', an advance in thought. Hegel's description of the dialectic in public life was slightly different to that of Fichte's but Fichte's wording has stuck, 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis'. This was to be adopted by Marx as a scientific rather than a philosophical law, though its reality seems to me to be simply a matter of faith.

Hegel's idea of 'geist' was very important. The word is difficult to translate but might be described as spirit-mind, a sensibility that at the right time a man might catch on to and do great things. Hegel might have seen Napoleon as such a man. Might he have thought it a failure of geist in Gray's 'Elegy...in a churchyard': 'Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest, some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood'.

Hegel's 'struggle to death – master slave dialectic' may have provided seeds for the different ideas of Marx and Nietzsche but Hegel had his critics. Karl Popper quoted a contemporary description of Hegel by Schopenhauer (1788-1860). '...a flat headed, insipid, nauseating, illiterate charlatan.'

Popper, in *The Open Society and its Enemies*, claimed that Hegel and Marx's historicism (the idea that the study of history can predict the future) leads to authoritarianism. For me that belief is another form of secular religion. In all religions there is a strong tendency, ranging from denigration to persecution, to reject those who disagree.

Marx and Engels should be considered as partners. Under Engle's name they wrote *The Communist Manifesto*. After Marx's death Engels completed *Das Kapital*. Both men had a real sense of compassion for the difficulties and suffering faced by the emergent working classes, but both also saw them as the 'army' that would overthrow capitalism, as their faith in historicism told them must happen. 'Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!'

The problem is that Hegel's dialectic, thesis-antithesis-synthesis, that Marx and Engels borrowed, has not worked. There have been endless excuses: wrong countries, wrong leaders at national and union levels, wrong timings are a few. There have been murders and mass slaughter in the name of communism. Many communist countries have now changed to autocratic capitalist societies, the theoretical good replaced by the capitalist concern for profit. It seems to me that for the present,

market economies are the least bad way of developing a country though the system may need fewer and fewer people as waged workers, and what are the plans for those who have no economic value?

Marx was deeply read as an economist. He recognised the inherently unstable and unpredictable nature of capitalism, and would have been surprised that it has survived to this day. Of the Jews he wrote "The task of abolishing Jewry in civil society, abolishing the inhumanity of today's practice of life, the summit of which is the money system', seemingly believing that 'the money system' and Jewishness, if not individual Jews, were somehow coterminous and needing to be swept away. Religion was a problem in the way of advancement. 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Religion is the opium of the people.'"

In the 1840s attempted revolutions sweeping across Europe seemed likely of success until they were firmly stamped upon. For his views Marx was stripped of his Prussian citizenship and banished from the country, finding a safe haven in England. Marx and Engels worked on, developing a canon of works which provided a description of the society of the time and a port for the struggles of the working classes. Seeing struggle as the road to success, the Marxists made few moral appeals to the capitalists, whom they acknowledged had provided a necessary stepping stone from feudalism to socialism and an eventual communist society. Engels, as a partner in a prosperous Manchester cotton mill, a fully paid up member of the bourgeoisie, funded Marx in order to overthrow the class he belonged to. He must be the first or one of the first champagne socialists. I'd argue that, rather than conflict, a combination of ethical arguments concerning justice and better conditions for the working classes, together with a growing exercise of working class political muscle, stifled the appeal of Marxism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain and to a lesser extent in Germany. That does not mean that a self-regulating economic system always works but it does now seem to be seen by ex-communist societies as the best solution.

At this point it is worth saying that many people who have claimed to be followers of Marx or Nietzsche would not have been recognised as such by the men they claimed allegiance to. In his later years Marx was heard to say, 'I am not a Marxist'. In his later years Nietzsche was in no position to defend himself against his sister's antisemitism which he loathed. Can Marx and Nietzsche be blamed for things that were done in their names? But their ideas appealed to the dictatorships that caused havoc in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In hard times, ideas that once sounded good can be transmuted into dreadful practice I will repeat, the economies of 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalist societies, supposedly self-regulating markets unconcerned with virtue, seemed better places to be than Marxism or Fascism provided.

Because of his at the very least unusual personality, an interest in Zoroastrianism may now seem to be one of Nietzsche's stranger features. But in his time many German philologists were deeply interested in the newly emerging translations of ancient middle eastern languages. It was a subject that was unlikely to raise fears among continental governments. His florid and exuberant use of language may have been equally unalarming to the authorities.

Avestan, an Eastern Persian language containing an early version of Zoroastrian scriptures, was of general interest. The title of *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, perhaps Nietzsche's most famous book, would not have surprised then as much as now. His *Zarathustra* was to signal God's death and the emergence of the first 'Superman'. God was dead and man faced an endless cycle of birth and rebirth. Only Nietzsche 'Supermen' could welcome the cycle with all its conflict, pain and suffering. A Superman could rejoice in conflict; he could say, 'The best peace is a short peace'. He believed that almost all people, 'The herd', were only fit to be led.

Nietzsche's philosophy chimed in with a mood of nostalgia for an older mythical Germany (a little akin to one in Britain?). There were the folk stories of the brothers Grimm, Wagner's Grand Operas (with Nietzsche's approval and then with his disapproval), a romantic myth and a grandeur newly discovered and perhaps needing a new sort of leader. Yet Nietzsche himself seems to have had little regard for Germany as a country to live in. His Supermen transcended Race and Countries.

Nietzsche believed that Goethe was a Superman. He was not a Jew hater. Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* notes that '... out of disgust with Bismark's German Reich he coined the word "good Europeans" for the Jews', members of the one race in Europe without a country. But after he became totally insane his sister Elizabeth, a Jew hater, cobbled together her anti-semitism with scraps of his notes to produce *The Will to Power* which together with Wagner, Hitler claimed as his intellectual and emotional base. Fascism, which combined ethnic nationalism with a totalitarian concept of the State, came in a number of flavours but Hitler's National Socialism was the most virulent. Nietzsche's Superman, or Overman, poisoned by his sister's anti-semitic additions, provided a way of validating Hitler as the man apart, above the 'herd' that 'by right' he directed.

Engels and Marx, concerned with their 'scientific' theory of the inevitability of the triumph of the proletariat, had little to say about morals and ethics, In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche struck out at beliefs about morality. There was no good and evil, only the activity of our impulses that drove us to seek power in our lives, 'the will to power'. A master-slave relationship was useful and self-correcting. Actions should be judged by their results not their morality. Both Marx and Nietzsche launched what might be described as secular faiths that in practice demanded belief from their followers.

## The 20<sup>th</sup> century

In 1914 many European countries went to war. To their leaders war might have seemed to be a logical extension of diplomacy but a mechanised War proved unimaginably brutal. Overall, the economic costs to all the countries amounted to 200 billion pounds. The cost to Britain was 47 billion. Nowadays that does not sound much but the present equivalent in costs to Britain, in terms of the current economic pound, is about 15 trillion. The cost to all the combatant nations may have been an estimated unbelievable 60 trillion in today's money Millions died directly because of war (my grandfather among them), others of starvation, or of illnesses exacerbated by starvation such as the 1918-19 flu epidemic. Yet the sheer foolishness went on for four years. When it ended Germany was savagely punished as if it had been entirely responsible for all that had happened.

The control and prosecution of war may have been seen as the business of the national elites, but there can be no mistaking the widespread enthusiasm that war generated, taking precedence over issues relating to employment and voting rights that had been absorbing attention and frightening conservative citizens. Objections to war seem to have been held by a small minority (but among them were leaders of the British Labour party and the German Social Democrats). Aristocratic elites, seeing war as their trade, somehow took control and could not be reeled in by civil governments. Yet how could Germany not have aligned itself with a crumbling Austrian Empire? How could Britain not have come to the aid of 'gallant little Belgium', and to France, her new partner in the *Entente Cordiale*? Could Russia turn its back on the Slavs beyond her border? All this slaughter followed the death of one man, admittedly a Crown Prince, but still, only one man.

The Second World War, caused perhaps by the harsh terms imposed on Germany, led to the discrediting of the German aristocracy but also to the profoundly violent and evil Nazi regime and



the consolidation of a new communist state in Russia.

William James suggested that violent emotions are sensations of physiological disturbances, but I would question whether the conflicts of the twentieth century can be described as some sort of global wide mental illness. Rather, it was demonstrated that human beings can be unbelievably violent in certain situations. It's the way we human beings are made, like other apes but using increasingly sophisticated weapons.

A famous study in America at about the time of the Vietnam war demonstrated that subjects operating under the orders of supposed figures of authority could be made to inflict what they believed were lethal shocks on people who failed to give the right answers to questions. Studies of the brain seem more and more to support Hume's suggestion that we are governed by emotions rather than reason: 'reason is, and should be, the slave of the passions'. Many philosophers have seemed to treat the passions with suspicion, yet passion rather than reason, in the form of secular religions, seems to have led to an awful number of deaths in the conflicted twentieth century and surely needs to be factored in to any philosophical discussion.

In Britain deflection of debate away from the dreadful 'overkill' of the First World War was at little cost to celebrate 'the glorious dead'. What does it mean to be glorious because you have been killed; did you want to be? My mother paraded at the front of the march to the new war memorial in Huddersfield wearing a white dress with a black sash, as a member of the largest family to have lost their father. She greatly enjoyed the experience. The war of 1914-18, described as 'the war to end all war', reflected such a craving for peace that there was real reluctance to rearm until the threat from a very evil German regime was utterly unmistakable.

In Germany with its collapsed economy and the old war lords repeating the claim that the army had never been defeated, (it had), democracy seemed a busted flush. Hitler, claiming inspiration from Nietzsche, came to power, trumpeting the old complaint that the Jews were the cause of the country's ills. Hitler also planned, that after a successful war he would go on to exterminate the 'racially inferior' Slavs and create a greater *Lebensraum*, (living space) for the nation.

The Second World War killed its own vast swathes of people. After the war, aided rather than punished, Germany recovered and, in West Germany at least, it was as if the uprising of 1848 had finally become successful. However, I sense that many Germans feel a real sense of guilt, coupled with incredulity that their nation could once have used mass murder to eliminate those it considered corrupt or inferior. The 'science' of eugenics was discredited.

Before and after the Second World War communist states have killed or starved huge numbers of people who they believed had not followed party lines.

## Conclusions

After the First World War, unfairly and dangerously, all blame for the conflict was laid at Germany's and Austria's doors. Austria was reduced from an Empire to a small country. The scale of reparations demanded of Germany by the allies was crippling and the economic collapse of 1929 brought a struggling state to its knees. The idea came easily that 'someone else' was to blame and in Germany the communists and the Jews became 'the someone else'. Self-proclaimed strong leadership had huge appeal and with it a desire to return to the prosperous and autocratic rule of an earlier Germany. Adolf Hitler, the self-proclaimed strong man, claiming to be inspired by Nietzsche, was

appointed as the saviour of the country. He was supported by the mantra in military circles that the German army had not been defeated in the Great War. In the Second World War in Europe, three ideologies clashed, communism, national socialism and, almost apologetically, democracy. Neither Marx nor Nietzsche were monsters, but Hitler and Stalin were. After the war in Germany, it could be said that the great-great grandsons of the young Hegelians came to power and are still ruling, perhaps with the temperament and style of the Whigs of the British 18<sup>th</sup> century.

We know that mass killings were far from uncommon in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They (still) seem to occur when State propaganda has persuaded their people that their vital interests require another group to be eliminated. In such circumstances in the 20<sup>th</sup> century at least a million people were murdered at the partition of India. When the Serbs were murdering Bosnians as a matter of policy their television news was claiming that Bosnians were feeding Serb children to animals in the zoo. Tribal groups in Africa have resorted to genocide, but states under Fascist and Communist rule either on ethnic or political grounds have killed vastly more. Philosophy does not seem to address properly the question of irrational behaviour. Why? In all societies life is a precarious, gut-churning business more often than we care to admit.

What hope is there is for the world? What I have to offer is summed up in a word, *caritas*. It is the same word as charity that used to be in the phrase 'faith hope and charity'. It is a quality that our fellow apes possess at times. It means the capacity to offer love with nothing asked for in return. Here is the last verse of 'Dover Beach'.

Ah love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

John Dearnley

Reverend Dr John Dearnley's main career was in social work, At various times he had links with the Tavistock Institute, worked in for the Race Relations Board and in Community Work, but mainly he was concerned with local authority social work, then a member of the Social Services Inspectorate. On retirement he moved into voluntary work with the Church in Wales, being at one time Social Responsibility Officer for the Diocese of Monmouth and later becoming Priest in Charge in Llandogo and Tintern.