



SHH A PARTNER OF HUK

WHAT'S COMING UP



**AIMAN ALZETANI MUSLIM FAITH ADVISER TO UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHAMPTON FAITH AND REFLECTION CENTRE**



THE MORAL CODE OF ISLAM

SUN JULY 17TH 7.0PM PAVILION, RESIDENTS' GARDENS, ABBOTTS WAY, SO171QP



DISCUSSION GROUP.

**ARE WE TOO DEPENDENT ON THE NHS? DOES IT LESSEN OUR PERSONAL
RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR HEALTH?**

WED JULY 20TH 7.30PM, HOME OF MEG CAMPBELL, MEMBERS ONLY. ADDRESS FROM TONI



CHARITY GARDEN PARTY IN AID OF UKRANIAN REFUGEES

**TUESDAY AUGUST 30TH 2PM. HOME OF LIZ AND GRAYHAM MIZON
18 BROOKVALE RD, SO171QP**

ALL WELCOME. HELP AND CAKE GRATEFULLY RECEIVED!

RECENT EVENTS
MAY 18TH DISCUSSION GROUP

The group discussed the question ‘Is social mobility (SM) getting worse, and, if so, how should it be improved?’

The discussion was introduced by Roger Brown who has written on the subject. There was little doubt that SM, as defined fairly crudely as the ability to move up or down the social hierarchy, had got worse since the mid-80s. Trends in SM were associated with trends in inequality and poverty. So the best way to arrest the decline in SM was to reduce inequality and poverty. However there was a strong case for saying that what we should be concerned about – at least in the first instance - was not SM but equity and social justice. Roger quoted Raymond Williams (Culture and Society, 1780-1950):

...the ladder version of society is objectionable in two related aspects...it weakens the principle of common betterment...it sweetens the poison of hierarchy.

There was then a general discussion. There was broad agreement that both SM and social justice were important. The ambivalent position of education – as both the enabler of individual advancement and as a barrier between the better educated and the rest – was noted. This had a clear geographical aspect (the clustering of graduates in the larger cities) and was a factor in the Brexit vote.

The focus on ‘merit’ and meritocracy was another way in which society was being divided between more meritorious sheep and less meritorious goats. There was some criticism of the preoccupation with economic and material considerations in assessing social status. Cultural factors might be just as, or even more, important in determining opportunities and progression. The education system needed to recognise and accommodate this more than it does.

Finally, there was general agreement that reducing inequality and improving social mobility would require radical actions of redistribution that would not necessarily attract popular support. However there were good historical precedents for radical social change often triggered by a shock such as a war or an economic crisis. RB



MAY22ND BARRY NEWMAN
ASSISTED DYING. WHAT, WHY AND HOW?

Barry Newman, a retired anaesthetist and critical care doctor, and a member of Dignity in Dying, gave us an excellent presentation on Assisted Dying which he defined as **“assistance provided to carry out an action in response to an explicit request by a person with full mental capacity, where the intention is that the action will lead to the person’s death”**

He spent time defining terms, and as he talked, we increasingly realised the importance of such precision in an area fraught with legal, philosophical and political challenge. While many, (more than 80% of UK citizens according to a recent poll) feel assisted dying is justified in terminal illness or where there is unbearable suffering, there are many questions to be considered. Questions relating to an individual’s mental capacity, whether someone’s advanced directive should be allowed if they have lost their mental capacity; what is the position of someone with learning difficulties; whether in the situation where there is loss of physical capacity another individual should be allowed to administer the necessary medication; whether psychiatric suffering should qualify? So many questions that perhaps we had not begun to consider.

Objections to assisted dying may be spiritual -the feeling, if we are religious, that we have no right to discard a God given life. Barry suggested that as Humanists, our version of the spiritual objection is a **“philosophy about the value of life arrived at by reason rather than adopted via faith”**. Doctors may object because their tradition is to save life and they resist compulsion. What about the vulnerable? Is assisted dying a slippery slope, could it be used as a screen for eugenics? And how far can we take the argument of personal autonomy? **“An individual’s right to autonomy does not take precedence over the norms of a society or the greater good in society”**

But globally, Assisted Dying has been allowed in some places for many years, although it was fascinating, as Barry outlined the requirements in different places, how much they varied. For example in Oregon it has been allowed since 1998 for terminal illness, only for those with full mental capacity, no advance directive or psychiatric conditions allowed. While in Switzerland, also 1998, terminal illness and unbearable suffering, and

mental illness are allowed, but again no advance directives are accepted. In Canada since 2016 assisted dying may be considered for serious illness which does not have to be terminal, and drugs can be administered by another person. Holland and Belgium are the most liberal allowing assisted dying since 1973 for unbearable suffering with no prospect of relief and also including psychiatric illness and accepting advance directives. In the past 10 years 3.4% deaths in Holland and Belgium have been assisted, and this is 10 times higher than the figure in Oregon.

But what I find most interesting is that since 2016 in Holland and Belgium assisted dying is allowed for those who feel they are **“finished with life”, who have “a sense of aching loneliness, a feeling of not mattering, an inability to express themselves, a multidimensional tiredness and an aversion of feared dependency”**. What does this say about our modern society and family structure and our brilliant medical progress which keeps us alive longer and longer?

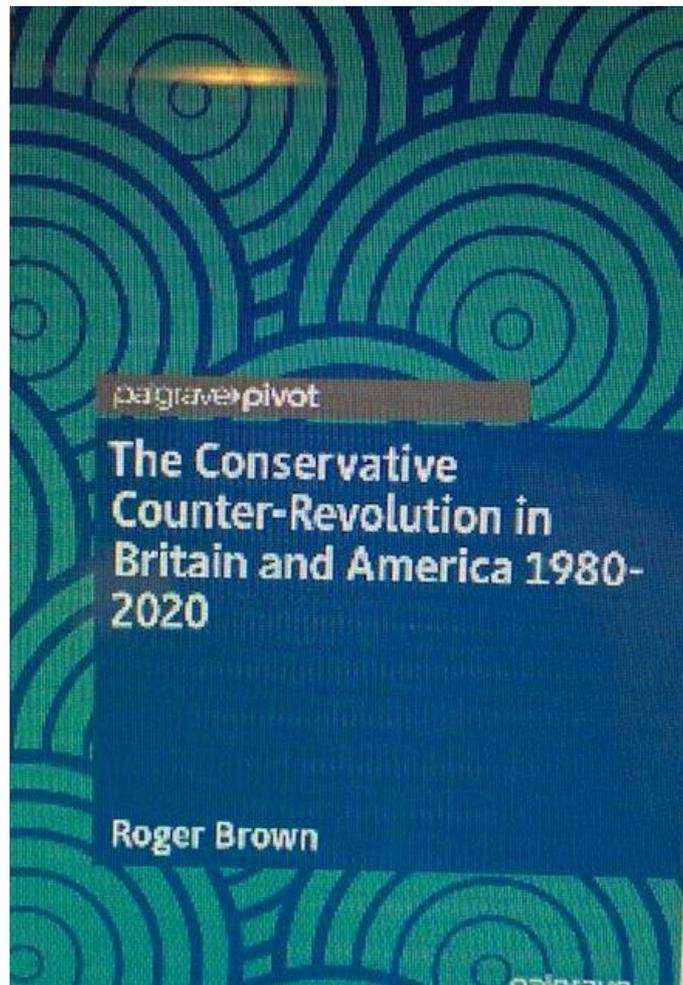
In the UK, despite support from a majority of the public and parliament, and a recent vocal intervention from a group of Anglican bishops, passage of legislation through parliament, spearheaded by Baroness Molly Meacher, continues to be thwarted. However it will probably come soon and it will be interesting to see its form. Dignity in Dying’s conditions require a terminal illness, full mental and physical capacity to self-administer, a waiting period and the involvement of 2 doctors and a high court judge.

An important subject and Barry Newman brilliantly showed us that even if we supported the concept we needed to inform ourselves and think about all the implications very carefully.
TFR



BARONESS MOLLY MEACHER

TWO OF OUR MEMBERS, ROGER BROWN AND NORMAN MACLEAN IN THE NEWS!



“In this readable, insightful and illuminating account, Roger Brown charts the roots and legacy of the four-decade-long experiment in neoliberalism, and exposes the reality behind the promises of a stronger economy and a more resilient society by the free market evangelists.” —
Stewart Lansley, Visiting Fellow at the School of Policy Studies, University of Bristol,

ROGER’S NEW BOOK PUBLISHED AUGUST 2ND BY PALGRAVE MACMILLAN. WE HOPE TO HAVE A JOINT EVENT WITH OCTOBER BOOKS TO DISCUSS IT

NORMAN MACLEAN WAS ONE OF THE PANELLISTS ON HUK’S ZOOM MEETING “IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF DARWINISM- PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY IN THE ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE”

Norman, who is emeritus professor of Zoology in Southampton, joined Zoe Davis, Prof of Environmental studies at Kent Uni for this HUK zoom presentation. The third panellist, Sian Berry of the Green Party was indisposed. They each gave presentations and answered questions from the 50+ audience.

Norman said he and Zoe agreed that climate change was contributing to the loss of biodiversity, stark examples being the melting of polar ice caps with the potential extinction of species such as polar bear, arctic fox and penguins, and also the loss of coral as sea temperatures rose.

But they emphasised there were also many other factors threatening biodiversity.

Increasing population growth, and the inevitable resulting activity, had led to intensive farming with its use of fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides, the destruction of forests, overfishing. Human activity was also causing extensive desertification, fires in grass and woodland, urban and industrial sprawl, increasing air travel--all leading to atmospheric pollution and higher CO2 levels in air and sea water with damage to animal and plant habitats and ecosystems



Globalisation increasingly caused the introduction of species, either intentionally or accidentally, to new environments. Some had become invasive or predatory to indigenous species, examples being rats, mice, pigs, grey squirrels and plant species such as water hyacinth, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam. Local species had been or were being destroyed.

There was some good news, Attempts were being made to restore rain forests and European deciduous forests, but this was a long- term prospect. Indian tiger numbers were increasing and the whale population was recovering as their commercial

hunting declined. Red kites and white- tailed eagles had been successfully reintroduced to the UK. Rats and mice had been eradicated from some tropical islands where their accidental introduction had decimated sea bird colonies, now recovering. UK farmers were being encouraged to replant hedges and “set aside” field margins etc to increase food and nesting environments for our native birds. Fishermen were increasingly using special guarded hooks which can prevent the accidental deaths of sea birds impaled on normal bated hooks.



**A perilous time for the planet. In our hands.
Thanks Norman.**

SHH CONTACTS

- **Chairman Liz Mizon**
- **liz.mizon@btinternet.com**
- **Newsletter editor**
- **tonirolles@yahoo.com**
- **Website**
- **Southhamps.humanist.org.uk**
- **Chris Robinson, membership secretary**
chrisrobinson153@btinternet.com

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Go to Find a Celebrant- Humanists UK

This site will allow you to choose which category of celebrant you need and to enter your postcode. It will then provide a current list of approved celebrants servicing your area

