

RSA

21st century enlightenment

Journal Spring 2012

Cruel intentions?

Kathleen Taylor on why the first step towards eradicating cruelty is to understand the motives behind it

Susie Orbach calls for a new definition of happiness that relies on emotional, rather than economic, wellbeing

Jake Arnott blames crime fiction for our morbid obsession with the criminal mind



RSA

House

Fresh approach

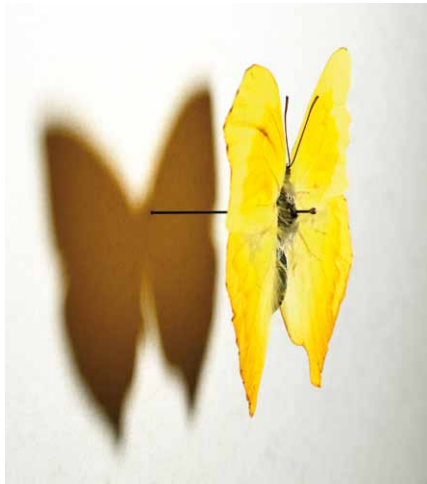


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“WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT CRUELTY”

KATHLEEN TAYLOR, PAGE 10

REGULARS

- 06 UPDATE
The latest RSA news
- 09 PREVIEW
Events programme highlights
- 46 NEW FELLOWS / REPLY
Introducing six new RSA Fellows, plus your views on recent features
- 48 REVIEW
John Podmore says that we are still a long way from a rehabilitation revolution, and Roy F Baumeister compares willpower to a muscle
- 50 LAST WORD
The first sign of madness is going out looking for it, finds Jon Ronson

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

- 14 *Arrival Education is transforming the prospects of young people from socially disadvantaged communities*
- 19 *David Floyd FRSA is exploring the role of social enterprises in providing mental health services*
- 22 *The UK Recovery Walk aims to combat the social stigma facing drug and alcohol misusers*
- 44 *Two Fellows have launched an online tool to combat food wastage*

FEATURES

- 10 BEHAVIOUR
The science of cruelty
From callousness to terrorism, cruelty has many faces, and we need to understand them all, says Dr Kathleen Taylor
- 15 RSA PROJECTS
Social sentencing
Steve Broome on the benefits of community-based sentences
- 16 MENTAL HEALTH
The sad truth
Tackling mental distress starts with acknowledging its presence in society, believes Susie Orbach
- 20 ADDICTION
Addiction myths
The emergence of a pseudo-scientific discourse about addiction detracts from the importance of personal motivation in the recovery process, argues Stanton Peele
- 25 OBITUARY
Ronald Searle RDI
Martin Rowson pays tribute to the late cartoonist Ronald Searle
- 26 PHOTOJOURNALISM
Through the lens
In an age of digital cameras, photojournalists still have a unique role to play, says Robin Laurance
- 28 JUSTICE
True crime
The growing popularity of thrillers – in print and on screen – is blinding us to the mundane reality of crime, warns Jake Arnott
- 32 PHILOSOPHY
On liberty
Could modern misconceptions of freedom be to blame for the severity of the socioeconomic crisis we are facing? Adam Lent investigates
- 35 EMPLOYMENT
RSA Jobs Summit
Luke Johnson, Paul Gregg and James Mawson explore the challenges facing the UK as it seeks to kickstart economic growth in the face of widespread unemployment
- 40 REHABILITATION
Step by step
The rewards outweigh the risks for those companies that recruit ex-offenders, says John Timpson
- 42 ENVIRONMENT
Green shoots
Some of the most effective ‘green’ initiatives have come from small local groups, says Roger Scruton, so why do we rely on global treaties and international activists to solve the environmental crisis?

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“IT’S NOT THE ROTTEN APPLE, IT’S THE ROTTEN BARREL”



MATTHEW TAYLOR

If we are to tackle criminality at its roots, we need to keep an open mind, avoid knee-jerk reactions and build stronger support networks for people who may be at risk of turning to crime

Thankfully, the *RSA Journal* team has chosen the joyous months of spring for an edition largely dedicated to the darker sides of life. As I enter the autumn of my own life, I find a terrible ennui hovering when certain conversation topics come up. One such is crime and misbehaviour. There are so many traps to be avoided that I am tempted not to embark on the intellectual journey in the first place.

The most obvious is the tendency to think that things – and people – are getting worse. Yet, as Stephen Pinker lucidly explained to an RSA audience a few months ago, the human race is almost certainly less violent now than at any time in its entire history. The capacity for cruelty may be ‘hardwired’ into humans, as Kathleen Taylor argues in our cover feature (page 10), but progress can in part be measured by the ascendancy of what Pinker calls “the better angels of our nature”.

As we step away from undue pessimism, we are in danger of falling into the trap labelled ‘smug complacency’. We should veer away again. As long as there are any innocent victims of greed, hate or indifference, we should strive for a better world. It is in the random nature of evil and calamity that a thunderbolt can explode a peaceful scene. Already, austerity in the UK is providing the context for a reversal of two decades of falling crime. It would only take a terrorist with a dirty bomb to make a mockery of the pleasing slopes of Pinker’s ‘deaths from violence’ graphs.

Having managed to steer a course between pessimism and complacency on crime, we are faced with the Scylla and Charybdis of social cause and individual responsibility. While liberals brandish evidence of the undeniable statistical links between disadvantage and criminality, social conservatives focus on the individual culpability of wrongdoers, pointing out that most poor people manage to stay on the straight and narrow. My two-step route through this minefield relies, first, on clarifying what is meant by a causal connection; it is, for example, not necessary for every smoker – nor even most of them – to succumb to lung cancer to accept that the habit causes the disease.

Second – and this presents a possible third way between liberals and conservatives – the impact of sheer financial disadvantage is clearly mediated by human factors such as family breakdown and peer-group pressure.

All discussion of human behaviour involves complexity, but our visceral reaction to crime can lead us to hunker down in a narrow and fixed position. We have to work hard to keep an open and enquiring mind about the nature and foundations of badness. Indeed, deeper reflection seems to have a consistent effect. Reports from citizens’ juries and deliberative polls on crime show participants starting off in the *Daily Mail* position and emerging sounding like *Guardian* readers.

While the left blames rising inequality and unemployment, and the right moral decline and broken homes, on the subject of criminality we all agree that more should be done to keep those who have fallen off the rails from falling again. This has become an important focus for the RSA. Our Transitions project is seeking to develop a new type of prison in which socially useful work bridges the divide between sentence and rehabilitation. Steve Broome writes in this issue on the scope for forms of social sentencing that combine reparation with reintegration (page 15). The theme of civic engagement is also central to our West Kent project on the rehabilitation of substance abusers (page 24).

Partly to check whether the audience is awake, I often ask in speeches whether anyone in the room “would like to be a better person”. My advice is simple: throw away the self-help books and choose more virtuous friends. As its title suggests, the RSA’s Social Brain project has underlined the importance of relationship networks in shaping behaviour. The fundamental flaw in our system of punishment is that we expect people to change their ways while surrounded by others who share their plight. This is why integration in wider society is such a strong theme of the RSA’s work.

Another past RSA speaker is Philip Zimbardo, the architect of the famous Stanford Prison experiment. Defending military guards at Abu Ghraib prison, Zimbardo summarised his research in this way: “It’s not the rotten apple, it’s the rotten barrel.” It is natural to sympathise with the victims of crime and violence, but any understanding of human nature should lead us also to look at the perpetrators and wonder what it is that really distinguishes us from them. ■



RSA HOUSE

HELP TRANSFORM THE GREAT ROOM

The RSA has launched an appeal to help fund the refurbishment of the Great Room. With Fellows' support, this ambitious project will create a technologically advanced space that is fit for use in the 21st century.

The upgraded Great Room will offer enhanced facilities for communicating the RSA's work to a global online audience. With improved technology, the RSA will be able to host live video streams of the majority of events, expanding their reach to international Fellows and new audiences worldwide. Lively social media reporting will help build an engaged online viewing community and increase the interactivity of events.

The new flexible seating arrangements and multiple possible configurations of the Great Room will enable the RSA to offer more innovative event formats, while the introduction of more imaginative catering options will increase opportunities for pre- and post-event networking.

A donation to the RSA's Great Room appeal will go directly to the refurbishment project. Fellows can choose the amount they would like to give and see how that gift will be used. All donations will be recognised on a special roll of honour screened in the House this summer.

If you would like to make a donation to the Great Room Appeal, please visit www.thersa.org/greatroom



EVENTS

RSA JOBS SUMMIT

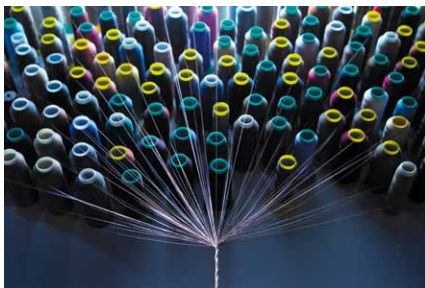
The UK government has a strong track record in terms of job creation but needs to focus its attention on the age groups and geographies that consistently show high rates of unemployment. This was one of the key messages that came out of the RSA's Jobs Summit in January, instigated by RSA chair Luke Johnson, who co-chaired the debate alongside RSA chief executive Matthew Taylor and economist Vicky Pryce.

The day-long event, sponsored by Aviva, brought together senior politicians, academics, policy analysts, economic commentators and business leaders for a broad-ranging debate about jobs, enterprise, industrial policy and labour-market regulation. The debate highlighted the fact that, while unemployment rates have not risen as far as expected, the combination of weak GDP growth and the threat of high inflation limits the chances of an improvement in the job market.

David Miliband MP joined a panel debate about what we can do to get more young people into work, while policy analyst Jonathan Portes offered some predictions about future employment patterns, focusing on the move away from financial services, changes in labour regulation and the impact of immigration. Meanwhile, entrepreneurs such as Elizabeth Varley called for greater government support for small start-ups, which are a vital source of economic growth.

Turn to page 35 to read more about the Jobs Summit or, to download audio and video content, visit www.thersa.org/rsa-jobs-summit. A full report will be available online soon

“THE COMBINATION OF WEAK GDP GROWTH AND THE THREAT OF HIGH INFLATION LIMITS THE CHANCES OF AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE JOB MARKET”



CITIZEN POWER

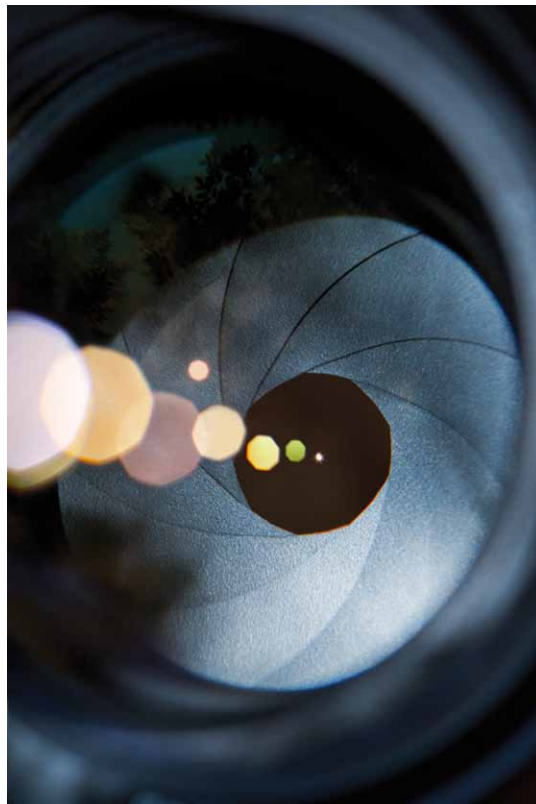
LOCAL HEROES

More than 200 Peterborough citizens have been identified as local 'change makers' by the RSA's Citizen Power programme, which is building a network of residents to help drive change in the city.

The network is the result of the ChangeMakers project, which has piloted an innovative method for identifying – and mapping the connections between – individuals who are adept at accelerating positive change. Whether they are businesspeople, members of the clergy, artists, housing officers, charity workers, headteachers, police officers, primary care trust representatives or council officers, the 230 people all have strong links with their community and an interest in using their skills and experience to address local issues.

Through a series of events, members of the ChangeMakers network will share ideas and advice, and gain access to useful resources, training and support. RSA researcher Benedict Dellot said: "As part of the Citizen Power programme, ChangeMakers will tap into and weave together the skills, knowledge and ideas of key individuals who can support the city as it attempts to achieve long-lasting, positive change at a time of economic and social flux."

■ To find out more about this project, or to discuss the possibility of forming a ChangeMakers network in your local area, please contact Benedict Dellot at benedict.dellot@rsa.org.uk



DESIGN AND SOCIETY



TECHNOLOGY ON TRIAL

Good design could increase the productivity and cost-effectiveness of the UK's criminal justice system, according to a new RSA report.

The result of a seminar held by the RSA and Cisco Systems, the report explores how a 'design thinking' approach to videoconferencing technologies in courtrooms could reduce costs without compromising the core values of the criminal justice system.

Drawing on the experiences of academics, designers and those involved in videoconferencing pilots in the UK and the Netherlands, it proposes three key stages for improving the design and integration of technology in UK courtrooms: the need to inspire, prototype and execute. It highlights the importance of the involvement of all court users in the process ('inspire'), frequent testing and evaluation of the new technology ('prototype') and a focus on design thinking as a route to innovation ('execute').

Jeremy Crump, director of safety and security at Cisco Systems, said: "As UK criminal justice agencies continue to extend the use of video technology in courts and police stations, there is an opportunity not only to reduce costs but also to create a better experience for all those involved. The application of design principles can help realise the potential benefits of new technology."

■ To download a full copy of the report, A virtual day in court, please visit www.thersa.org/a-virtual-day-in-court



PHILANTHROPY

GENEROUS LEGACY

The RSA is sad to announce the death of Odette Nettle (1915–2011). We would like to express our gratitude for her generous gift to the organisation of nearly £12,000.

Odette Nettle was born in 1915 in Le Havre, France. Academically gifted, she chose to study classics at the Sorbonne in Paris. After graduating, she headed to North Africa, where she became an English teacher in Algeria; this was the start of a lifetime career in teaching. In 1947, she married a naval officer, Stanley Nettle, who later reached the rank of commander and was a Life Fellow of the RSA.

Odette Nettle's gift will enable us to continue our work in education, design and drugs recovery, helping future generations to fulfil their potential.

Every gift in every will, large or small, makes a difference: just 1% of your estate will make a vital contribution to our work. Making a will is a personal decision and you will no doubt want to look after your friends and family first. If you would like to discuss leaving a gift in your will to the RSA, contact Esther McCarthy, head of development, at +44 (0)20 7451 6961 or esther.mccarthy@rsa.org.uk



FELLOWSHIP

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The RSA's Social Entrepreneurs Network has recently concluded the Social Enterprise Spotlight pilot, which has charted the progress of eight UK-based social enterprises.

The Spotlight initiative is just one of the benefits enjoyed by the 280 members of the Social Entrepreneurs Network, which provides practical support and inspiration to budding social entrepreneurs through quarterly gatherings, monthly breakfasts and an active online network.

Over the past year, the eight social entrepreneurs have led Spotlight quarterly events and have featured as case studies, sharing their experiences of running successful and sustainable enterprises. Each event aimed to solve one of the challenges social enterprises face, such as establishing governance or finding funding. The series culminated in an event in March that celebrated the role of social enterprise in UK industry.

This year's Spotlight case studies have included Arrival Education – a social enterprise that helps young people from underprivileged communities to improve their career prospects (see page 14) – and the DoNation, which invites people to sponsor their friends by carrying out a meaningful action rather than contributing financially. The next round of Spotlight events will kick off shortly with new case studies, so look out for more information in the Summer issue of the *RSA Journal*.

To join the RSA's Social Entrepreneurs Network or find out more about Spotlight, please visit www.rsafellowship.com/group/socialentrepreneursnetwork

NEWS IN BRIEF FELLOWSHIP SURVEY

The RSA completed its first annual survey in January. Led by Josef Lentsch, the RSA's head of Fellowship Services, with support from Professor Edward Truch FRSA, the survey attracted responses from more than 6,000 Fellows, representing 22% of the Fellowship. The RSA will publish a summary report of the findings later in the spring and will use insights from the survey to improve Fellowship services. Thank you to all those who contributed their feedback.

HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROJECT

As part of its Enterprise programme, the RSA will be launching a project to encourage employers to invest more in employee education and development. The project aims to overcome a number of obstacles to this, including standard accounting practices that classify such spending as a cost and the difficulties of measuring the return on investment from 'intangible' human assets. For more information or to get involved, email Julian Thompson, director of enterprise, at julian.thompson@rsa.org.uk

PREVIEW



THE RIGHTEOUS MIND

Why can't we all just get along? Jonathan Haidt, one of the world's most influential psychologists, reveals that the reason we find it so hard to do this is because our minds are designed to be moral. Our intrinsic morality has enabled us to form communities and create civilisation, and it is the key to understanding political and religious divisions. The RSA will host a live video stream of this event.

Where: RSA, London
When: Tue 10 April, 1pm



IMAGINE: HOW CREATIVITY WORKS

Shattering the myth of creative 'types', bestselling journalist and author Jonah Lehrer shows how new research is deepening our understanding of the human imagination. He considers how this new science can make us happier, our neighbourhoods more vibrant, our companies more productive and our schools more effective.

Where: RSA, London
When: Wed 25 April, 6pm



WHAT IS A GOOD TEACHER?

As part of the RSA/Teach First Education Matters Debates, HM Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw joins a high-profile panel of practitioners and policymakers to ask: what does it take to ensure that every child, regardless of socioeconomic background, is taught by a 'good teacher'.

Where: RSA, London
When: Mon 30 April, 6.30pm



FREE MARKET FAIRNESS

Can libertarians care about social justice? Challenging those on the left and the right, political philosopher Professor John Tomasi presents a hybrid theory of liberal justice that is committed to both limited government and the material betterment of the poor.

Where: RSA, London
When: Thu 3 May, 1pm



TIME WARPED

We are obsessed with time. But how much do we really understand it? Can we train our brains and improve our relationship with it? Acclaimed writer and broadcaster Claudia Hammond draws on research to shed light on the mysteries of time perception.

Where: RSA, London
When: Thu 24 May, 1pm

RSA Events development officer Abi Stephenson selected the highlights above from a large number of public events in the summer programme. For full event listings and free audio and video downloads, please visit www.thersa.org/events

FOR HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT EVENTS, SEE PAGE 48

THE SCIENCE OF CRUELTY

Callousness, disgust, sadism, terrorism: these are just a few of the ways in which cruelty shows its face in today's society. Only by seeking to define and distinguish these types of behaviour can we begin to tackle cruelty at its roots

By Dr Kathleen Taylor

We need to talk about cruelty. Following the recent financial crisis, many people feel that their futures are more uncertain, their security and comfort under threat. Western societies are still comparatively luxurious, tolerant and peaceful: Britain, with a population of more than 60 million, last year reported 642 homicides. Yet as economies stagnate, pessimists dread the beginning of the end of western capitalism, or at best a long, grim struggle for the good life. And, as the August 2011 riots in England reminded us, we fear dark times not just for their economic impact, but also because they can bring out the dark side of human nature. The heart of that darkness has always been cruelty.

Whether or not the pessimists are right and cruelty is likely to rise in the near future, we need to talk about the immense, long-lasting harm it is already doing. Verbal cruelty affects our brains like physical pain. Extreme mass cruelty can scar a society for generations. Half a century after the UN said 'Never again' in response to the Holocaust, more

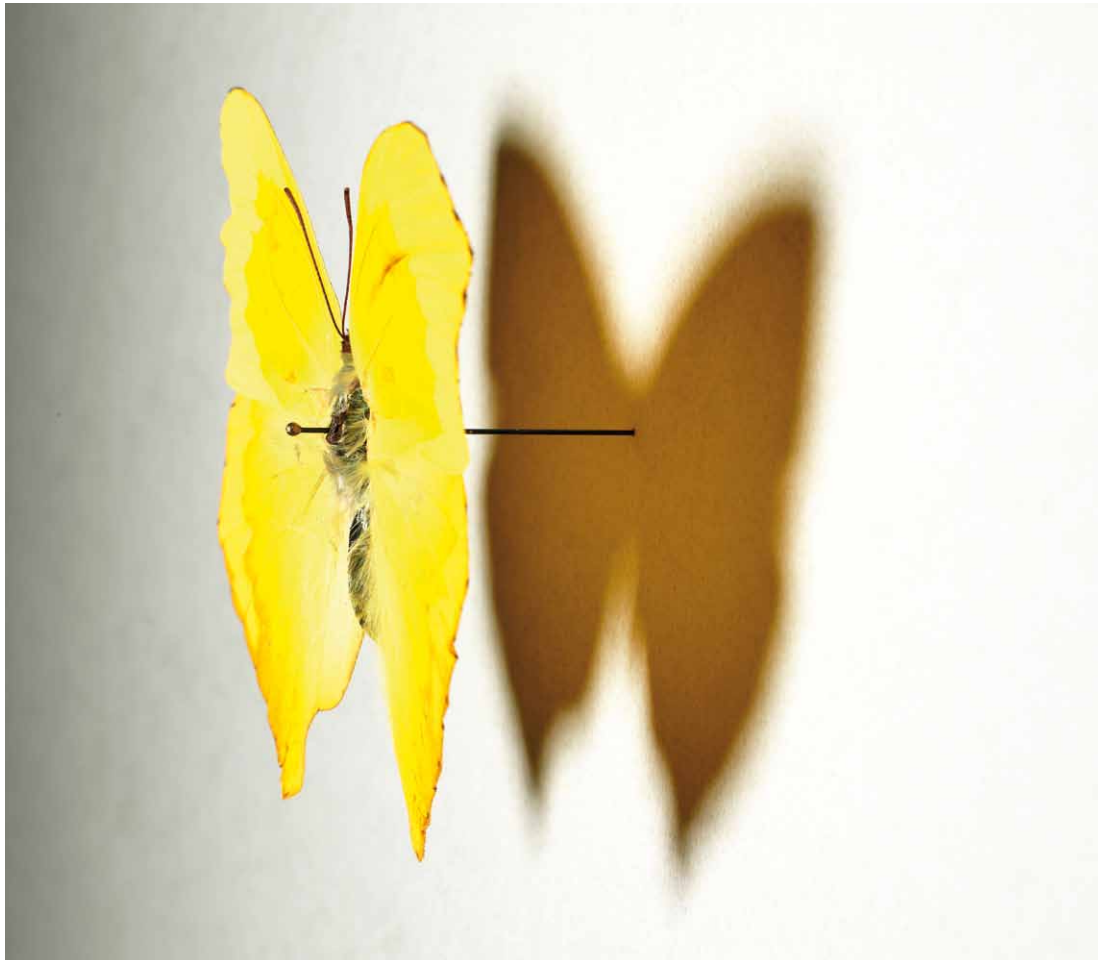
DR KATHLEEN TAYLOR IS A RESEARCHER AND SCIENCE WRITER

than 7,000 people have been killed in Srebrenica, and more than 800,000 in the Rwandan genocide. Shameful stories of western atrocities have emerged from Iraq and Afghanistan. In the UK, reports of home-grown viciousness include a mob jeering at a suicidal teenager, abusive neighbours driving a disabled youngster's mother to murder-suicide, and people who rape, enslave and torture children. Less visible, and more common, are animal abuse, school and workplace bullying, 'minor' child abuse and domestic violence. Cruelty is part of our repertoire.

To reduce the damage, we need to understand cruelty. Unfortunately, most of us would rather not. Cruelty offends those who are optimistic about human nature, and those who would blame society for bad behaviour, because it is gratuitous and deliberate. It is also inherently – sometimes almost unbearably – unpleasant to contemplate. Imagining ourselves acting with even minor cruelty makes us uncomfortable, though most of us will have been cruel at some time.

Discussing cruelty is made harder by the fact that we have two languages for harm-doing. One is the academic discourse of science and government, which emphasises >>





>> situational risk factors, personality traits, causal mechanisms and statistics, leaving scant room for the free agency essential to our notions of cruelty. The second is a much older framework of moral judgement found in all cultures. It sees perpetrators as responsible agents who act deliberately and deserve punishment.

Some academics view this basic morality as at best tabloid, at worst dangerous and wrongheaded, while many people see academic talk as little more than attempts to defend the indefensible. Both sides have a point. Thousands of years of moralising have not succeeded in getting rid of cruelty. Science has proved its analytical worth, but a science that barely acknowledges cruelty's existence cannot explain it. We need a new approach that combines the two, taking basic morality seriously but assessing it in scientific terms.

By bringing together social neuroscience, moral psychology, evolutionary arguments, anthropological and historical data, and cross-species research, scientists have begun to develop explanations for cruelty. They have observed that basic morality – unlike later moral ideas such as human rights – is group-centred. This tendency to favour one's own people (the ingroup) over outsiders (the outgroup) is found in other species, and in humans it modulates moral judgements. Setting off an explosion, for instance, can be seen as heroic soldiery or

terrorist bombing, depending on who makes the judgement and their social links to perpetrators and victims.

Punishments and judgements of moral responsibility also tend to vary by social status. Ingroup offenders receive more lenient treatment, their cruelty mitigated by reference to circumstances.

Outgroup offenders, believed to be cruel by choice, face more vengeful action. Even cognition and brain activity are altered, with outgroup members' beliefs and motives understood in less complex terms, as if they were animals, and less effort and empathy spent on considering their justifications.

Violent cruelty is often said to erupt out of nowhere. In fact, there is always a prelude of rising 'otherisation': a catch-all term for the social and psychological processes that push individuals and groups into mutual hostility. Stereotyping, avoidance, false beliefs and casual denigration can, if left unchecked, escalate into abuse and outright conflict. As enmity grows and strong emotions are aroused, the outgroup becomes increasingly dehumanised. Its aggression is seen as sadistic cruelty, and is often exaggerated. As it acquires the label 'evil', rational approaches become irrelevant.

Basic morality served our ancestors well. Murderous action to protect kith, kin and allies can boost a group's survival chances. A damaged enemy can retaliate; an exterminated one cannot. Group-centred morality also makes violence less traumatic

“THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF MORALISING HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN GETTING RID OF CRUELTY”

for perpetrators, since destroying evil is ultimately an action of self-defence, even when the outgroup poses no obvious threat. Other benefits include enhanced feelings of solidarity, power and purpose, less criticism of leaders, a willingness to rally round and a useful external enemy on whom any failures can be blamed. In today’s globalised, highly populated world, however, the tendency for cruelty to breed more cruelty can spiral to afflict vast numbers of people. This fact alone demands that we try to reduce it.

WHY DO WE BEHAVE CRUELLY?

To this end, researchers are identifying the mechanisms that drive otherisation, including how brains process rewards and trigger threat responses. Basic morality views outgroup cruelty as sadism, but most cruel behaviour has other motives, whether rewards, threats or a combination of the two. Rewards include curiosity, the desire for gain, competition for resources, wanting to please or impress superiors and colleagues, the thrill of physical exertion, the excitement of risk-taking and sexual desire. These can be powerful drivers, especially when they are unexpected reactions to a novel, usually threatening, situation. Much cruelty occurs in high-pressure environments that demand fast action, not rational consideration. Extreme examples, such as war crimes or gang murders, typically involve tight-knit groups of ill-educated, inadequately trained young men who depend on one another for survival and who feel under deadly threat from the people they attack. Add in the common effects of intoxicants, and there is little chance that logical reflection or a rush of empathy will intervene to make perpetrators spare their victims.

Threats, like rewards, are key to cruelty. Humans have evolved threat responses associated with overpowering emotions: fear for threats to existence; rage for threats to power, status or resources; disgust for intangible threats such as pathogens or, more recently, ideas. Fear of punishment, dread of outgroup vengeance, anger aroused by tales of outgroup atrocities and loathsome stereotypes all feature in perpetrators’ justifications. Disgust is particularly useful because, unlike fear and anger, it can be deployed against an outgroup pre-emptively, even when that group is clearly powerless. (Rotting food, a prime disgust threat, cannot actively attack you, though it may be lethal if eaten.) Disgust is, unsurprisingly, central to the language and

logic of extreme otherisation across cultures. Whoever the victims, they are portrayed as rats, filth, cancer or infection: threats from which the ingroup must be cleansed by the quarantining, expulsion or eradication of the outgroup.

Cruelty can serve various purposes. The most common form is callousness, in which cruelty is a by-product of perpetrators’ other goals. A drug addict who mugs an old lady to get money for a fix is acting callously. The victim’s suffering is not the aim of the exercise – money found lying in the street would do instead – but her pain does not matter enough to deter the perpetrator.

Callousness can escalate into terrorism. This happens when the suffering inflicted on the victim becomes useful in itself, for example as a show of power. Terrorist cruelty is a means to an end.

Terrorism can, in turn, develop into sadism. This happens when the signs of suffering themselves become desirable, as the stimuli become directly associated with pleasure by the brain’s reward pathways. Sexual sadism is the best-known form, though other rewards, such as an adrenaline rush, can serve as well. Here, delight in cruelty becomes an end in itself.

Sadism, callousness and terrorism can evoke the same behaviour. A sadist might mutilate and kill a young child for pleasure. A soldier might do so to look tough or demonstrate loyalty. A terrorist, meanwhile, might find his strong belief that the enemy is disgusting and dangerous painfully challenged by a vulnerable, appealing young child and resolve the mental conflict by making his victim disgusting. Mutilation and murder achieve this efficiently; we have evolved to flinch from wounds and corpses.

To manage cruelty, it is crucial to distinguish its various forms. Sadism is best treated as an addiction: the brain has created a link between a certain stimulus and a certain reward, and the two now need to be decoupled. Callousness and terrorism are more rationally responsive to changes in the perpetrator’s environment – including the social context – which is why some war criminals adapt very well to peacetime. Fear-driven cruelty can be defused by displaying the enemy’s weakness and incentivising antagonists to cooperate on projects. Disgust-driven cruelty is better prevented by social norms that reject the offensive language.

Addressing the specific motives at work and counteracting otherisation can decrease incentives and >>

“SETTING OFF AN EXPLOSION CAN BE SEEN AS HEROIC SOLDIERY OR TERRORIST BOMBING, DEPENDING ON WHO MAKES THE JUDGEMENT”

» diminish cruel behaviour. Acting early to remove rewards, make punishments proportionate and consistent, and weaken group influences can reduce the chances of cruelty becoming more serious. Furthermore, as behaviour worsens, it can often feel increasingly compelling: “I can’t go back to normal after what I’ve done, so I might as well go on.” The chance to act otherwise, at every stage, needs to be made easier and more obvious, so that perpetrators can escape the funnel of necessity with less risk and lower costs.

Callousness, terrorism and sadism can be hard to tell apart without an effort to understand the perpetrator, something that many people find morally repugnant. Yet if understanding can lessen cruel behaviour, surely we are ethically bound to try. For those who worry that science will simply generate more excuses for criminals, it need not be so. Understanding cruelty could focus moral condemnation where it will have most effect – away from the seriously mentally ill, for instance. It could also extend our outrage from sadism and terrorism to callousness,

which is often excused as minor, and from members of disliked outgroups to people like us.

Our cultures could be less tolerant of bullying, animal abuse and domestic violence. We could show our abhorrence of them, and the attitudes behind them, more clearly and consistently. We could also intervene before otherisation makes cruelty inevitable, rather than punishing it afterwards. Most of all, we could encourage our leaders to be more aware of the triggers of cruel behaviour, firmer in their condemnation – whoever the perpetrators – and more prepared to change the social structures that contribute to cruelty, not least by the ways in which they limit people’s options.

Understanding cruelty would be an ethical advance. Talking about why it happens will not solve the problem, but it is a necessary start. ■

Dr Kathleen Taylor’s book, Cruelty: Human Evil and the Human Brain, is published by Oxford University Press.

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

ARRIVAL EDUCATION

Daniel Snell FRSA started working with young people in 2003 after a friend’s younger brother was murdered. He quit his corporate career to work on an initiative designed to transform the prospects of children in inner-city areas. Now, Snell is working with the RSA’s Social Entrepreneurs Network to share his experiences of changing young people’s lives.

The original initiative has evolved into a social enterprise, Arrival Education, which runs a four-year talent development programme for students who have the potential to influence their peers’ behaviour positively. Engaging young people from the age of 14, the Success for Life programme places participants in local businesses in order to develop their mindsets, skills and leadership potential.

On graduating from the programme, participants can choose to go to a top-20 university, find employment (potentially at Arrival Education), or set up their own business or social enterprise in return for investment from Arrival Education and its partners. All graduates from the programme receive shares in the social enterprise.

“This model provides genuine social mobility by giving both us and the businesses we work with the chance to invest in the progress of talented young people,” said Snell, who is currently involved in the RSA’s Social Enterprise Spotlight initiative. This has profiled the highs and lows of eight social enterprises over a 12-month period.

Having shared Arrival Education’s story with a network of more than 200 social entrepreneurs, Snell has made valuable contacts – including potential investors and advisory board members – and identified common challenges and opportunities that social enterprises face. He said: “The Social Entrepreneurs Network is a fantastic way of celebrating the UK’s social enterprise industry. I would like to see the RSA lead the way in promoting business models that combine profit with purpose.”

■ To find out more about Arrival Education, please visit www.arrivaleducation.com or email fellowship@rsa.org.uk. To join the Social Entrepreneurs Network or attend a Spotlight event, visit www.rsafellowship.com/group/socialentrepreneursnetwork

SOCIAL SENTENCING

If we want to foster a greater sense of citizenship among offenders and accelerate their reintegration into the local community, we should explore the concept of social sentencing

By Steve Broome

The government's promise to deliver a 'rehabilitation revolution' was well received when it was announced some 18 months ago. But alongside concerns about how this is developing in practice, we need to step back and ask more fundamental questions about what we mean by rehabilitation, and how anyone can 'deliver' it.

Rehabilitation has largely been framed as achieving a reduction in reoffending through the better management of offenders, tackling drug dependency, addressing mental health problems and helping people to acquire skills and jobs. The government's *Breaking the Cycle* green paper (December 2010), however, spoke of offenders returning to their communities as law-abiding citizens. Citizenship – considered as accepted membership of a community and participation in collaborative enterprise for the public good – depends on reintegration that cannot come solely from the top down or the individual. It requires the participation and commitment of both the offender and the community.

In his work on civic virtues, political scientist Richard Dagger suggests that the more we can do to achieve this kind of citizenship, the less we will need to rely on punishment, and that if the sense of citizenship is weak, the prospect of (re)offending is greater. The legislator should design the system to foster citizenship and move people towards collaboration.

Are these ideas practicable? Community sentencing seems an obvious first option to explore. This often incorporates unpaid work, such as removing graffiti or clearing derelict areas, that requires offenders to wear high-visibility jackets emblazoned with 'Community Payback' to emphasis the focus on punishment and improve public confidence in these types of sentence. But in visibly marking offenders as 'other' and by choosing payback activities that mean offenders work in isolation (either individually or only with other offenders), we limit the social productivity and reintegrative potential of such sentences.

The RSA's Connected Communities programme explores how social networks (real-world relationships and exchanges, rather than online connections) can become more inclusive and exert greater positive influence on issues such as health and employment. So, can we design sentencing to widen the constructive social connections of offenders and promote positive



social influence? Rather than separating offenders from other citizens, can they undertake 'payback' that is equally demanding and useful, but that requires interaction with the parts of their communities from which they are removed?

Examples of such 'social sentences' include helping to organise community events, working for voluntary groups, assisting with community organising or helping with consultations. These could be particularly effective where sentences hand down a high number of working hours, resulting in sustained interaction and influence in the community. The potential returns on such an approach are considerable; almost nine million hours of work were undertaken

through Community Payback last year.

Criminologist Nils Christie argues that conflicts belong to the people who are involved in them and that, in assigning ownership to the state and courts, we 'steal the conflict'. In doing so, we remove communities' opportunities to resolve them directly, along with the resultant benefits. Social sentences would be determined and delivered locally; they would require offenders to participate in more meaningful activities that generate greater benefits for all stakeholders; and they have the potential to be more cost-effective in a time of austerity. They can also help to kickstart reintegration by fostering citizenship, empathy and collaboration.

There are a number of potential challenges to this approach, such as gaining buy-in from local communities and a perceived public resistance to working closely with offenders. But research for the University of Cambridge Public Opinion Project shows that about a third of people would consider volunteering time or money to support alternatives to prison. Community involvement in the criminal justice system, as criminologist Shadd Maruna has shown, is likely to increase support for community-based sentences and thus create further opportunities for implementing them. In this way, a significant step in realising a rehabilitation revolution might be to enable greater 'rehabilitation devolution' through initiatives such as social sentencing. ■

■ This year, the RSA's Connected Communities team aims to develop the idea of social sentencing, exploring how to generate community support. We also hope to create a working model of how such sentences could be designed and implemented. For more information, contact Steve Broome at steve.broome@rsa.org.uk

STEVE BROOME IS DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AT THE RSA

THE SAD TRUTH

If the government's wellbeing agenda is to amount to anything, we need first to challenge the idea that happiness depends on individual attainment. Only then can we acknowledge and address the personal and collective distress that is rife within our society

By Susie Orbach

Psychoanalysts are the spoilsports at the party. People come to us in the hope of transforming bleakness when lives gone wrong, lives incomprehensible, lives in which apparently self-destructive behaviours thwart longings cannot be understood by talking with friends or spiritual leaders.

People come, hoping for relief, for the lifting of confusion, sorrow, muddle, rage and despair. Paradoxically, what provides for relief is often not the dissolving of confusion, sorrow, muddle, rage and despair. It is the recognition of the legitimacy of this kind of distress.

The therapist endeavours to help the patient find words that speak of her or his experience and, in doing so, conveys the sense that emotional distress can be borne and not trivialised. Feelings that were suspended outside the individual's consciousness are now accepted and understood in a manner unique to that individual.

At a time of deep social unease and darkness, happiness of a perverse and most ersatz nature seems requisite. Everyone seems required to project that they are fine.

When I am in a shop in New York buying a coffee or shoes, the sales assistant inevitably says "Have a great day" or, of late, looks at me meaningfully and says "Have a really great day". Call me British, or curmudgeonly; call me a Jew with that cultural tic of seeing trouble as much as joy; call me a shrink. However you wish to label me, it doesn't take away from the fact that I feel desperately put out. The exhortation to "have a really great day" does not match my desire, let alone my mood, and I always find myself replying: "Can't I just have an OK day or an interesting day or the day I was having?"

The sales assistant is thrown, and I am thrown by her or his being thrown. I've

SUSIE ORBACH IS A PSYCHOTHERAPIST, PSYCHOANALYST, WRITER AND SOCIAL CRITIC

dared to interrupt the mantra of 'have a good time' that is the bizarre accompaniment to late capitalism. I've barged in with something that doesn't fit, that is less than pretty, that doesn't suit the story. Apparently, I have not just a constitutionally protected right to the pursuit of happiness, but also the right to happiness every day, all day, even when I am simply buying a coffee.

I remember my two-year-old son being told to "smile for Mummy" when being left at nursery school, when what he was feeling was a momentary prickle of separation. Saying instead that "it can be sad to say goodbye" provided an acknowledgement of his emotional reality. He could then bounce off to play with the other children.

Late capitalism's ideological figleaf is happiness. Be made redundant, find you have cancer, lose your son in Afghanistan, be unexpectedly deserted by a partner. These events are life-changing. They are unwelcome and provide a considerable emotional challenge. In so far as we have slumbered under a cloak of synthetic happiness as a way to live, they are a wake-up call, but the anger, distress, fury or sense of abandonment they evoke should not be denied. The feelings they engender are part of what makes it possible to survive the loss. An authentically positive attitude arises out of assimilating the range of difficult and painful feelings that such events produce, not out of saying you are all right when you are not.

Unhappiness, reflection, grief, confusion and distress have been cordoned off to the problem pages, the counsellor's or priest's office and, latterly, to the pharmaceutical companies as a disease entity. Shy? There is a medicalised treatment for social phobia. Low libido? Try Viagra. For despair, try Prozac; for depression, try Lustral; for unfocused energy (ADHD), try amphetamines.

With the separation of difficulty from ordinary social intercourse, we have become fearful of non-happy







>> feelings as though they are pollutants, rather than an aspect of life that – if we can but experience it – allows us to digest things and move on.

Late capitalism has offered us a radically different vision of what it is to be human. It is about consuming as a means to happiness. This notion is sold all around the world, particularly to the emerging economies of Brazil, India, China and Russia. It has replaced the idea of making a contribution, of a community of purpose and a life lived with others with all its ups and downs. Instead, individual attainment, including the acquisition of goods, fame and wealth, has become – until last summer's riots – the aspiration and marker of happiness for our time.

Aspirations are wonderful and engaging. But aspiration is not the same as fulfilment. It is the how, what and why of our engagement, as well as the process of involvement, that is crucial. Attainment is good, but if aspiration is all, then there is a risk that, on arrival, we feel empty or denuded of meaning.

Young people aspire to recognition. They want to be seen, to find a place, to know that they are valued. Fair enough. Sadly, representations of value have mostly focused on luxury brands, perfect bodies, celebrity and money. This method of recognition can be thought of as the manufacture of misery and self-hatred in the name of the happiness deity. Much profit is made on this basis and we need to challenge it. Exploitation and false gods should never go with impunity. They should be exposed and contested.

I don't want to be a pain junkie, but any sustainable and authentic view of happiness emerges out of our capacity to embrace a smorgasbord of emotions. This includes everything from the grand emotions – Love, Hate, Grief, Jealousy, Bliss, Anger, Joy – to the more subtle and equally valuable states of disappointment, contentment, restlessness, boredom, ennui, longing, poignancy, hurt, frustration, tenderness and so on. The English language has a great many words for our psychological states. No wonder. We need them all, at different times. When we find the right way to express what we feel – even if it is

disconsolate – we are in the process of something rich and, I believe, are on the way to finding a part of what makes it possible to be fulfilled and happy.

THE HAPPINESS AGENDA

Of late, the government has been interested in the question of happiness and wellbeing. This is an agenda that Antidote, the organisation created to propagate emotional literacy, has pioneered over the past 20 years. The question, though, is how, in whose interests and for what ends the government is now considering this area. Partly, one could argue, an important issue has finally come to the fore. Emotional life has been validated as important in itself. But while part of me embraces that victory, a more cynical ear thinks that the emotional literacy and wellbeing agenda is being subverted to deflect attention away from the social and economic issues that affect us all.

Wilkinson and Pickett's 2009 book, *The Spirit Level*, was unequivocal in demonstrating the negative consequences of inequality on the whole population. It showed that the greater the disparity of income and resources within a society, the unhealthier the society. Post-war Britain was a society moving towards a diminishing of inequalities, but the past 30 years have seen an enormous growth in inequality. With this, there has been an ideological shift away from collective and social responsibility and towards the notion of individual responsibility for success or failure. Those who 'fail' or are dispossessed are too often deemed the makers of their own misfortune. The poor, the sick of heart and head, those drawn to substances that dampen the pain and those exempt from consumer society all sit here, a long way from the index of wellbeing.

We need to open up a public discourse about the cruelties of our society, from its vast social divisions to the difficult, and often desperate, aspects of early family life that many experience. Where Sure Start provided support to all in the crucial early years of life, not only underpinning the emotional life of the child but also engaging the weary, worried and

“PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING IS NOT AN EASY THING TO ACHIEVE IN A SOCIETY SATURATED WITH DESTRUCTION”

under-resourced parent, we are now seeing the dismantling of a democratically oriented social provision.

The evidence is clear. Early intervention means greater mental and emotional stability for all, especially the next generation. Mental health problems, learning difficulties and violence in early family life all set patterns that are hard to treat, dissolve and dislodge unless engaged with early on. Such difficulties do not just hurt the individual, they also hurt those around them.

Painful feelings that cannot be acknowledged get split off, ready for expulsion in different – and often far more damaging – forms into the general environment. Feelings of neglect, of abandonment, of humiliation, of vulnerability can be so shamefully experienced that they become shielded in a carapace of toughness and seeming invulnerability. Then, when the individual feels threatened and the feelings become unmanageable, they turn into violence, to be either flung on to others or themselves. Our city centres are full of youngsters whose hurt feelings were never addressed in their early years. Their distress sits like an emotional rocket ready to explode. Lacking the tools to assimilate their distress, they end up taking part in the drinking brawls and fights that stain our public and private spaces, and the sense of ourselves as decent.

Yet again and again, the efficacies of early interventions are set aside, hidden under a rhetoric of personal responsibility and personal failure and coupled with the increasing tendency to diagnose mental illness as treatable and controllable by drugs. World-class therapeutic services that provide care, help and fellowship to adults are being pared down and replaced by pharmaceutical products. These products are designed to treat ever-narrowing bands of mental disorders and diagnoses that, I fear, have more to do with swelling profits than solving emotional anguish.

The government’s interest in measuring wellbeing and putting it on the political agenda then becomes less a noble intention than it first seems. It is not really about increasing emotional literacy, with all its benefits. In a society that is beset by never-ending cuts to mental health, education maintenance, youth and family services, employment prospects and pensions, it is hard not to see the wellbeing agenda as cruel and mocking. Psychological wellbeing is not an easy thing to achieve in a society saturated with destruction.

Consumerism – putting our faith in objects – has not provided us with ever-greater satisfaction. Growing the economy on the basis of selling more and more goods is not only unsound, it also does not account for the economic, psychological and environmental costs of the failures of such policies. It is not just the have-nots who suffer. We all suffer. Curiously, western economies count everything sold as growth so that the costs of the damage from intense consumerism do not hit the

balance sheet. The revenue from psychoactive drugs used to ‘treat’ mental distress counts as growth for the pharmaceutical companies that governments are so desperate to keep in the UK economy, despite the considerable cost to the NHS. True economic and emotional costs are cut adrift from consciousness, leaving us without the means to engage with what will heal us as a society and individually.

We need a grown-up conversation. A conversation that refuses to stigmatise victims and recognises the damage that has come from disinvestment, the demise of communities and the way the consuming imperative plays out in our families, schools and individual life. Mental health cannot be achieved by repositioning it as wellbeing or by destroying the general and specific services that underpin a society. It is a mean and cheap trick. ■

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

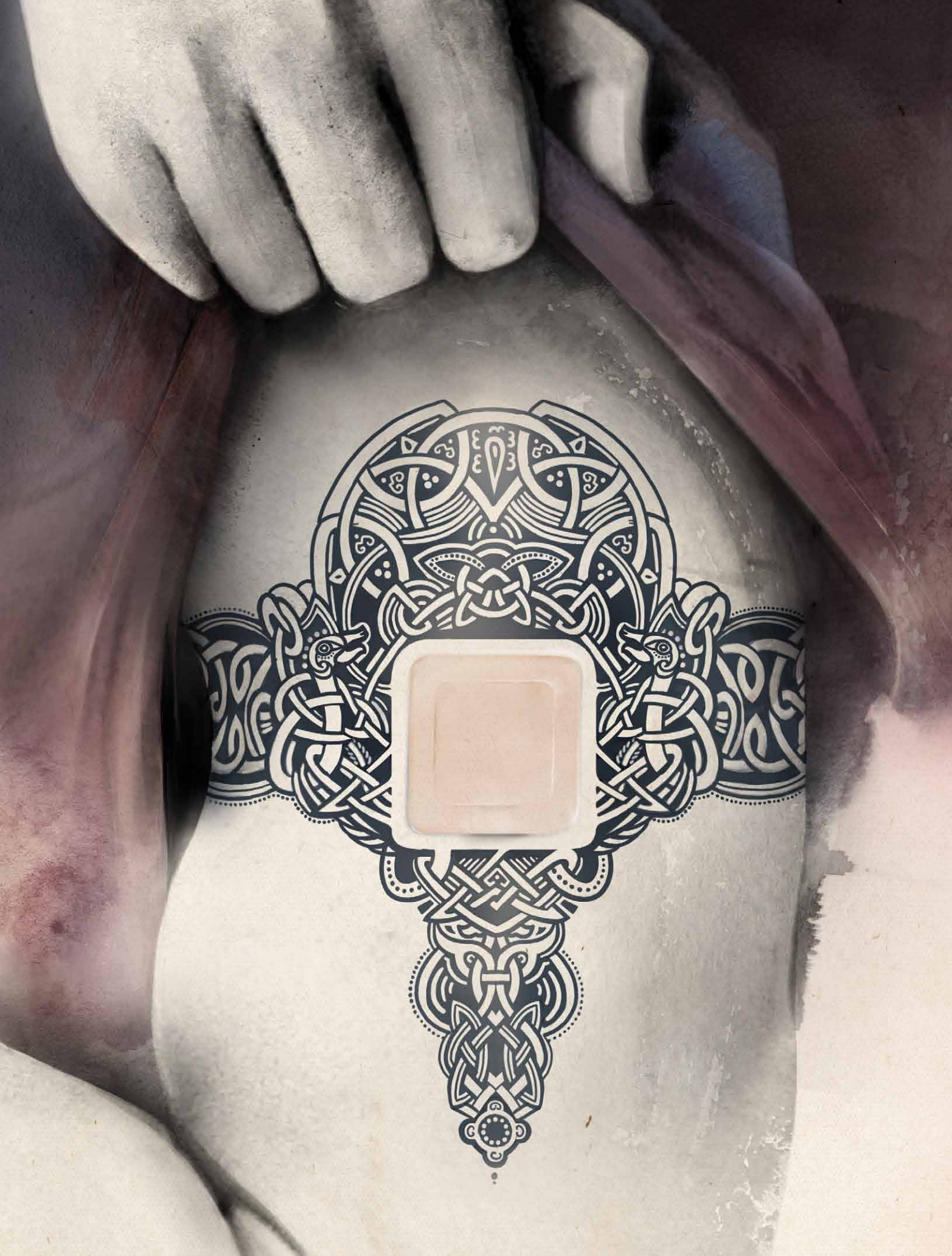
SOCIAL SPIDER

David Floyd FRSA is working with the RSA’s Social Entrepreneurs Network to explore new approaches to mental health services.

Floyd set up Social Spider in 2003 with the goal of running design and communications projects that achieve positive change in the community. These projects include assignments from the public sector and devising a creative writing course for a mental health charity in Hackney, London. Social Spider also produces a national magazine, *One in Four*, written by and for people experiencing mental health difficulties. The magazine aims to provide practical advice and information, covering themes such as employment, health and relationships.

Recent policy-focused projects include research into the impact of public-sector spending cuts on mental health services. “We are particularly interested in a user-led model for service provision, as the people who have used the service tend to be experts in tackling potential challenges,” said Floyd. “I am keen for other Fellows to share their ideas about how to provide a broader range of services to people with mental health difficulties, and how to develop a financially sustainable way of working.”

■ *If you are interested in socially enterprising approaches to mental health and would like to support this project, please visit www.socialspider.com or www.oneinfourmag.org, or contact fellowship@rsa.org.uk*



ADDICTION MYTHS

Scientists seem increasingly determined to interpret addiction as a biochemical problem that is best treated with expensive medication. Yet a large body of evidence indicates that recovery depends less on drug therapy and more on people's life situations and motivation

By Stanton Peele

We live in an era when neuroscience is thought to hold the key to our happiness and the prospects for our future. This is nowhere more evident than in the case of addiction, where the US's National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), under the leadership of neuroscience researcher Nora Volkow, promises to find the key to addiction in the brain and to eliminate it through some visionary manipulation of neurochemistry, perhaps a vaccine.

This is a long-held dream in American neuroscience, as expressed by prominent neurologist Richard Restak: "So far, researchers have carefully avoided hyperbole in their descriptions of the endorphins. But it's hard to leave out the exclamation points when you are talking about a veritable philosopher's stone – a group of substances that hold out the promise of alleviating, or even eliminating, such age-old medical bugaboos as pain, drug addiction and, among other mental illnesses, schizophrenia."

Have we come any closer to eliminating addiction since Restak wrote those words in 1977? Will we be closer in 20 years? In 100 years? A recent study in *Science* found that siblings – including both a drug abuser and a non-addicted control – inherit a brain structure that causes poor impulse control. (Of course, the siblings who shared this trait differed in their being addicted or not.) This might suggest that we are on the path to discovering the genetic source of addiction, yet previous experience gives the lie to this impression.

STANTON PEELE IS A PSYCHOLOGIST WHO HAS CHALLENGED ADDICTION CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES OVER THE PAST FIVE DECADES

A widely heralded 1990 study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, for example, announced the discovery of the gene for alcoholism, and perhaps for all addiction. Today, no geneticist believes there is such a gene.

We can go back further in American history to find the sources of both the addiction problem and our misconceived ways of addressing it. In a very brief snapshot, the US entering the 19th century was the 'drinking republic', where alcohol was widely accepted and used in a highly socially regulated way. When the colonial society on which this model was based dissolved under the onslaught of industrialisation and immigration, the "alcoholic republic" (WR Rorabaugh's term) emerged. The temperance movement also grew, leading to a black-and-white vision of drinking that both caused more drinking problems and created the view that drinking problems are a disease.

Beginning at the turn of the last century, both Britain and the US made the transition from societies in which opiate use was massive and indiscriminate, and yet where narcotic addiction was not noted as a special problem, to defining narcotic addiction as a special matter unlike any other type of human involvement. Enter the modern addiction era, which has grown in the US into an irreversible level of treatment provision and neuroscientific drug research anchored to the idea of addiction as a chronic brain disease. Ironically, given the buoyant claims for this vision, addiction is becoming out of control. Not only have we failed to produce effective remedies for familiar addictions such as alcohol, but addiction is also commonplace with substances such as pharmaceutical painkillers. Meanwhile, addiction is being diagnosed in >>

» entirely new areas. The revision currently under way of the psychiatric bible (the *DSM-5*) has for the first time identified a non-drug-based activity – gambling – as addictive.

Ironically, the scientists who announce that addiction is not limited to drugs see the expansion of addiction into the non-substance realm as affirmation of their unshakeable faith that addiction is rooted in – and will be solved by – neuroscience. Thus, the head of the *DSM-5* substance abuse committee, psychiatric researcher Charles O'Brien, confidently asserts that gambling is addictive because it affects the same "brain and neurological reward system" as drugs. This scientific-sounding claim represents reductionism: the idea that translating human experience and behaviour into biological terms, even in as inexact a way as O'Brien does, somehow improves our understanding of these phenomena is absurd.

The 'new' science of addiction actually reinforces a popular mythology that is contradicted by empirical realities documented by the US government itself. The annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health reveals that fewer than 10% of those who have ever used heroin or cocaine (including crack)

currently do so as often as once a month. The mythology holds that these drugs are our most addictive substances. Yet people who smoke, have drinking problems or overeat continue these habits at far higher rates than do narcotics, cocaine or methamphetamine users.

Nonetheless, even in the case of alcohol – belying the temperance image of the alcohol abuser going straight to prison, a hospital or his grave – most people overcome alcoholism, as they do all addiction, on their own. The National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism conducted the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC), which interviewed 43,000 Americans about their lifetime drinking experiences. Remission is commonplace: in the long run, about three-quarters of alcoholics achieve full recovery. Of this sizeable majority, "about 75% of persons who recover from alcohol dependence do so without seeking any kind of help", including either medical treatment or attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Finally, 'controlled drinking' is one of the most contentious alcohol treatment issues, yet NESARC indicated that this type of remission is at least as common as abstinence: "More than half of the fully recovered drink at low-risk levels without symptoms of alcohol dependence." Remarkable results? Only if you have been force-fed the chronic brain disease theory that Americans are increasingly feeding to the world.

AA is 75 years old. Both it and the modern medical model view addiction as resulting from powerful external forces beyond the individual's control. This is true even though the 12-step and medical models are strange bedfellows. Name one medical problem (or psychological one, for that matter) other than addiction where the clinical advice is to admit you are powerless over the disorder and to turn for your salvation to a 'higher power'. Yet most people – even the scientifically rooted among us – do not blink an eye when they see this idea in books, in films or on TV. The supposedly scientific concept of addiction in the US is really, therefore, a cultural conception.

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

BUILDING RECOVERY COMMUNITIES

Brian Morgan FRSA is working to build a network of local groups in West Sussex that support the recovery of former and current drug and alcohol users.

Morgan is part of the West Sussex Drug and Alcohol Action Team and is in recovery himself. He has been involved in the RSA's Whole Person Recovery project since its launch and has helped set up six independent community groups. These aid recovery by promoting open conversations among service users, ex-service users and key local stakeholders; they also deliver support services such as advocacy training. The EXACT model promotes an asset-based approach to community development, drawing on the skills and resources that already exist in the local area. Service users are actively involved in designing and running the groups, which Morgan is now growing into self-sustaining social enterprises.

"The EXACT model gives service users hope by bringing them into contact with peers who have developed the courage to seek treatment and support," said Morgan, who is also working with the UK Recovery Foundation to challenge the social stigma that recovering service users face.

Morgan received a £500 grant from the RSA South East Regional Committee, along with input from local Fellows, after pitching an idea to run a UK Recovery Walk in Brighton and Hove. The walk, which will take place in September, will help build a sustainable recovery community for the city.

■ If you would like to launch an EXACT group in your area, or can help develop the model, contact fellowship@rsa.org.uk

THE DRUGS DON'T WORK

Only in recent years has medicine begun focusing seriously on pharmaceutical remedies for alcoholism and other addictions. The most prominent of these, Naltrexone, is a blocking agent that is thought to suppress the pleasurable effects of opioid drugs and can reduce cravings among some alcoholics. But clinical trials of Naltrexone have produced disappointing results with both opioids and alcohol. Antabuse, a drug widely used in alcoholism treatment for some time, simply acts to make people violently ill if they drink. Alcoholics must continue the medication *ad infinitum*, which is a central issue faced by every drug therapy. The third type of pharmacological addiction treatment – exemplified by methadone – works on the principle of preventing withdrawal, and is better seen as a way to reduce the harm of opioid use.

These few medications available to treat addiction have shown tenuous efficacy. Moreover, substance abusers often exhibit a flexibility about shifting addictive objects that makes drug therapy both unreliable (they can take drugs other than



the ones being blocked or substituted for) and dangerous (if they combine more than one substance).

It can be self-defeating for individuals to buy into the belief that their addiction is purely biochemical in nature. A team of researchers recently discovered that providing nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) – even when accompanied by counselling – did not affect whether quitters remained cigarette-free. Indeed, the heaviest smokers were twice as likely to relapse when they relied on NRT as were those who quit without it. In this near-laboratory test of the biochemical theory of addiction, which holds that people smoke in order to maintain their cellular nicotine levels, smokers who conceive of their addiction this way and believe that NRT will save them most often fail. This is because they lack the self-assertiveness and acceptance of responsibility required to quit addiction.

All is not lost, however. In an opposite development, the US's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recently redefined the term 'recovery', calling it "a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life and strive to reach their full potential". This is a harm-reduction approach in that it does not focus solely – or primarily – on abstinence. It recognises that recovery is driven by the individual and depends on self-determination and self-direction. A recent report by the British Liver Trust makes the same points, acknowledging the inadequacy of a one-size-fits-all abstinence approach and calling for healthcare professionals to work closely with patients to understand their preferences and set goals. "Problem drinkers," says the report, "are after all a mixed bag of people with a range of mild, moderate and severe alcohol dependence."

Taken together, the historical, epidemiological and clinical evidence shows that addiction is a particular individual's dependence on an experience in a particular situation (think

about rampant heroin addiction among soldiers in Vietnam). Individuals can come to depend on such an experience for their basic psychic wellbeing, even if it is detrimental to their overall health and life satisfaction. No gene for addiction or specific addictive neurochemical pathway can explain this process, which comprises an all-encompassing reliance on an experience. (This is true even as we note that any powerful experience does have some neurochemical basis.) A person's values and psychological resources are crucial in the formation and cessation of dependence. Addiction can ease if the individual develops better coping mechanisms or leaves behind disastrous settings. This was the case among homeward-bound Vietnam veterans, resulting in a miraculous cure rate.

In the face of disappointing results, and of abundant examples of more effective methods, why does the focus on pharmacological treatments persist? One explanation is the potential market for a pharmaceutical treatment or vaccine. The NESARC data, while optimistic about our natural ability to mature out of addictions, indicate that nearly a third of the US population at some point encounters a problem with alcohol. Throw in addictions to pharmaceuticals, illicit drugs, gambling, sex and shopping, and pretty soon – as the saying goes – you're talking real money.

Moreover, addiction treatment in the US is built on an infrastructure of private hospitals and rehabilitation centres aimed at the medicalised treatment of drug and alcohol problems. Canada and some other countries take a diametrically opposed approach. In the province of Ontario, for instance, the majority of addiction treatment programmes are publicly funded and community-based. Unlike in the US, where a 90-day stint in a residential rehabilitation centre is typical, only Ontarians with the most severe addictions and the least social support are referred to costly residential treatment. Of course, in >>

>> Canada, taxpayers and the government foot that bill, so costs are closely monitored.

Neurobiological models of addiction are consistent with the privatised American healthcare system. Meanwhile, the American vision of addiction is spreading rapidly, due to proselytising by AA advocates, the scientific claims of the NIDA and the pharmaceutical industry's marketing. Yet our best data – including the NESARC results – show that addiction should be de-medicalised in favour of a model that encourages the advancement of psychological and environmental conditions that naturally prevent and dispel addiction.

Although AA will remain a beneficial community resource for some alcoholics, it further entrenches the disease model in our culture and works against the natural recovery that research shows is more common and enduring. Community supports and therapies will be more effective if they focus on enhancing natural recovery processes by working with people on reducing or managing their substance use, developing more productive coping skills, and improving their housing, employment and relationships.

The ethos buttressing pharmacological addiction treatments is far more pervasive and insidious than the commercial interests that maintain them. The NIDA and the newly minted American Board of Addiction Medicine – the medical specialty that has attached itself to the meme 'chronic brain disease' – encourage us to see addiction as something external to our lived experience that can be chemically extirpated. The recognition that addiction is not linked to a specific chemical object, and that it occurs with sex, shopping or gaming, should instead make us see that addiction can never be dealt with in a purely medical way.

Yet, worldwide, more and more people, both professionals and ordinary people – taking the lead from the US – subsume these newly discovered addictions as medical problems. This is especially tempting as national budgets for social welfare and other lifestyle-based approaches wane. Ironically, though, medical treatments are the most expensive approaches of all, both monetarily and in the costs to our individual and collective psyches. Instead, we must recognise that, at its core, addiction is more than a physical problem; it is a problem with how we live and experience our lives. ■

RSA PROJECTS

WHOLE PERSON RECOVERY IN KENT

The RSA is setting up a team of Recovery Community Organisers (RCO) in West Kent to implement the RSA's Whole Person Recovery System in partnership with the CRI – a national treatment provider – and the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

This initiative will build on the principles of the Whole Person Recovery system, which supports people who experience problems with drugs and alcohol by organising services around their needs and improving the resilience of the wider community. In West Kent, RCOs will develop recovery alliances – broad groups of local community stakeholders – to support and oversee local initiatives designed to sustain people's recovery, encourage their participation in the community and develop opportunities for work.

Local RSA Fellows will be at the heart of these groups and will initially support the development of three innovations. One of these is a Small Sparks Scheme, which will give people in recovery the chance to apply to a panel of their peers for a small grant. These will enable them to carry out projects that traditional treatment services might be unable to support, such as buying fishing equipment or bicycles, or obtaining seed funding to set up independent recovery groups.

Recovery alliances will support the development of a Recovery Bank, a new form of timebank that aims to grow the resources and opportunities that help people to sustain recovery. People will benefit from training, mentoring and work experience in return for their time and effort in supporting others.

The third core initiative will be the creation of a public events programme, with a local Recovery Month its focal point. This aims to engage a much broader audience and bring together local people with experts from West Kent and beyond; the aim is to make recovery more visible and inspire hope and aspiration across the region.

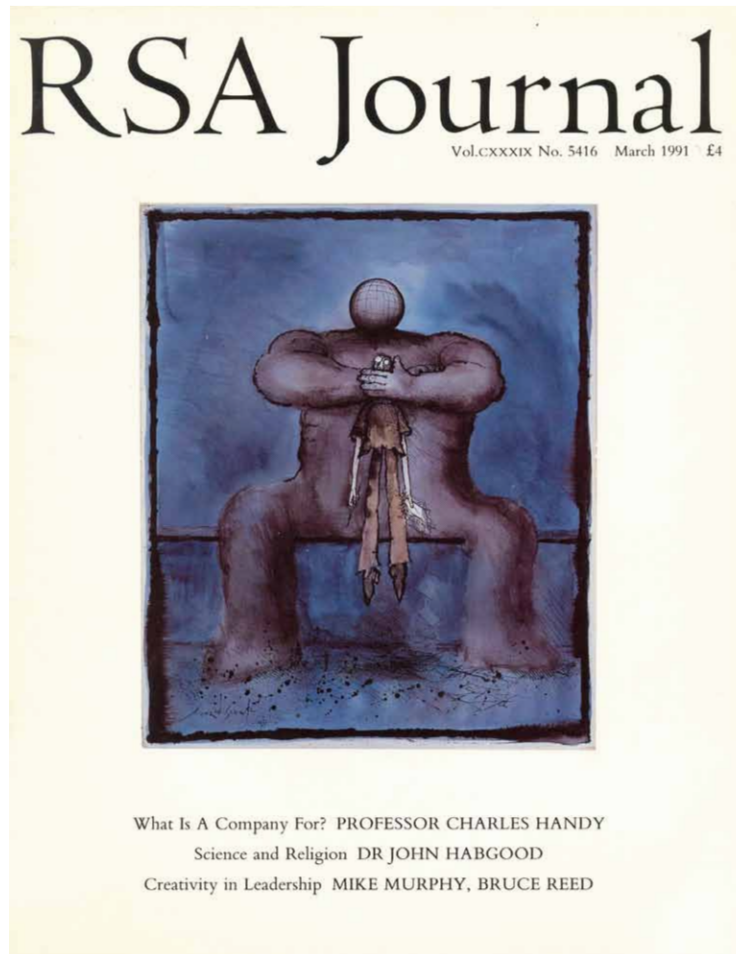
The West Kent project builds on the RSA's history of turning ambitious ideas into practice in order to influence policy and practice in some of the most complex areas. With the support of our partners, we are aiming to create an integrated recovery system across West Kent, mainly through three hubs located in Maidstone, Gravesend and Tonbridge. The services will be run using a 'payment by results' framework, which will provide an opportunity for developing understanding of how the government's preferred contracting system will work in practice.

The project draws on the ideas and experience gained through other RSA project work: for example, how we improve mental health, create new enterprises and build inclusive, resilient communities. Through working with the projects team, bringing public events to West Kent and working closely with Fellows, we are taking a 'whole RSA' approach.

■ *If you live in or near West Kent, or have an interest in recovery from substance misuse and would like to get involved in this project, please contact Rebecca Daddow at rebecca.daddow@rsa.org.uk*

RONALD SEARLE RDI (1920–2011)

By Martin Rowson



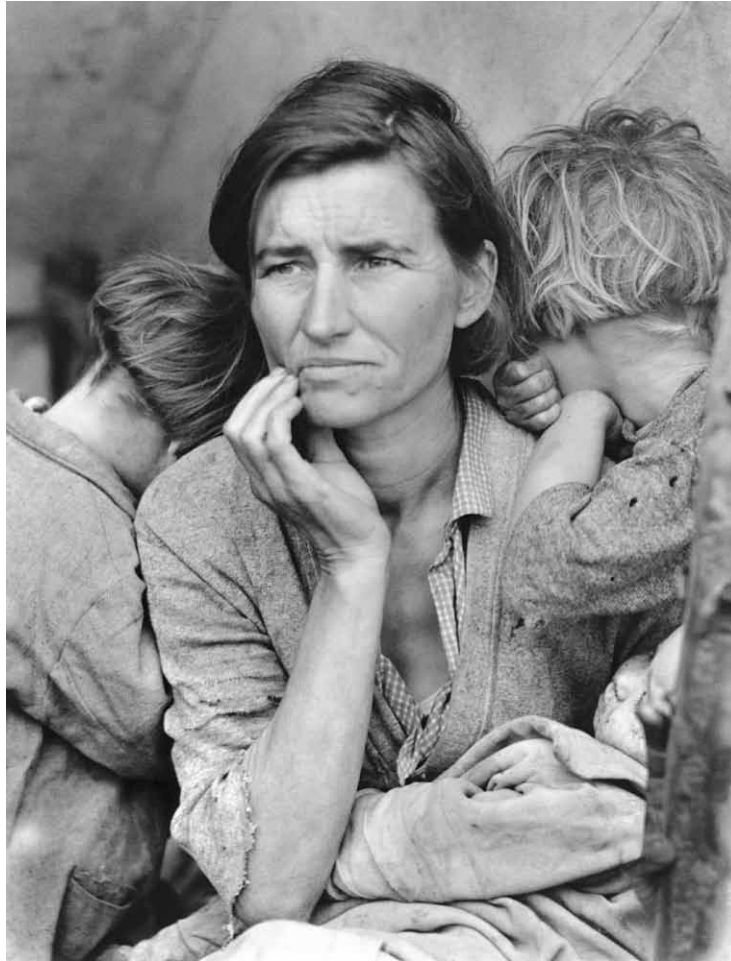
Ronald Searle was, without question, the greatest British cartoonist of the 20th century. In fact, it seems churlish to limit him by nationality, as he was probably revered even more in the US, Germany and France, his adopted home, than in the country of his birth. In Britain, he would always be the ‘St Trinian’s cartoonist’: indeed, that was how he was almost universally portrayed in obituaries, despite having spent the last 60 years of his life trying to shake off those murderous schoolgirls who made him famous in the first place.

But it wasn’t St Trinian’s that made him great, though it played its part. True, his experiences as a Japanese prisoner of war

MARTIN ROWSON
IS A CARTOONIST
AND AUTHOR

informed his St Trinian’s cartoons, some of which are, in compositional terms, lifted directly from drawings he risked his life to produce while building the Burma Railway. He was the cartoonist he was because he had the power to transubstantiate horror into laughter, probably because nearly dying at 19 gave him a lust for life beyond 90.

But what truly elevated him to the ranks of greatness was what he could do with a line. A Searle line is a beautiful thing, stuttering, swirling, smooth and jagged, thick and thin and then spattering into blots like champagne bubbles – and that’s all one line, the pen never leaving the paper. And, of course, hardly a line drawn by a British cartoonist since 1960 is imaginable without Ronald Searle. ■



THROUGH THE LENS

They say the camera never lies, yet it is all too easy for photographers and editors to manipulate imagery and, with it, public opinion. How can we ensure that photojournalism remains a tool for honest reporting, rather than propaganda?

By Robin Laurance

When the spin doctors of the Tudor court commissioned a celebrity German painter to produce a portrait of their king, they knew well the importance of image. Holbein's idealised portrait of Henry VIII was an attempt to communicate visually the power of the throne.

Five centuries later, the power of the still image has, against all expectations, held its own against newsreel and television footage. It is the relationship between photojournalism and politicians,

ROBIN LAURANCE IS A PHOTOJOURNALIST

rather than monarchs, that now informs and shapes the way society views those who govern us. "A picture can change the world much more than many speeches. It is a good lesson we politicians have to draw," declared Javier Solana when he was the EU's foreign policy chief.

Some politicians have learnt this the hard way, while others embrace the opportunities that pictures present. Photographs of Neil Kinnock falling into the sea at Brighton, William Hague in his baseball hat and David Miliband with his banana changed the worlds of those three hapless politicians. President Obama,

“WE HAVE, IN PICTURES, A MEANS OF COMMUNICATING STORIES IN A POWERFUL AND IMMEDIATE WAY”

on the other hand, follows the example set by President Kennedy by being proactive and having staff photographers attached to the White House. David Cameron became the first senior British politician to employ a personal cameraman when he hired a former Press Association photographer for the 2010 election campaign. Some argue that these photographers offer useful behind-the-scenes views of governments and politicians at work. Others view such pictures as pure propaganda masquerading as news with the connivance of the newspapers that publish them.

If it is propaganda, then at least it is clearly so in the US, where the convention is to label the source of hand-out pictures from government departments, the White House included. A similar byline convention, making clear the provenance of pictures from Whitehall press offices, should operate in this country.

While politically inspired pictures may not be lies, they are too often manipulations of the truth. This is nothing new. A century and a half ago, the British photographer Roger Fenton was sent to photograph the war in the Crimea. The *Times* had been critical of aspects of Britain's prosecution of the war and Fenton's patron, Prince Albert, was looking for a positive spin. So Fenton avoided photographing the slain British soldiers around him. He moved cannonballs hidden in a ditch into the centre of the road where the camera picked them out more clearly. Although all photography is in some ways selective, here – in the vanguard of photojournalism – Fenton was influenced by political considerations in deciding where to point his camera and how to enhance his pictures.

Almost 150 years later, President George H W Bush, like Prince Albert, showed his awareness of the power of pictures when he banned pictures of flag-draped coffins of the US's war dead returning from the first Gulf War in 1991. This ban, which later covered Afghanistan and the second Gulf War, was only recently lifted by Obama. Bush said that it was to protect bereaved families from further distress; most observers believe it was to ensure that public opinion remained in favour of the US's foreign wars.

Obama's decision to lift the ban by no means reflected any lesser concern about the power of pictures. In a speech at the US National Defence University in 2011 in which he justified the US's involvement in Libya, he said: “Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different. And as president, I refused to wait for the images of slaughter and mass graves before taking action.”

Governments in the Middle East are no less aware of the power of pictures. Nor are they any less adept than their western counterparts in using digital technology. In July 2008, in Iran, when one of four missiles failed to fire in front of reporters, the government's digital manipulators put the fourth missile in place. The *Financial Times* and the *New York Times* were just two of the newspapers to run the picture before the truth was uncovered. Two years later, the state-controlled Egyptian daily

Al-Abram digitally manipulated a group of negotiators at the Middle East peace talks to bring the country's then president, Hosni Mubarak, from the back of the group to the front.

Nor is the British press immune from cheating. The editor of the *Daily Mirror*, Piers Morgan, was forced to resign when his paper ran a picture that purported to show British troops abusing Iraqi detainees. The picture was a hoax. Digital manipulation of one kind or another is common. More subtle editing techniques such as the use of pictures out of context, the simple cropping of an image, a picture's positioning on a page, creative caption writing and even the presentation of old pictures as current news can and do influence the meaning of images. This, in turn, undermines the veracity of the stories they illustrate.

RESTORING FAITH IN PHOTOJOURNALISM

When the camera took over from the artist's paintbrush as a means of recording history, people believed the camera never lied. But that assumption is being eroded and, with it, trust in photojournalists as our eyewitnesses to history.

The chief editors of our newspapers should take stock. They have, in pictures, an invaluable means of communicating stories in a powerful and immediate way, as Dorothea Lange's memorable *Migrant Mother* photograph (see image), taken during the US Great Depression, attests. In an age when consumers want news in small bites, pictures offer the ideal vehicle. Honest pictures, when handled sensitively, can inform the political process; they can tell the stories behind the headlines and help readers make political choices. Picture editors need to reassert their authority, stop complaining about lack of financial resources and ensure that the best reportage – of which there is no shortage – pushes celebrity 'eye candy' aside.

Photojournalism should begin, once again, to inform society about the world we live in. Citizens can provide on-the-spot pictures when breaking news is out of reach of professional news photographers. But such news events are comparatively rare, and pictures from citizen photographers are proving less useful than news organisations had hoped. Their contributions may be cheap, but the images often turn out to be of poor quality or difficult to verify, and may lack the storytelling qualities of pictures from experienced professionals.

Nor do the amateurs have the inclination or the expertise to illustrate stories about the less dramatic, but nonetheless vital, issues that affect all our lives every day. Professional photographers should be recording conditions in our worst-performing hospitals; they should be illustrating the economic divides in our society; they should be exposing the lifestyles of our poorly performing and over-rewarded bankers while recording the plight of our unemployed youth. And photojournalism must play its part in the greater journalistic endeavour of holding governments to account. ■



TRUE CRIME

Serial killers, violence against women and forensic investigation are all staples of modern crime fiction, but the reality of criminal activity is rather more mundane. Could the popularisation of crime be feeding an excessively repressive criminal justice system?

By Jake Arnott

When I first started going into prisons to do readings, I came across a bit of folklore that so intrigued me that I've always asked after it in the many jails I've been to since. It simply concerns the two books that have been the most ordered, most borrowed and most stolen from HM prison libraries: *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli and *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu. These are two of the most seminal texts on strategy and statecraft, both



ILLUSTRATION: LUCAS VARELA

excellent manuals on the real business of crime. I was struck by the intelligence of these choices; very little crime fiction or ‘true crime’ literature can offer such ruthless advice for the wrongdoer. And both books offer a blueprint for success to those who have failed, usually in the utter pettiness of their offence. “Steal a little, and they throw you in jail,” sang Bob Dylan. “Steal a lot, and they make you king.”

The structure of power is a good thing to study when you are inside a structure of power. Prison can concentrate the mind, a focus that is lacking in much of our culture when it comes to crime and punishment. One can see that the failed criminal might want to see how it is really done by reading Machiavelli. They might find other explanations for their situation, even tips for survival. For those on the outside, fictional representations of crime are everywhere, but how many of them give us any real understanding? There is a continuing interest in detection, but nothing is ever really solved by this genre of literature. Within its pages, the murder rate soars and the perpetrators become increasingly evil. The reader becomes dumbfounded in horror.

JAKE ARNOTT | Real criminals, on the other hand, are
IS A NOVELIST | interested in understanding who – or what – they

are. In a system rife with illiteracy, learning disabilities and mental health problems, library users in HMP establishments may seem a select group, but they are probably no more disproportionate than those on the outside.

I judged English PEN’s ‘Writing Freedom’ competition this year. It invited men and women prisoners to write about their lives or review a book that has been important to them. I was astonished by the scope and diversity of the reading. Mary Shelley, Joseph Heller, a moving critique on John Donne’s *Devotions*; someone even submitted a review of Dante’s *Inferno*. In an essay on Emil Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*, one prisoner cited Eleanor Roosevelt’s analysis of ‘reading as a revolutionary act’. This simple function clearly has an urgent and transformative power in a place that incarcerates not merely the mind and the body, but also the soul. As defined by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, this soul is “the effect and instrument of a political anatomy. The soul is the prison of the body”.

Perhaps the prison library lies at the heart of the Panopticon – part of the technology of power – but could it not also be an escape route, a hole in the wall, a labyrinth of tunnels? They are certainly calmer and more >>

“THE PRISON LIBRARY LIES AT THE HEART OF THE PANOPTICON, BUT COULD IT NOT ALSO BE AN ESCAPE ROUTE, A HOLE IN THE WALL, A LABYRINTH OF TUNNELS?”

»» contemplative places than modern public libraries. No internet access, no computers, no computer games, no racks of DVDs, no storytelling sessions for children. Just books; a place of quiet study only occasionally interrupted by readings from quizzical and credulous writers like myself. These spaces could simply be the liberal’s dream of coercive rehabilitation, but the viral anecdote of Machiavelli and Sun Tzu implies that there is an impulse of resistance among the books, or at least an active engagement by the reader in his own predicament. Few of the author events I have done in public arenas have matched those inside in terms of real debate and discussion.

On the outside, the situation for the individual reader seems much less hopeful. At a time when actual literary criticism is in a steep decline, the surveillance over what we read has increased dramatically. There are countless lists of ‘important’ or ‘favourite’ books: the BBC’s Big Read; Richard and Judy’s Book Club; a proliferation of reading groups. Publishers will now sometimes print a list of questions at the back of a popular novel as guidance for these reading group discussions, just in case nobody is quite sure what they think about the text. There is a gentle insistence on consensus to calm what is potentially a ‘revolutionary act’.

CRIME IN THE POPULAR IMAGINATION

So it might seem strange that the most successful genre to emerge in this period has been crime fiction. Books with increasingly disturbing depictions of violent crime (mostly against women) and gruesomely detailed descriptions of its forensic investigation have become mainstream and acceptable. There is nothing new in the desire to be terrified in the imagination, but the growing trend has been to present horror within the pseudo-naturalism of a police procedural.

There is a new reading of the ‘criminal mind’; a supposed scientific basis is introduced to the detective work and to the character of the villain, who is almost invariably a serial killer endowed with remarkable abilities and resources in his *modus operandi*. The way to catch him is to use psychological profiling, offender signatures and victimology, all elements of a paradigm of criminology that emerged from the FBI Behavioural Analysis Unit (BAU) in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, the first really successful example of this new genre, the film *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), based on the

Thomas Harris novel, was also the first cultural depiction of the BAU. Innovative and hugely influential, the film spawned countless imitators, and the serial killer became established as a modern archetype. Levels of violence that had previously been confined to ‘video nasties’ (which had themselves caused a moral panic in the 1980s) could now be justified by the ‘seriousness’ of a new criminology.

Beyond the obvious advances in technology that have accompanied it, it is uncertain just how effective this approach to detection has been in reality. At times, it seems we are returning to Cesare Lombroso’s notion of the ‘criminal man’, with the study of physiognomy replaced by psychological profiling or even genetic analysis. There’s a seductive clarity to this discourse. It creates a forbidding certainty that can easily challenge the need for rehabilitation and justify indeterminate sentencing for public protection. And for the writer and the reader, it provides the two essential components of story: character and narrative.

The character of the serial killer reinvents the monster as antagonist. Conforming to Lombroso’s notion of atavism, they are subhuman and immune to empathy. They are also superhuman, with extraordinary skills and perceptions. Their humanity is a mask; their true personality exists only in the components of their offender profile. The understanding of character in the monster is merely the function of its eventual incarceration or destruction.

The narrative structure in the serial killer genre has a rhythm that plays between compulsion and frustration. The groans of the audience at the horror on the screen or the page always sound to me like the groans of disappointment, as if all that blood were not enough. It is an addictive milieu, and the serial murderer offers reliable repetition, a dramatic pulse that can be traced back to the very creation of the term.

In his memoir, tellingly titled *Whoever Fights Monsters*, Robert Ressler, a former FBI agent at the BAU who came up with the term, explains: “Now that I look back on that naming event, I think that what was also on my mind were the serial adventures we used to see on Saturday at the movies. Each week, you’d be lured back to see another episode, because at the end of each one there was a cliff-hanger. In dramatic terms, this wasn’t a satisfactory ending, because it increased, not lessened, the tension. The same dissatisfaction occurs in the minds of serial killers.”



It also, perhaps, exists in the mind of a culture obsessed with violent crime and its forensic investigation. As fantasy, the struggle with monsters has a benign logic; when presented as realism, it becomes problematic. Most crime fiction has little to do with actual crime; instead, it presents a ludicrously heightened version of it, excused by the ‘seriousness’ of its theoretical agenda. Thus the new criminology is seen in dramatic terms and its dissatisfaction feeds the desire for a serial. Television is the obvious arena for this repeat offending, but it is also found in literature, where the most successful crime novels are series.

The viewer and the reader themselves become recidivists and each imagined act of barbarity accumulates in the identification of evil in the modern world. There is an odd kind of reassurance in believing in monsters. It can eliminate the need to think logically about crime and punishment, as with John Major’s pronouncement that “society needs to condemn a little more and understand a little less”. And it can elaborate straightforward issues beyond comprehension, insisting upon a mystery even though most crime, particularly violence against woman, is all too apparent and depressingly predictable.

The ‘realism’ of the serial killer narrative helps to create oppressive fantasy, a coercive system of terror. There is a growing perception of fear that has coincided with an actual decline in crime and a spiralling prison population. There are, of course, exceptions within this genre, but the vast

majority of depictions of crime in our culture now seem obsessed with multiple murders.

In reality, most crime is small in scale but huge in terms of the social problems it creates. And there is a real fear in how we go about dealing with it. The draconian sentences meted out to those arrested for fairly minor offences in last year’s English riots reflected an easy demonisation of those involved in a serious breakdown in law and order. A woman who had not even taken part in the riots received a five-month sentence for receiving a pair of stolen shorts. Such harshness only confirms the injustice of the power system – “steal a little and they throw you in jail” – and stores up trouble for the future. Those convicted during the riots will be out this year, along with the 80,000 men and women who are released from prison each year.

The emphasis on monsters and evil in crime fiction can help to justify an increasingly repressive and self-perpetuating criminal justice system. We can feel secure in our imaginary fear and ignore the real problems that surround us. We should take care in how we read crime. Perhaps some of the rigour found in the prison library could help. The gaze is easily drawn to horror and just as easily lost to it. The title of the FBI agent Robert Ressler’s memoir comes from Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a warning to those who fight monsters to see to it that they do not become monsters themselves. “When you look into the abyss,” warns Nietzsche, “the abyss also looks into you.” ■

ON LIBERTY

In ancient societies, freedom was about overcoming internal as well as external constraints. Have modern misinterpretations triggered a social and economic crisis?

By Adam Lent

We fight wars in its defence. It is a defining feature of our societies. Many desire more of it. And yet freedom is a strangely unexamined ideal. Indeed, the notion that it might mean anything other than its current conceptualisation seems downright strange.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that freedom is “the power or right to act, speak or think as one wants”. The definition captures the fact that we regard freedom not simply as a narrow political ideal but also as a personal aspiration. Not only do I want the freedom to vote, worship and write, I also crave greater autonomy at work, in my choice of where to go on holiday and in what I buy, in how I spend my leisure time and in where I send my children to school. In short, I want to be able to do what I want to do.

Yet this ‘doing what I want’ conception of freedom is relatively new. In the two millennia prior to the 16th century, two very different ways of understanding freedom dominated.

The first, originating in Greek and Roman cultures, regarded freedom as the privilege of an elite, in contrast with women and slaves, who were legally obliged to do the will of

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others. This privilege was not enjoyed for its own sake, however. Freedom of thought and movement meant that the dominant class could commit itself to the statesmanship and military matters that protected the security and wealth of the community. So, freedom from external constraints also implied a necessary desire to be free from internal constraints such as idleness, cowardice and ignorance, and a commitment to nurture virtues such as vigour, courage and learning, which were seen as central to the practice of politics and warfare.

The second conception of freedom has its origins in the Judeo-Christian worldview. According to thinkers such as St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas, the freedom of choice that God granted to all humans imbues our decisions with a moral content. Without such free choice, we would not be able to be held responsible for what we do. But choice alone is not enough to guarantee full enjoyment of our natural freedom. We can choose sin or we can choose virtue, but in choosing the former, we ultimately enslave ourselves to our own passions. Virtue, by contrast, originates in the self-awareness and self-control that allow true freedom to flourish. Indeed, Augustine goes so far as to say that it is preferable to be enslaved by other men than to be a slave to one’s own passion.



The Roman conception regarded the struggle for freedom as a sociopolitical necessity met by an elite, while the Judeo-Christian view saw it as a personal spiritual quest available to all. For both approaches, however, it involved struggle against internal constraints.

This changed with the expansion of trade during the Renaissance. Increasingly, the measure of a thriving community was the success of its merchants and the conspicuous consumption of its wealthy classes, rather than the virtues of a spiritual or warrior elite.

Thomas Hobbes was one of the first to redefine freedom in a form that seemed more appropriate to these times. With a particular hostility to the way it had been understood by the ancients, Hobbes argued that freedom was nothing more than the capacity to do as one willed, without external constraints. At the time, this was a truly scandalous view. Many felt Hobbes' perspective simply did not make sense. If people were free to do just as they wanted, society would surely collapse into a battle of one against all, ultimately destroying that same freedom.

Nevertheless, as modern economies developed, Hobbes' outrageous idea grew in relevance, boosted by the philosophy of Adam Smith. Smith's timely focus on the centrality of trade

allowed him to argue that the freedom to pursue one's own material self-interest contributes to the greater wealth of all. This was Smith's famous 'invisible hand'. For the first time, the link between personal virtue and the common good – which had been assumed for many centuries – was convincingly broken. The fear that Hobbes' notion would lead to chaos was dispelled.

Through Smith, Hobbes' definition had a profound impact on two strands of 19th century thought that remain highly influential today. The first was the liberalism of thinkers such as JS Mill, who sought to expand individuals' freedom to do what they want without external constraint. The second influence worked through thinkers such as Leon Walras, who helped transform Smith's analysis into the underlying 'scientific' principles of economics. These were based heavily on the notion that individuals' free choices for their own material wellbeing result in stable markets that benefit everyone.

However, it was in the 20th century that the 'doing what I want' conception of freedom became embedded in western culture and the older notions faded almost entirely from the public mind. The mass consumerism that grew at a rapid rate during the last century ensured that getting and doing what you wanted was more than just the privilege of a wealthy elite. Instead, >>

“OLDER APPROACHES REGARDED FREEDOM AS A PRACTICE FOR SELF-PERFECTION, NOT A CONDITION FOR SELF-SATISFACTION”

>> it became the driving force of the modern economy. And as a growing range of product areas, along with lifestyle and culture, became commercialised, so Hobbes’ once-scandalous definition became irresistibly relevant.

What this history reveals is that our apparently commonsense notion of freedom is, in fact, deeply contextual. It opens up the possibility of viewing that particular understanding of freedom more objectively. At a time of rather profound crisis for the conditions that have given rise to that conception, this possibility may be particularly welcome. Should we therefore revisit that earlier focus on the importance of the internal life?

FREEDOM IN THE AGE OF CONSUMERISM

We currently face an economic crisis of historical severity. The causes are many and complex. Clearly, behaviour in the banking sector played a major role, as did the popular purchase of cheap imports through the expansion of personal debt. However, these were not purely economic phenomena. The development of a culture of acquisition and pleasure seeking has also helped drive unrestrained bonus chasing and debt-fuelled consumerism. In this context, the idea that freedom is about securing ‘what I want’ suddenly appears more problematic.

It may be, therefore, that a certain wisdom present in older ideas of freedom has been lost to our detriment. To see freedom as the pure exercise of will without external impediments ignores the fact that the nature of my motivations shapes how fully I make use of that freedom and, ultimately, whether it will prove sustainable.

To put it another way, older approaches regarded freedom as a practice for self-perfection, not, as we have come to understand it, a condition for self-satisfaction. If I am externally free but remain a slave to my internal constraints, then not only am I not fully free, but my external freedom will also prove unfulfilling and self-destructive. This outlook certainly seems relevant to our fraught times.

It would be naïve to believe we can simply resurrect ancient perspectives that had their roots in slave-owning societies. Our challenge is to understand what the focus on internal as

well as external freedom might mean in a world where trade and consumerism may not be about to disappear but may face a sustained period of moderation. One place to start is the increasingly rich understanding we have of our internal lives.

As the psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist has shown, there is a growing evidence base that suggests our brains are structured so that every decision, every movement, every conscious thought is the product of a complex psychic battle in which certain inclinations struggle for supremacy. Will we direct our attention to the specific or the whole? Will we solve a problem through deduction or induction? Will we seek the novel in an experience or regard it as unremarkable? These, and a host of others, are the types of question that our brain is constantly resolving as we are bombarded with sense data every second of every day. And how they are resolved has an incalculable impact on me and my environment.

These insights are important because they offer a scientific challenge to the contemporary notion of freedom. They reveal that the way internal conflicts are resolved by freeing some aspects of myself and suppressing others will have a fundamental effect on how I use and sustain my external freedoms. This is just as the older philosophers suspected.

So, maybe the time is right, in the midst of a crisis, to rethink our notion of freedom. As long as we continue to use precious external freedoms without a clearer understanding of which parts of our personality and behaviour should be nurtured and which contained, we risk degrading that which we value so much.

This poses the challenging question of how we can identify and liberate the most beneficent aspects of ourselves. Answering this is no simple matter, given the interweaving of the neural complexity revealed by science with our social, economic and cultural conditions. However, with its commitment to rethinking Enlightenment values for the new challenges of the 21st century, there can be few better places to start answering this question than at the RSA. ■

Many thanks to Malcolm Brown, Jonathan Rowson and Mark Vernon for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.



RSA JOBS SUMMIT

Against a backdrop of high unemployment rates, the RSA Jobs Summit provided the occasion for a much-needed public debate about promoting and sustaining job growth

By Luke Johnson

Many people believe that high structural unemployment is an almost existential threat to mature economies such as Britain's. The recession, globalisation and technological advances have permanently eliminated large numbers of jobs from the private sector.

This grave situation will be compounded by growing redundancies in the public sector and by evidence suggesting that unless newly unemployed people find jobs within six months, they will find it very difficult to get back into work. A combination of fiscal and demographic changes means that we will probably have to create about an extra 300,000 jobs a year over the next decade even to maintain unemployment at today's levels.

The RSA hosted its Jobs Summit earlier this year by bringing together experts to identify new opportunities for sparking and sustaining job growth. This is not just a short-term challenge; it is one of the most important issues facing the nation, even as we adjust to significant economic and demographic changes.

My own experience as an entrepreneur tells me that if we are going to be able to navigate our way through this rocky period, we are going to need some bright ideas, and fast. The RSA wanted to kickstart this discussion, looking at how we can encourage change and bring about bold but practical solutions that both government and businesses can take to steer us in the right direction. We covered three core areas: labour market policy, trends in employment patterns and incentives to create jobs in the private sector.

While there were inevitably different views, there emerged some key areas of consensus. On the positive side, despite the grim unemployment figures, Britain has a good record on

job creation. Our labour market is more flexible than some, although less so than it used to be. Many entrepreneurs believe small firms are over-burdened with employment legislation, which inhibits job creation. Despite this, there are probably more budding entrepreneurs in the UK now than ever before: although the vital ingredients for success are debatable, there is agreement that such start-ups – especially the so-called gazelles – are essential to future growth and job creation.

We are also well placed to exploit growing global markets in terms of our current areas of economic strength, such as the creative industries, pharmaceuticals and business services. The government acknowledges the need for an industrial policy, but this must be based on an objective assessment of our relative strengths.

On the negative side, there is an acute problem with youth unemployment and a major challenge concerning the employability of those young people not going into higher education. Notwithstanding the pressures of austerity, there may be a case for emergency action to create public-works jobs for young people. Certain groups and locations have been consistently over-represented among the unemployed and under-employed.

The over-concentration of power, investment and growth in London and the South East creates an imbalance, and most attendees agreed that part of the answer may lie in boosting regional government. There was wide recognition of the need for greater flexibility in labour-market factors at both a city and a population subgroup level.

The RSA will continue this important debate. In the meantime, two of our speakers – Paul Gregg and James Mawson – here write in more detail about the task ahead. ■

>> LABOUR PAINS

While the effect of the financial crisis on national employment rates has been less severe than expected, certain vulnerable groups need more support than others

By Paul Gregg

Britain has just suffered the worst recession since the Second World War. Compared with the Great Depression, the fall in output was slightly lower but the recovery has been far weaker and more prolonged. The reason it does not feel like a second Great Depression is that employment has held up remarkably well. In the recession of the 1980s and 1990s, we lost about 6% of jobs, almost three times as many as we have this time. To put it in numbers, if the UK had lost employment at the same rate as it did in past recessions, unemployment would stand at record levels of 3.5 to four million.

Furthermore, in the brief recovery of late 2009 and early 2010, unemployment started to fall back incredibly quickly after such a deep recession. This makes the broader point that the UK generates jobs easily as soon as it experiences even moderate economic growth (above about 1.5%), and has done so since the mid-1980s, except during periods of recession. From 1993 to 2007, Britain added nearly five million jobs; since then, the low job loss and early recovery in employment suggests that when growth returns, it will be rich in jobs.

The institutions of Britain's labour market, including the welfare system, have worked remarkably well, meaning that Britain has no structural impediment to generating jobs. Despite this, a number of voices have been calling for labour-market deregulation

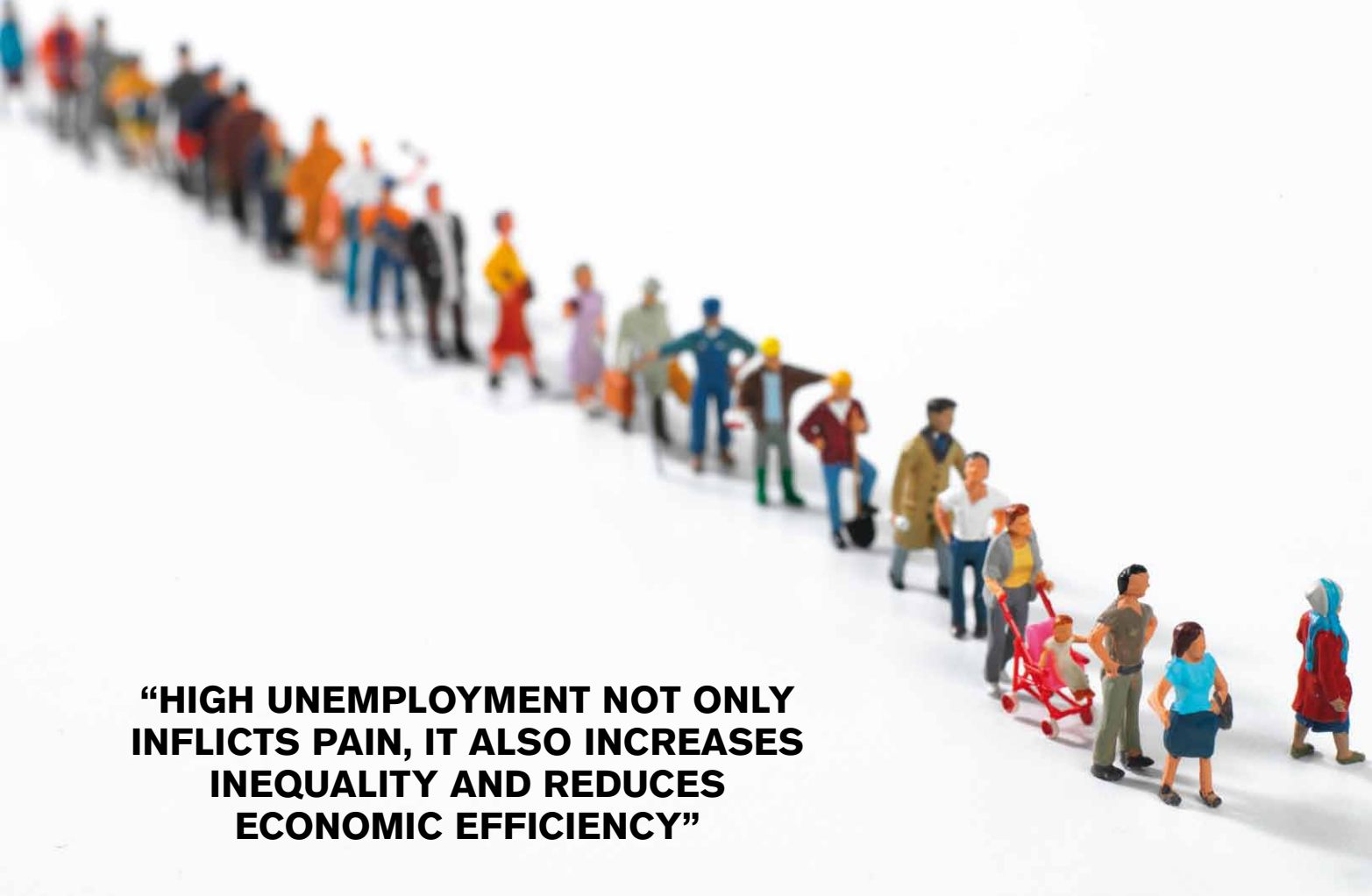
PAUL GREGG IS
PROFESSOR OF
ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL POLICY AT
BATH UNIVERSITY

to create jobs, making it easier and cheaper to sack workers and cut minimum wages. These calls seem rather odd given that the UK has one of the most deregulated labour markets and given the absence of evidence that deregulation creates jobs. The UK, along with other Anglo-centric countries such as the US, Ireland and Australia, has far lighter regulation than other European economies, yet the Scandinavian countries, as well as Germany, Holland, Austria and Switzerland, have the highest employment rates. Indeed, the US – the archetypal deregulated labour market – has experienced a very poor labour market performance in the past decade or so. Even before the recession, it was characterised by stagnant employment rates and living standards, combined with rapid increases in inequality. This is not a positive model to follow.

NATURAL RECOVERY

The labour market corrects itself, albeit slowly. In times of high unemployment, there is strong downward pressure on wages and any economic growth produces more in the way of jobs than higher wages. While such downward pressure will constrain consumption, we are likely to see a slow thawing in terms of jobs as competitiveness improves.

However, simply waiting for the upturn has two major risks. The first is that, on top of finding jobs for Britain's 2.6 million unemployed people, we are seeing a push to increase employment among workers beyond retirement age, lone parents and people



“HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT NOT ONLY INFLICTS PAIN, IT ALSO INCREASES INEQUALITY AND REDUCES ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY”

with disabilities. We are also having to cope with a growing population, driven both domestically and by immigration. This means that, if we are to reduce unemployment to, say, 1.5 million people within the next five to 10 years, we may have to create more than five million extra jobs. So, we are likely to see periods of rising employment without significant falls in unemployment.

The second risk is that unemployment becomes increasingly concentrated on certain individuals, such as those who experience long-term unemployment, and on certain parts of society, generally low-skilled people living in inner cities. Already the young are bearing the brunt of unemployment. Such concentration is damaging to people's lives, in terms of future unemployment, lower wages and health deterioration (the so-called scarring effect). It will also lead to growing inequality between the parts of the labour market that are tight (highly educated and prosperous areas) and the young, low-skilled and deprived communities.

More worryingly, it inhibits the adjustment process in the economy and job creation. When concentrated on particular individuals, areas or groups, unemployment becomes less effective at restraining wages and bringing about longer-term job growth. As a result, high unemployment not only inflicts pain, it also increases inequality and reduces economic efficiency. This, in part, explains why Britain experienced high inflation in the late 1980s when, although unemployment remained above 8%, the north-south divide contributed to mass long-term unemployment. By

contrast, Britain did not experience any inflationary pressure during the more balanced recovery of the late 1990s and early 2000s, even though unemployment fell below 5%.

Successive governments have recognised this problem and have launched various programmes to counteract it. These include Labour's New Deals and Youth Guarantee, and the current government's Work Programme and Youth Contract. The poor performance of previous schemes, such as those of the 1980s, have taught us that work experience and training are valuable but can get in the way of an active search for jobs, delaying a return to work. We therefore need to maintain and support people's job searches while they are carrying out work experience placements. The New Deals did this by having a Gateway phase of intense job-search support, followed by work experience and a second phase of support. This approach is also at the heart of the Work Programme, but is worryingly absent in the controversial Work Placement Programme, which involves two months of unpaid work experience.

Mass unemployment, especially among young people, damages not just individuals but also wider economic performance, and is extremely costly as a result. The recent ACEVO Commission on Youth Unemployment estimated that the current cost to the Treasury alone is £5bn a year. The scarring effects are likely to cost another £3bn a year for the foreseeable future, even when unemployment comes down. Youth unemployment is, as the Commission concluded, a crisis we cannot afford. ■ >>



>> THE TALENTED FEW

Few people have the ability and determination to turn creative ideas into lasting business models. All the more reason, then, for governments, businesses and universities to nurture talent whenever and wherever they find it

By James Mawson

In the US, substantial value and job creation has come from start-ups that successfully scale up. The US trade body National Venture Capital Association estimates that 11% of the American private sector workforce has venture backing. Fast-growth companies have been responsible for a lot of hiring: Google was founded fewer than 15 years ago, but now employs more than 30,000 people. Non-profit organisation the Kauffman Foundation estimates that, each year, the US creates about 10 companies that go on to post \$1bn in revenues. What is less clear is whether other countries can repeat the trick.

As Sherry Coutu, serial entrepreneur, successful angel investor and co-chairman of the Silicon Valley Comes to the UK event, has said: “The UK has half the rate of ‘scale-ups’ as other countries. It is an important issue and one that we need to understand and address.”

The development of start-ups into medium-sized and large businesses can drive economic growth, both through the direct creation of jobs, taxes and

JAMES MAWSON
IS FOUNDER AND
EDITOR OF GLOBAL
CORPORATE
VENTURING

enterprise value and through the formation of clusters and an ecosystem to support other businesses. We need to encourage both sides of the equation: developing start-ups with good ideas and creating a support system that helps them survive and thrive, so that they can make the transition from nascent powerhouse to large, global leader.

Venture capitalists have long known that the best people to back are serial entrepreneurs. This is partly because they have learnt lessons from previous successes and failures that they can apply in their next venture, and partly because they retain a hunger to innovate, to start things, and to seek out and develop ideas to change the world.

Less well known is the fact that many of the attributes of successful serial entrepreneurs are found in other walks of life, such as large corporations and universities. This is why it is so important to encourage ‘intrapreneurialism’, which involves identifying talented individuals within a large organisation and giving them the freedom to develop their creative ideas. It seems that few people are able to build on good ideas to create something new, and fewer still are able to do so more



STEP BY STEP

Big businesses must lead the way in giving ex-offenders secure employment that will prevent them from falling back into crime

By John Timpson

A chance encounter inside Thorn Cross prison, near Warrington, led to a project that has produced a marked drop in reoffending and a £10m saving to the taxpayer. Few people thought it would work; even fewer are keen to copy the idea.

James (my son and chief executive) was at the prison to prepare for a visit by his local business forum. James was so impressed with Matt, the inmate who showed him round, that he told him: “When you get out, give me a ring and I will find you a job.” Eight years later, Matt is still on our payroll. He has become a successful manager and is happily married with two children.

JOHN TIMPSON
IS CHAIRMAN OF
TIMPSON LTD

Helping Matt made us realise we could help ourselves and people like him at the same time. There are almost 88,000 people in UK prisons, 61% of whom reoffend within two years of release. For those with a job, that figure drops to 19%. The prison population contains plenty of individuals we would not want to work with us: the fairly mad, really bad and people such as sex offenders. But many custodial sentences are served by fundamentally honest people who made one big mistake. Some ex-prisoners have the personalities to turn into superstars, but their employment prospects are blighted by HR departments that will not touch anyone with a criminal record. We will, and we have. With no competition, we can take our pick from an eager and talented bunch.

We have interviewed and recruited in more than 70 prisons. A lot of our new colleagues are released on temporary licence: they are allowed to leave prison in the morning and work during the day, before returning to their cells at night. This is the perfect way to prepare a new starter for life on the outside as a permanent employee. Indeed, 91% of those who join us on temporary licence are still with us after two years.

In 2007, James took the scheme to another level when he persuaded Alan Brown, then governor of HMP Liverpool, to allow us to open a training centre. It is different from most prison workshops. We covered the windows, put up our display material, imported our own training team and asked all the trainees to change into a Timpson uniform before starting work. They followed our usual apprentice training scheme (excluding key cutting!), with the promise of a job trial on release.

Our main worry was how branch colleagues would react; there was no guarantee that they would welcome working alongside ex-prisoners. Our first recruits got a warm welcome, but we kept the scheme quiet from the rest of the business. When the *Sun* ran the story 'Cons taught to cut keys', I decided to come clean in our weekly newsletter under the headline 'The *Sun* won't stop us'.

Five years later, more than 200 colleagues (male and female) have joined us straight from prison, several being promoted to branch manager, with 50 more training in our four prison workshops. There have been disappointments, but with only 25% failing to stay for two years, retention is no better or worse than it is for our average recruits.

A STEEP LEARNING CURVE

We have learnt a lot along the way. The experience my wife Alex and I had as foster parents made me aware of attachment disorder and its dramatic influence on the behaviour of many children in care. Forty per cent of young people in prison have been through the care system, so, even though we recruit for personality, we expected a few problems. We would not have won without Dennis, a burly amateur football referee and experienced member of our People Support team. For nine years, he has devoted his working life to the welfare of our ex-offenders. Everyone needs a Dennis, with the patience to sort out all the problems that prevent success at work.

Most recruits are good at cobbling; it is their life outside work that can cause trouble. The main dangers are drink (more than drugs), debt, family problems and finding a place to live. It is not easy to turn over a new leaf when you meet up with the old mates who originally got you into trouble. These fishes just out of water need support to get their lives back on a proper track, which is why we lend them money, help with housing and do a lot of listening: they often talk to Dennis.

We have plenty of statistics that shout success (5% of our workforce joined from prison, including our 'apprentice of the year'), but individuals' stories provide the best evidence of how much a job means to an ex-offender.

One recruit, Stephen, who had been in and out of custody from the age of 15, used his job with us as a stepping stone to become

"MOST RECRUITS ARE GOOD AT COBBLING; IT IS THEIR LIFE OUTSIDE WORK THAT CAN CAUSE TROUBLE"

an actor. He gave us the credit in an interview with the *Manchester Evening News*, saying: "Timpson made a big difference. If it wasn't for them, I don't know where I would have been. It gave me my self-respect." The website response to that article included plenty of criticism as well as praise. One commentator said: "Why give another chance to scumbags when honest people can't get work?" Another said: "If they give jobs to criminals, I will never trust Timpson again."

Although expected, this prejudice is blind to the fact that getting a job is key to staying out of trouble. The economic case is compelling. Of the 200 people we have recruited from prison, we know of only nine who have reoffended, a tiny percentage in comparison with the national reoffending rate. Statistics suggest that 120 of our recruits would, without the chance of a job, have gone back to prison. At £50,000 each, that would cost the taxpayer £6m a year. Since the Timpson scheme started, we estimate that we have saved the nation more than £10m.

It is a winning combination that brings great personalities to Timpson, substantial savings to the prison bill and a life-changing experience to ex-offenders. Despite this success, we have only found a few other companies that are willing to take on people from prison. Many of those want to remain anonymous, frightened that having old lags on the payroll will tarnish their reputation. Few realise that nearly 30% of the working population have a criminal record; at least we have a full and factual file on employees who are ex-offenders.

At the heart of this prejudice are the words 'prisoner' and 'offender'. Visit any prison and you will discover that inmates come in all shapes and sizes. Among the bad and the ugly you will find plenty of good and quite a few who are fantastic.

We know our scheme works, but even if the recruits reach 10% of the Timpson workforce, we will be helping just 0.3% of the prison population. A massive reduction in the UK's reoffending rate can only be achieved if several big employers follow in our footsteps.

We are willing to act as a mentor and pass on our experience to other employers. But, to make a real difference, they must be prepared to offer proper, permanent jobs. By giving this wholehearted commitment, they will keep people out of prison, reduce crime in the community, save the taxpayer money and help stamp out the prejudice that can turn a prison leaver's life into a nightmare.

I am keen to hear from companies with the courage to give it a go. ■

GREEN SHOOTS

Environmental activists have traditionally called for an international response to issues such as climate change and population growth. Yet history shows that the most effective environmental initiatives arise not at a global or governmental level, but through the efforts of local people

By Roger Scruton

I frequently hear it said that the environment has slipped down the political agenda, that what was a vital issue only a decade ago is now part of political history, and that resignation and indifference have smothered the brief willingness to act. But people say these things largely because they see environmental politics in global terms, as an attempt to confront transnational problems through international initiatives. Climate change, population growth, the worldwide depletion of resources, the destruction of oceans and rainforests: such issues have been taken as paramount by a generation of activists, mostly migrants from the traditional left, who have sought to define the environment as the new international cause. Important as those issues are, however, there are others that are just as urgent, and that have never ceased to be important to conservatives. And these other issues are now at the top of the agenda, where they belong.

One such issue is planning. How and where should we build, and what features of our local environment deserve special protection? You do not have to read widely in the British press to discover that this is, for many people, the issue of the day. And it connects with questions that the ordinary voter would like to see discussed but that the political class has swept under the carpet: immigration, for example. After all, Britain – along with all other countries that enjoy the inheritance of the English language, the English culture of tolerance and the English common law – is the destination of choice for a large number of the earth's oppressed or uprooted people. How can we accommodate our growing population and still enjoy the extraordinary countryside that our parents and grandparents fought to defend? How should we design cities so that they are viable human habitats and centres of social and cultural life?

Equally important for many people is the issue of transport. Recent governments have endorsed

ROGER SCRUTON
IS A WRITER AND
PHILOSOPHER

the post-war scramble to build motorways and bypasses, regardless of the objections raised by local residents. The top-down dictatorship of the road-building years has now been transferred, first to expanding airports and now to the scheme for a high-speed rail link, which will knock all of 25 minutes off the journey time from London to Birmingham. Again, there is no evidence that this issue has slipped down the agenda of the ordinary voter. I am confident that popular opinion is firmly opposed to what the political class tells us is 'progress', and which after all must be progress, since it involves vast expense and far-reaching destruction for so few tangible rewards.

CIVIC ENVIRONMENTALISM

Behind these high-profile issues lie subsidiary questions that are part of environmental politics, even though they are seldom defined as such by those who spend their time and use their voices at big international meetings. There is the issue of fisheries, for example. British people feel very strongly about this, since their well-maintained and sustainable coastal waters have been taken from them without their consent by the eurocrats, acting in league with an indifferent political class. The 'tragedy of the commons', which we have seen inflicted on the North Sea and our southern coastline, has brought home to all of us the logic of environmental destruction. This can only be avoided by local people asserting defined rights of property, not by international treaties opening our assets to outsiders.

There is the issue of wind farms, those symbolic blots on the landscape that have done more than anything else to alienate ordinary people from the environmentalists who campaign for their use. Real environmental politics touches on that deep instinct for society that Burke described when he argued that the social contract unites the living with the unborn and the dead. People have a motive to protect their environment when they can see it as a shared and historically continuous home. Mutilate the landscape, vandalise the cities, overlay the debris



with motorways, and you will effectively destroy any vestige of the motive of conservation. That is why British people, who have a natural love of the environment and an instinct to conserve it, have taken against wind farms. But they also know that wind farms are inefficient, need to be backed up by other sources of power and leave a hefty carbon footprint.

There is the issue of waste, and specifically of plastic waste, which can now be found everywhere and which exists largely because of regulations that oblige us to produce it. Health and safety rules imposed by the EU ensure that 25% of the content of supermarket trolleys consists of plastic wrapping, much of which ends up in hedgerows and waterways around the country. The supermarkets do not object to these rules,

since they form part of the unseen subsidies that ensure their competitive advantage over the small distributor and the local food economy. But I suspect there is a growing awareness that these rules are one major cause of environmental destruction, and that they are yet another sign of the fact that our power to take action has been confiscated by unanswerable bureaucrats and imposed upon us from above.

There is the issue of architecture and, in particular, the new habit of situating architectural blemishes in the centre of our towns in order to declare that they are no longer residences, but intergalactic space stations where the global economy can come briefly to earth. Again, I have no doubt that the political class and the architectural establishment are at >>

“THE REAL DANGER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT COMES FROM ACTIVISTS WHO WISH TO LIFT THE PROBLEM FROM THE LOCAL ARENA IN WHICH IT CAN BE CONFRONTED”

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

PLAN ZHEROES

An RSA-backed initiative is helping to reduce waste by redirecting surplus food to charities that need it.

The RSA Catalyst fund initially awarded £1,900 to Plan Zheroes – whose name means ‘zero food waste heroes’ – to enable it to build an online map that pinpoints the location of food donors and recipients in the Greater London area. The map provides details about food types and collection times.

Plan Zheroes, which is supported by London Leaders, has signed up more than 150 donors and 50 charities. By working with high-profile organisations that already donate food, such as sandwich chains Pret A Manger and EAT, co-founders Maria Ana Botelho Neves FRSA and Chris Wilkie FRSA hope to set an example for others.

The next step is to develop a mobile app version of the map and to create the Zheroes Index, a public list of organisations that have a responsible attitude to distributing surplus food. Plan Zheroes has recently benefited from an additional grant of £5,000 from RSA Catalyst that will bring it closer to its long-term goal of creating a financially sustainable social enterprise.

The RSA’s London City Network has helped Neves and Wilkie to build relationships with other Fellows who share their interests and concerns. Among them is Marcus Jamieson-Pond FRSA, a corporate social responsibility expert who recently involved Plan Zheroes in a ‘Volunteers Day’ he was running on behalf of a large organisation. Top performers at the organisation spent the day promoting the food map and signing up businesses and charities.

Neves said: “This is a fantastic example of how Fellows with a shared vision can help one another. The Fellowship and RSA Catalyst can provide a great knowledge resource in helping us overcome barriers of adoption.”

■ *If you have a background in social enterprise or information technology and would like to support this project, please visit www.planzheroes.org or contact fellowship@rsa.org.uk. If you have a new idea to tackle a social problem, find out how RSA Catalyst could help you at www.thersa.org/catalyst*

» variance with ordinary people in this matter. Whenever given a chance to vote on a project or to express their views, most people tend to side with Léon Krier and the Prince of Wales against the likes of Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid. But the right to decide has been confiscated from them. They are forced to stand back and observe in indignant silence as the great Victorian cities, products of local patriotism and civic pride, are reduced to collections of gadgets and gizmos.

Then there are those little issues that matter to local residents but that have, once again, suffered from top-down solutions imposed by people from elsewhere. There is the constant interference in farming practices by overt or hidden subsidies (largely connected with the Common Agricultural Policy). These impose uses of the land that might have no relation to its historic meaning or its nature as an animal or human habitat, as well as benefiting the absentee agribusiness at the expense of the resident farmer. There is vindictive legislation such as the Hunting Act, which has disrupted a longstanding and ecologically sensitive form of wildlife management for purposes that have nothing to do with the environment. There are the planning exemptions enjoyed by business parks and distribution centres, which have enabled the supermarkets effectively to kill off the local food economy throughout the country. There are the EU regulations governing abattoirs, which have centralised the production of meat and have made disasters such as the foot-and-mouth epidemic more likely. And so on.

You will say that these are the gripes of a Luddite for whom the modern world is simply one long journey downhill. Not so. I believe that environmental problems are real and for the most part soluble, and that we have in this country a long and proud tradition of solving them. That tradition would continue were it not for the habit of thinking that such problems must be solved from the top and not from the bottom. Partly because of the EU, and partly because of the post-war habit of dictating solutions before defining the problems, our ability to sort ourselves out has been confiscated from us.

Look back at the environmental movement when it first began in reaction to the industrial revolution, and you will see that British people have been able to confront and resolve their environmental problems through their own initiative and through the inheritance of the common law. The ‘polluter pays’ principle is already suggested by the common law of nuisance, and further endorsed by the leading case in tort of *Rylands v Fletcher*, 1868, which returned the environmental costs of many industrial activities to the one who caused them. Associations of citizens inspired (and sometimes led) by Wordsworth and Ruskin actively resisted the spoliation of the countryside. Their activities culminated in the foundation of the National Trust in 1895, a civil association that now has four million members and is entirely outside the sphere of government.

How were our rivers saved from pollution? Not by the state, which was a major cause of it, but by another civil association: the Anglers Conservation Association, which used common-law rights to protect rivers from local governments and nationalised polluters (*Pride of Derby* case, 1952). The protection of our countryside by the Town and Country Planning Act 1946 was



the result of active association among opinion-formers under the leadership of GM Trevelyan and Clough Williams-Ellis during the inter-war period. The Prince of Wales and others, inspired by the New Urbanist movement that now stretches across the world, have demonstrated the way forward for new town development. From the formation of the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society by George Shaw-Lefevre in 1865 to the Wildlife Trusts and the local conservation societies today, the initiative in protecting the environment has been with public-spirited individuals and the 'little platoons' of civil society, rather than with the state.

The real danger for the environment comes, it seems to me, precisely from those activists who wish to lift the problem from the local arena in which it can be understood and confronted. They seek to recast it as a global catastrophe for which only vast and comprehensive solutions can be envisaged, involving worldwide treaties that the real culprits will have no motive to sign. By diverting our finite legacy of public spirit to causes on which it can only be squandered, these activists have contributed to the confiscation of our local problems.

STARTING SMALL, THINKING BIG

I do not deny that global warming and population growth are real and potentially catastrophic. But the solution to neither problem lies in a global treaty. Clean energy has to be discovered at the local level by intensive scientific research, which will involve the energies of scientists in the richer countries. Population control has to come about through the restriction of migration, so that each country has a motive to manage its resources and so that the cost of mismanagement is felt locally. Only in this way can we draw upon our principal asset, which is the social and moral capital vested in civil society, and in the citizens' initiatives that have set successful examples.

However, citizens' initiatives exist only where there are citizens, and citizens only where there are prosperous settlements

in which people can spare the time, the energy and the resources to do things for the public good. People in poor countries will be able to look after their environment only if they can raise their standard of living to the point where a stable civil society emerges, something that has not happened in large parts of Africa and the Middle East. Meanwhile, people in rich countries continue to consume energy and resources in ways that threaten us all. Many activists therefore argue that there is a question of justice at the heart of environmental politics, and that unless and until we equalise the costs and benefits around the globe, we will be merely touching the surface of the problem.

I do not say that this demand for justice is wrong, only that it is futile. Humans do not respond in that way to global demands, or, if they do, it is very often in the way of Dickens' Mrs Jellyby, who neglected her family for the sake of Borio-boola Gha. It is precisely Jellybyism that has turned ordinary people against the environmental movement. The solution is not to transfer resources to the kleptocrats. The solution is for wealthy states to invest as much as they can in research, and to make the results available freely around the world. Meanwhile, we should encourage the kind of fair trade with developing countries that enables them actually to develop, rather than to live on subsidies enjoyed by the gangsters. Only when countries have developed will their citizens have the time and energy to address their environmental problems. We see this now in Brazil where, for the first time, a civilly active middle class is emerging and beginning to defend the country's extraordinary natural assets against the multinational exploiters.

My view is that we should simply stop thinking in terms of top-down global solutions and ask ourselves instead what we can do, and what it is rational to do, within the known constraints of human nature. When we look at things in this way, we can see that environmental problems have been more frequently solved by civil society than by the state and, indeed, that the modern state has been part of the problem. ■

NEW FELLOWS



PATRICK MILLWOOD



LAURA FERGUSON

RATIONAL POLICING

Studying for a degree in mathematics and helping to recruit young police officers is all in a day's work for Patrick Millwood, who volunteers for the Metropolitan Police on a part-time basis. For more than four years, he has been involved in youth outreach work on behalf of the Met, recruiting volunteers from universities and training new joiners.

Millwood's motivation for joining the RSA was similar to his reasons for volunteering for the police force. In both cases, he was keen to encourage people to use their skills and resources to support local communities. "At the Met, I try to encourage new officers to take a more reflective, and less reactive, approach to tackling crime," he said. "The RSA's work interests me because it promotes exactly this kind of rational outlook."

Millwood is supporting the RSA's Whole Person Recovery project (see page 24) and its new agenda to promote social justice in education. He explained: "Getting people from deprived communities into education has a huge impact on preventing crime."

IN BRIEF

Here are a few more new Fellows who are working to drive social progress:

Will Prochaska is chief executive of Alive and Kicking, an African social enterprise that helps to support communities, create jobs and promote health education through the manufacture of sports balls.

Caroline Stewart is a chartered clinical and forensic psychologist who, at the National Offender Management Service, was part of a team that develops policy for women offenders.

Professor Ted Cattle is chair of the Institute of Community Cohesion, which designs policies and practical solutions to prevent communal tensions and promote a greater shared identity and interdependence.

Swadeka Ahsun is an adviser and consultant on matters of Islam, faith and gender on behalf of the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth. She also exhibits art inspired by Islam and its cultural heritage.

TACKLING LONELINESS

As director of the Campaign to End Loneliness, Laura Ferguson aims to help combat loneliness in old age by encouraging people to build and maintain social connections.

Through partnerships with Manchester City Council and charities including Age UK Oxfordshire and Sense, the campaign seeks to address the problem of loneliness through a research- and policy-based approach. In particular, it has highlighted the severity of the health risks associated with loneliness and the need to make information about local support services for older people more widely available. This is all the more important in the context of economic austerity, with spending cuts to health, leisure and housing services all affecting the prospects of older people.

Ferguson joined the RSA because of its research into the role of networks in building more cohesive communities. She said: "Like the RSA, we are looking into ways to help people improve their resilience by taking active steps to broaden their social networks."

YOUR FELLOWSHIP

Explore opportunities to get involved at www.thersa.org/fellowship

Networks near you: connect with other Fellows at one of the regular local networks and events taking place throughout the world.

Online networks: RSA Comment and FRSA online spaces enable you to debate, engage and connect.

Fellowship newsletter: a fortnightly e-newsletter about your activities, detailing ways for you to get involved.

Fellowship Council: keep up to date with Council activities.

Spread the word: help build a progressive society by nominating other Fellows.

Fellows' facilities: use the RSA House library, archive, bar, restaurant and meeting spaces.

Turn your ideas into action: the Catalyst Fund supports new and early-stage projects aimed at tackling social problems.

MANUFACTURING MATTERS

I represent one of the statistically more prosperous wards in what Vicky Pryce ('Does manufacturing matter?', Winter 2011) would call a "ghost town". As she rightly says, these ghost towns are the product of the mistaken 'manufacturing does not matter' philosophy of the 1980s. In Burnley, we recognise that manufacturing is not likely to be as important as it was in the past and that we need employment opportunities in all sectors. However, we see manufacturing playing a more important role, in Burnley and elsewhere, than Ms Pryce thinks possible.

It is in manufacturing that many of our traditional talents have been found and it is where many, at all levels of ability, expect to be productive. There remains a pride in making things, something that seems to have been overlooked by those who have made nothing much themselves. Today, the biggest beneficiaries of government largesse are the financiers in the City. This includes not only the massive government bailout of the banks, but also the favour the City has enjoyed over any other part of the country.

For too long, those in power have allowed manufacturing to decline in the belief that the City and the service sector will provide. Yet a reliance on the financial sector and the south-east is just as wrong now as it has ever been. What this country should have been doing is setting up systems that support manufacturing, encourage inventiveness and help industries to get new products made in Britain to the market. The only way forward is for the economy to be balanced.

—Roger Barstow Frost

THE TRUTH ABOUT PUBLIC HEALTH

Public policy appears to be in thrall to the idea that a mysterious metaphysical entity called 'deprivation' is causing people to be ill or die early (Comment, Matthew Taylor, Autumn 2011). Yet health disparities do not need to be interpreted this way. Life expectancy figures tell us the average age at which people have died in a particular area, not how long they are likely to live. It is almost inevitable that social housing estates will appear to have reduced average life expectancy, since they will usually contain a high proportion of sick and disabled people as a result of priority housing need criteria.

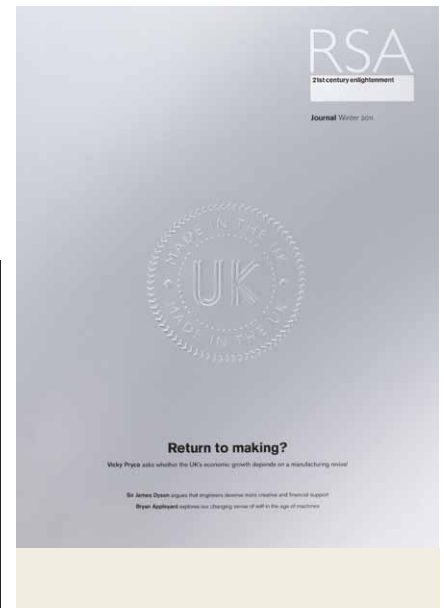
Of course, reduced income has an impact on quality of life. But we need to stop regarding health as just a function of our social and economic circumstances.

—Gary Kitchen

THE ETHICS OF NEUROMARKETING

We at Ethical Markets Media would like to point out that many companies, including ours, consider neuromarketing to be unethical and similar to the banned subliminal advertising attempted in the US in the 1970s ('Brain sells', Winter 2011). We believe it is manipulative and a misuse of medical technology such as MRI scanners. We hope that the *RSA Journal* will encourage more of a debate on this advertising practice and the role of marketing in sustainable societies.

—Hazel Henderson



KEEPING IT LOCAL

Two of the front cover headlines from the *RSA Journal* (Winter 2011) appear to relate to each other: "Vicky Pryce asks whether the UK's economic growth depends on a manufacturing revival" and "Sir James Dyson argues that engineers deserve more creative and financial support".

While the response to both points should be a quite definite "yes", the problem is that if Sir James and others continue to send manufacturing jobs overseas, the contribution of the manufacturing sector to UK employment could continue to decline.

—Dr Gwyn Rowley

Please send us your thoughts on the *RSA Journal* by emailing editor@rsa.org.uk or writing to Frances Hedges, *RSA Journal*, Wardour, 5th Floor, Drury House, 34–43 Russell Street, London WC2B 5HA. Or comment online at www.thersa.org/journal



OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

17 JANUARY 2012

The prison system is not working and successive governments have failed to fix it, says John Podmore. The government's 'rehabilitation revolution' depends on more innovation and less bureaucracy

“THE PRISON POPULATION TODAY STANDS AT 88,000. THAT IS MORALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND PRACTICALLY UNSUSTAINABLE”

The prison population today stands at 88,000: double what it was when I started working in the service 25 years ago. That is morally, economically and practically unsustainable. Having worked as a prisons governor and inspector, I am convinced by the need for what the government is calling a rehabilitation revolution. If we are to achieve this, however, we must focus on three things: security, localism and privatisation.

Security in prisons is something we should manage, not hide behind. Not all prisoners are rioters, rapists or murderers. They range from the exceptionally dangerous – the likes of Levi Bellfield and Ian Huntley – to the young man who was imprisoned for throwing a sickie while on jury duty. Treating all these prisoners in the same way is expensive, impractical and counterproductive.

There are two key problems with security. The first is not keeping people in but getting them out, and doing so in a way that protects the public. We release about 80,000 prisoners a year, and we owe the public a duty to ensure that they have somewhere to live, a job, a stable relationship and treatment for any drug and alcohol problems. Resettlement should start the day they go into prison, not the day after they come out.

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The second security problem is the relationship between staff and prisoners,

which has to be about cooperation, not coercion. Coercion requires a large number of staff and a lot of money, which is unpalatable even at times of economic prosperity. Sending people to prison to be punished, rather than as punishment, is neither appropriate nor affordable. Instead, we need a well-trained, well-managed and motivated workforce that works with prisoners in a constructive way. Staff who are scared of redundancy will not deliver a secure prison service. Though largely invisible to the public, there are some fantastic people working in prisons, and we should be building on – not ignoring – their talents.

Our next area of focus should be localism. When prisons and their governors embrace their communities, the results can be rewarding. But as long as prisons are part of a bureaucratic leviathan, this cannot work. Endless top-down reorganisations breed fear and resentment, and force prison governors to look upwards to the bean counters rather than outwards to their communities.

Yet there are alternatives to crushing bureaucracy. Here at the RSA, Fellows and staff have been developing the Transitions model, which embraces both prisoner resettlement and localism. The prison would operate as a social enterprise and would be led by the community, rather than the public or private sector. We also need to consider the role of locally elected police and crime commissions

in wresting control of prisons from big government.

The final issue we are facing is privatisation. By next year, there will be at least another six private prisons in England and Wales. These prisons should give us four things: transparency, cost efficiency, innovation and some transfer of risk.

The financial case for privatisation has not yet been proved, so we need transparency about outcomes and cost effectiveness, particularly when it comes to rehabilitation. We also need to see more innovation in the competition process. At present, the specifications are set by people in the Ministry of Justice who know little about prisons, let alone the management of multibillion-pound contracts. We need to create that capability in Whitehall if the private sector is not to outmanoeuvre government officials. Moreover, a mass exodus is currently taking place, with staff moving from the public to the private sector. Is it safe to assume that those who did not deliver in one uniform can do so simply by donning another?

Finally, if the private sector takes on the work, it must also take on the risk. If HMP Birmingham – the first public-sector prison to be privatised – burns to the ground, we deserve to know who will pick up the bill.

I do not advocate throwing money at the problem; that would get us nowhere. Prisons can only become better by being smarter and embracing the 21st century. That certainly would be a revolution. ■



WILLPOWER

23 JANUARY 2012

The ability to restrain desires and exert self-control is one of humanity's greatest strengths, says Roy F Baumeister

Evidence is coming out all the time that shows the benefits of good self-control. People who have this trait are more successful at work, their relationships are happier, they are better liked by others, their stress is lower and they live longer.

Self-control is the capacity of the self to change the self. Unlike other species, we restrain our impulses all the time to conform to social rules and live up to social ideals. Self-control is a key psychological ingredient in making culture possible. Morality, too, depends on self-control, as it often involves resisting a temptation for the sake of the greater good.

Laboratory tests have shown that our capacity for self-control is limited. When we engage in it, it uses up some kind of inner strength or energy – willpower, in fact – and leaves them depleted. Like a muscle, willpower shows fatigue effects after it is exerted, so the body automatically tries to conserve what it has left. This happens on a daily basis: for example, if you resist the desire to tell your supervisor what you think of him or her, and you resist the desire to have a beer or go to bed with the wrong person, all these things take their toll and you become more likely to give in to the next desire that comes along.

Regular exercise can, though, strengthen the willpower muscle over time. There have been various studies in which people have been asked to perform

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self-control exercises, such as spending a couple of weeks working on their posture, before returning to the laboratory for tests. In each case, they did better in self-control tests that had nothing to do with posture.

We only have one stock of willpower, so if we allocate it to one thing, it may not be available for others. When it comes to making resolutions, for example, it is best to succeed at one before moving on to the next. Succeeding at the first will strengthen your muscle and give you a greater capacity to achieve the next one.

We mainly associate willpower with self-control but, as part of the body's basic energy supply, it is used for other things too. One of these is decision making: after making choices or using your initiative, your willpower is depleted. Similarly, if you use up your willpower on self-control, your decisions will become more impulsive and more subject to irrational bias.

You might assume that people who score highly in self-control tests resist desires more often, but results are statistically significant in the opposite direction. People with good self-control are not so much resisting temptations as avoiding problems. They set up their lives so that they do not fall into tempting situations that require willpower to bail them out.

Willpower is not only a metaphor; it is tied to physiological processes. After people exert self-control, the glucose levels in their bloodstreams are lower, suggesting that the brain has burned up a lot of the available 'fuel'. This leads to poorer performance on self-control. If we can restore people's glucose levels, however, their performance revives fairly well. Other parts of the body, such as the immune system, use glucose, which is why people may have less self-control when they are fighting off a cold.

Willpower contributes to success in many spheres of life, academic and social. Our ability to restrain our desires enables us to function in a civilised way, which has always been our species' biological strategy. In this sense, willpower is one of the key traits that make us human. ■

MORE FROM THE EVENTS PROGRAMME

We have had an eclectic and high-profile mix of speakers on the stage in the past few months. Renowned academic and author **Nassim Nicholas Taleb** discussed his groundbreaking ideas with **Rohan Silva**, senior policy adviser to the prime minister; writer and philosopher **Roger Scruton** argued for a conservative approach to environmental problems; acclaimed academic **Richard Sennett** discussed the pleasure and politics of cooperation; economist **Loretta Napoleoni** outlined the victory of communism with a profit motive; **Manuel Lima**, senior UX design lead at Microsoft Bing, explored the power of network visualisation; internet freedom activist **Rebecca MacKinnon** discussed what constitutes good internet citizenship; **Digby Jones** argued for more competitiveness in the globalised 21st century economy; popular philosopher **Alain de Botton** presented a progressive alternative to the 'atheists versus believers' debate, and **Mark Pagel**, one of the world's leading experts on human evolution and development, looked at our capacity for culture, cooperation and community.

The highlights above are just a small selection of recent events from the RSA events programme. All of these, and many more, are available as audio downloads at www.thersa.org/audio

Full national and regional events listings are available at www.thersa.org/events

SANITY CHECK

Everything is relative, even psychopathy

By Jon Ronson

There was a frustrating period, two years ago, when I wrote to every disgraced corporate chief I could think of to ask if I could interview them to see if they were a psychopath. I wrote to Bernie Madoff and the Enron people. I got only nos. I came to realise that the thing in my letter that was putting them off was the word ‘psychopath’.

My attempts to journey into their world had begun some weeks earlier when I spent three days with Robert Hare learning how to use his industry-standard Hare Psychopathy Checklist and become a professional psychopath spotter. I had a Certificate of Attendance signed by him, which would be qualification enough to make me a court expert in some US states. This troubles Hare. There’s a world of globe-trotting ‘experts’, armed with the Hare checklist, plying their wares in sentencing and parole hearings. All he can do is teach the skills. He can’t stand over his students’ subsequent lives. And now he’d taught me the checklist, in a seminar in west Wales, and he needed a lift to Cardiff Central station.

In the car, he seemed rueful. “I shouldn’t have done all my research in prisons,” he said to me. “I should have gone inside the Stock Exchange as well.”

“Do you mean that?” I said.

He nodded. Psychopathy, he said, is such a powerful brain anomaly that it has remoulded society in all the wrong ways. Those feelings of fear and remorse and empathy that shoot backwards and forwards between our amygdalae and our central nervous systems? Psychopaths don’t experience them. And so, in the barren field where empathy should be grows a twisted forest of the 20 items on the Hare Checklist: Cunning/Manipulative, Lack of Remorse, Grandiose Self Worth, Shallow Affect (an inability to experience a range of deeply felt emotions) and so on. Capitalism rewards psychopathic character traits, Hare said.

I learnt from my Bernie Madoff and Enron knockbacks. In my next letter – to the notorious corporate asset stripper Al Dunlap – I didn’t mention psychopaths. I said instead that he might have a special brain anomaly that made him fearless and special and interested in the predatory spirit, and could I come to talk to



him about it? He emailed back to say I was more than welcome.

So I visited his Florida mansion, which was filled with an array of sculptures of predatory animals.

“You know I mentioned that you may have a special brain anomaly?” I said.

“Fascinating theory,” said Al.

“Well,” I said. “Some psychologists would say this might make you an, um, psychopath.”

There was an agonising silence. “What?” said Al.

“I’ve got a list of psychopathic traits in my pocket,” I said.

He looked intrigued, despite himself.

“Go on,” he said.

“Grandiose Sense of Self Worth,” I said.

Which would have been a hard one to deny, since he was standing underneath a giant oil painting of himself.

“You gotta believe in you,” he said.

“Manipulative?” I said.

“That’s leadership,” he said.

And so on. But something else odd happened that day. Whenever he said no to an item – like Juvenile Delinquency (he got accepted into the West Point military academy) and Many Short-Term Marital Relationships (his second marriage has lasted 41 years) – I thought: “Well, I won’t put THAT in my book.”

I realised then that administering the checklist had turned me somewhat psychopathic. We journalists are globe-trotters in the madness industry, hunting for appropriately crazy people to bring forth to entertain. We chop out the bits that make them seem normal, leaving a collage of the madness, those things that are officially defined as disorders. Yesterday I got an email from a former *Come Dine With Me* director who’d read my book: “My job was to poke the participants with a stick and then edit down their craziest moments into a one-hour show.”

And these are the most popular programmes on TV. Why? Maybe we’re all afraid we’re going crazy, and so it’s comforting to laugh at those who are crazier than us. Maybe we do it to make ourselves feel more normal. ■

JON RONSON IS A
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AND DOCUMENTARY MAKER

Jon Ronson’s book, *The Psychopath Test*, is now available in paperback.

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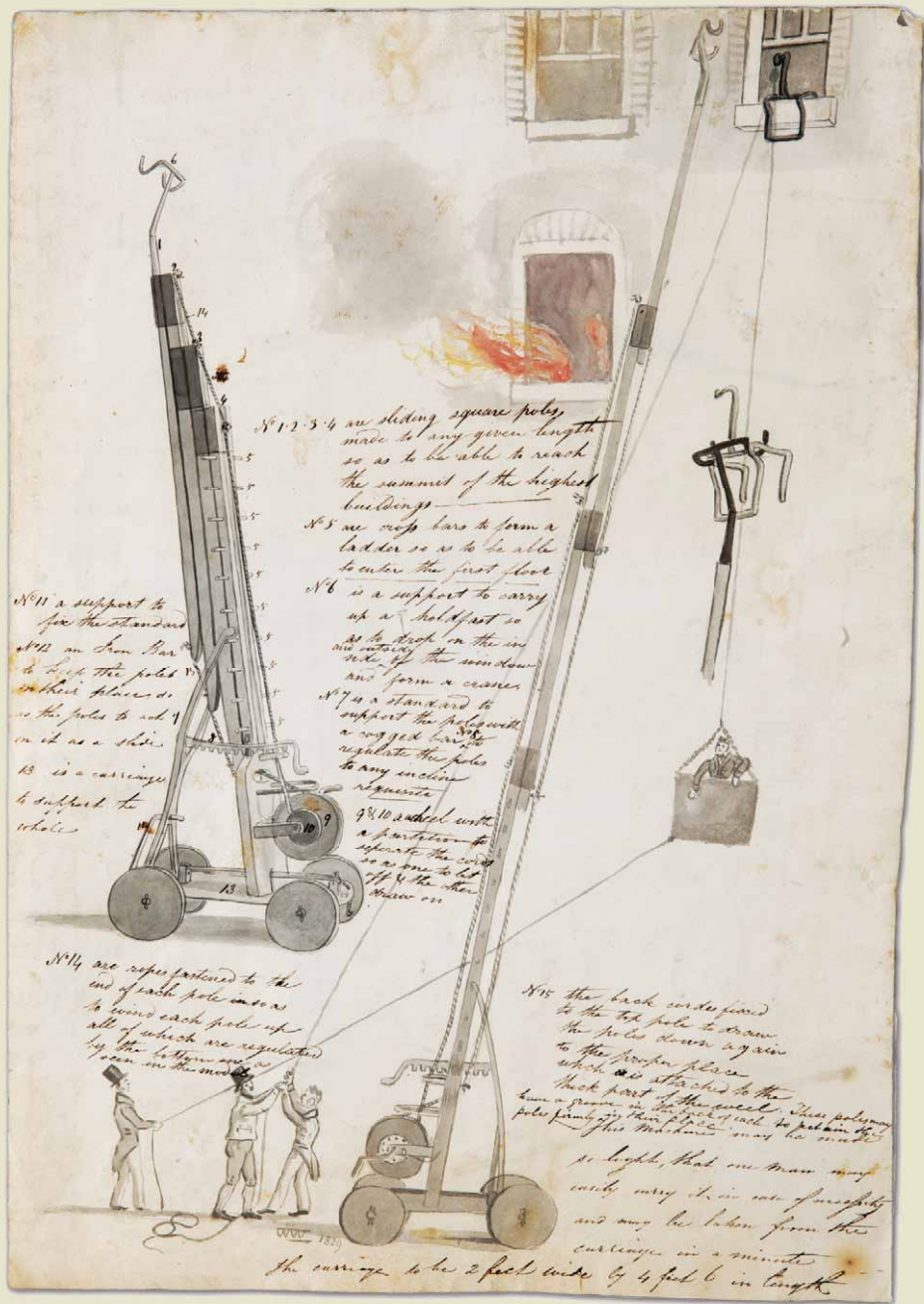
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Mr W Witty submitted this design for an extendable fire ladder, intended to provide an escape route from a burning building, for an RSA award in 1834. For more than 100 years after its foundation in 1754, the RSA awarded premiums for the best ideas for solving pressing social problems.



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