

**‘A Liberal Education’  
Stanley Unwin’s Publishing Values and a Cognitive  
Approach to Critical Thinking**

‘Portrait of Stanley Unwin’ by Oskar Kokoschka. Used for dust jacket on *The Truth About a Publisher* (1960).

**‘A Liberal Education’  
Stanley Unwin’s Publishing Values and a Cognitive Approach to  
Critical Thinking**

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### **Dedication and Acknowledgements**

This PhD would never have happened without the friendship and encouragement of Robert Peett, who has often believed in me much more than I have. My supervisors, Mark Nixon and Nicola Wilson, have provided invaluable guidance, great support, and some necessary reining in.

This PhD is dedicated to my father, Anthony Robson, who has always lived very far away, but has always been right there with me, cheering me on.

## **Abstract**

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study that considers the career and output of Stanley Unwin (1884 – 1968), founder of the publishing firm, George Allen and Unwin (1914 – 1990). Using the archives of Allen and Unwin in the Archive of British Printing and Publishing at the University of Reading, the thesis traces his career and the selected output of five of the authors his firm published, observing in Unwin's principles and in the arguments made in these publications the foundations for a new and more 'holistic' approach to critical thinking. Unwin felt that it was important to nurture cooperation among peers, to promote international and opposing voices, and to 'maintain an open forum' by publishing 'both sides' of contentious issues. These values together promote tolerance and respectful debate. The works of the chosen authors identify problems in interpersonal interactions and engagement with information among populations.

By identifying in these works understanding later garnered by the social sciences (1950s onwards), the thesis proposes a framework of concepts and metacognitive practice as the basis for an approach to the study and improvement of critical thinking more appropriate to and adapted for the modern world. The thesis's contribution to knowledge is therefore multiple: the archival work contributes to historical knowledge, and in particular, publishing and book historical knowledge. The thesis's interdisciplinary discourse surrounding the concepts associated with the cognitive and social sciences demonstrates their ubiquity in human interactions and contributes to an understanding of both the authors' observations and human behaviour. Finally, the proposed use of these ideas – and their application in projects over the course of the past several years – will hopefully provide new insight into ways of approaching the informational crisis humanity currently faces.

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## Abbreviations for Frequently Used Sources

### **Referred to throughout using abbreviated form**

**AUC and AU FSC:** refers to the George Allen and Unwin Collection, University of Reading Special Collections. FSC files are earlier.

**AURR and AU FSRR:** refers to readers' reports, George Allen and Unwin Collection, University of Reading Special Collections.

**Publisher:** Stanley Unwin, *The Truth About a Publisher* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960). Full citation given for reference to any other edition of the same.

**Publishing:** Stanley Unwin, *The Truth About Publishing* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960). Full citation given for reference to any other edition of the same.

**Book Makers:** Iain Stevenson, *Book Makers: British Publishing in the Twentieth Century* (London: British Library, 2010).

**Norrie, Publishing and Bookselling:** Ian Norrie, *Mumby's Publishing and Bookselling in the Twentieth Century* (London: Bell and Hyman, 1982).

**Kingsford:** R J L Kingsford, *The Publisher's Association: 1896 – 1946* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970).

**Remembrancer:** Rayner Unwin, *George Allen and Unwin: A Remembrancer* (Ludlow: Merlin Unwin Books, 1999).

**Christian:** Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975 [1957]). Cited in full in the first instance, abbreviated thereafter.

**Common Sense:** Bertrand Russell, *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959).

**Public Opinion:** Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillan, 1947). Cited in full in the first instance, abbreviated thereafter. The George Allen and Unwin edition was not available in hard copy, however the Macmillan edition was unchanged in content.

**Education Today** John Dewey, *Education Today* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941)

**Berger and Luckmann:** Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1966).

**Festinger:** Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (London: Tavistock, 1962 [1957]).



## **Preface**

The approach to critical thinking that this thesis describes and around which its discussion is built has been tested in a number of contexts throughout the past three years. I have given numerous talks – to local councillors, then museum staff, followed by two public talks and one for A Level and GCSE students at Theale Green School. The museum talk led to my being commissioned to write and deliver a course to Reading Borough Council employees. This course received fantastic feedback, and was run for a second time for members of the public. I have also created resources for local schools and for the EPQ programme based on this design, as well as integrating the ideas into my own teaching practice. Because of the work I have been doing, I was nominated to be a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, and the connections I have made through this have led to some potential projects when I have completed my PhD. Finally, I am in the process of writing a workbook that will guide teachers in integrating each of the thinking-orientated concepts into everyday lessons. In every project so far, participants have given feedback pertaining to their changed view and new perception of their own, and others', thinking.

## **Thesis Introduction**

### **Context**

*[I]t is impossible to foretell definitely just what civilization will be twenty years from now. Hence it is impossible to prepare the child for any precise set of conditions.<sup>1</sup>*

John Dewey

The epigraph to this Introduction is taken from John Dewey's *Education Today* (1941). In this and other works, Dewey argues that education is of fundamental importance to the wellbeing of a society and the achievement and maintenance of the democratic ideal. The statement has become increasingly – and concerningly – relevant: in the past twenty years, the world has changed to an almost inconceivable degree. In the past year alone, technologies unimaginable two decades ago have begun to pose genuine, tangible risks to legal protections of intellectual property, to millions of people's livelihoods, and to the mutual understandings that underpin the democratic ideal itself.

Walter Lippmann wrote his *Public Opinion* (1922) on the problems he observed in human behaviour and cognition that, he felt, undermined the very validity of the democratic model. He felt that humans are too simplicity-driven, too underinformed and too manipulable to be capable of making decisions on subjects of policy about which they were not well enough informed. Lippmann advocated the 'manufacture of consent': persuading populations to accept policy designed according to big data-driven assessment of need – a framework for benign technocracy. Dewey responded with *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), which argued that, under the right conditions, populations could be well-informed and capable of deciding their own futures. As he would later hold in *Education Today*, education was of fundamental importance.

The period around which their dialogue took place was one of great political and cultural change and technological progress. The early twentieth-century's advances in mass-production allowed for newspapers to be printed at lower cost than ever before. Selling advertising space artificially reduced consumer cost further, and enormously increased everyday exposure to advertising. Advertising became ever-more effective with increased understanding of psychology. The marketing-funded nature of the Press, coupled with progress

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<sup>1</sup> *Education Today*, p. 5.

in the understanding of psychology, make the middle of the twentieth century a period of profound importance in the evolution of public manipulation *en masse* by the media.<sup>2</sup>

Lippmann and Dewey's works, both of which are case studies in Part Two of this thesis, were published in England by a firm called George Allen and Unwin, headed by a man whose name is familiar to book historians, but little remembered outside this area: Stanley Unwin. Unwin's contribution to publishing was enormous, both in the vast textual output of his firm and in his own endeavours. The archives of his firm are held at the University of Reading. These archives have been used in a handful of historical studies of the book industry, but little focused attention has been paid to Unwin himself except by his family, probably in part because of his autobiography, *The Truth About a Publisher* (1960). In this, Unwin describes the principles according to which he attempted to run his publishing house: maintaining an 'open forum', by publishing opposing points of view; providing high-quality informational content by ensuring non-fiction was judged by expert readers and argued critically; and promoting intercultural discourse by publishing translated and international books in Britain, and by taking British books overseas. As the world changed over the tumultuous mid-twentieth century, Unwin's firm attempted to keep its readers abreast of the myriad ways of adapting to, and understanding, those changes.

Today's reality resembles a distorted reflection of what Lippmann envisaged: vast amounts of information is collected about human behaviour, not for use by governments to inform policy, but in order to garner maximum control and extract maximum profit. The Internet has in many ways democratised knowledge and information, but it has simultaneously ushered in the era of 'surveillance capitalism', the use of behavioural data gathered from human online interaction for purposes of manipulation. The progress of technology has offered humanity enormous benefit, and simultaneously blurred the lines between reality and fantasy, and in so doing, has placed the underpinnings of the democratic ideal under enormous strain. It is increasingly difficult to be well-informed, because false information is increasingly difficult to identify; increasingly difficult to be critical and objective, because the information we are fed very deliberately aligns itself with our pre-existing prejudices; increasingly difficult to foster open and nuanced debate, because populations are increasingly polarised.

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<sup>2</sup> The use of psychology was in part associated with Edward Bernays' and Lippmann's works. Matthew D'Ancona discusses the progress of psychology's relationship with the manipulation of public opinion in *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Ebury, 2017). Adrian Bingham explores the relationship between the press and public opinion in both *Gender, modernity, and the popular press in inter-war Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), and *Family newspapers?: Sex, private life, and the British popular press 1918-1978* (Oxford: University Press, 2009). See also Piers Brendon, *The Life and Death of the Press Barons* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1982).

The Internet caters both to the human needs for connection and knowledge, and the human tendency to seek, and to desire, simplicity and convenience. An awareness of, and interest in, these inescapable aspects of existing as a human being are at the foundation of this thesis. The past twenty years have radically altered the human landscape while changing nothing of the way that our minds work. Instead, the way people think, the way people interact with information and with one another, has begun to be weaponised, deliberately and incidentally, on a mass scale.

Stanley Unwin's career, and the principles he purported to run his business by, are used in this thesis as the foundation for a new model for, and approach to, critical thinking – informed and supported by the social commentary of a selection of his firm's authors.

## Question

What can be done in order to better adapt to this 'post-truth', algorithm-driven world; and what can be learnt from observers spanning the middle of the twentieth century – an important period of its genesis?

This thesis's argument is a consequence of the polarised and simultaneously over- and misinformed present. It is a study of a publisher, his principles, and the observations of some of his authors that form the basis of a proposal for an answer to the above question. The period over which Unwin's career took place was also a period of increased interest in, and understanding of, human cognition. This knowledge, as well as being used for good – to aid in the treatment of mental illness, for example – has been increasingly used to facilitate the manipulation of populations, for political and for profit-making ends. I will argue that this understanding might now be used as part of a counter-offensive: to empower populations against manipulation, polarisation and authoritarianism.

This thesis is about humans and the way that we think and engage with the world, which, as evolutionary psychologists assert, has remained largely unchanged since the pre-industrial era.<sup>3</sup> It explores some of the 'psychological mechanisms' that are 'universal' among

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<sup>3</sup> See Leda Cosmides, John Tooby and Jerome K Barkow, 'Introduction: Evolutionary Psychology and Conceptual Integration' (p. 5), and Donald Symons, 'On the Use and Misuse of Darwinism in the Study of Human Behaviour' (p. 138), in *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

*Homo sapiens*: mechanisms that produce differing behaviours according to their cultural, temporal and individual context, but that are, at base, ubiquitous and homogeneous.<sup>4</sup>

## Structure

This thesis is in three parts. Part One traces the life and work of Stanley Unwin, observing his publishing principles in action, and the value and importance he placed in fostering and facilitating cooperation among his peers – countering polarisation. Unwin’s ‘invaluable but sometimes biased’<sup>5</sup> publishing manual, *The Truth About Publishing* (1926, 1960), along with many other books and pamphlets he wrote, have provided historians with useful insight into the book industry in his time.<sup>6</sup> Unwin’s central role to the study is in part a response to the feelings of Brian Ryder (who catalogued the firm’s archives) about the historical importance of the collection<sup>7</sup> and Unwin’s character as portrayed through his correspondence:

*Le toute ensemble* does make a statement about the social history of its times [...] I am much nearer to being Unwin’s valet than his biographer, but if it has been an influence on me then I should actually be rather pleased.<sup>8</sup>

As McCleery and Bhaskar observe, publishers are often negatively characterised: at best, they might be considered ‘useful middlemen’,<sup>9</sup> at worst, ‘enem[ies]’<sup>10</sup> or ‘entrepreneurs of ideology’.<sup>11</sup> This thesis seeks to acknowledge Unwin as more than a middleman, and far from an enemy, but rather as a ‘facilitator and collaborator’.<sup>12</sup> Unwin was also inescapably a businessman – but a businessman who, sometimes, chose ‘importance’ over profit: a ‘gentleman publisher’, to whom cooperation among peers was of great importance.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Donald Symons, ‘On the Use and Misuse of Darwinism in the Study of Human Behaviour’, in *The Adapted Mind*, p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> For example, John Feather describes Unwin as one of the three ‘outstanding’ publishers in the first half of the twentieth century in *A History of British Publishing* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), p. 165; Iain Stevenson describes his publishing as ‘distinctive and influential’ and called his firm ‘an important influence on current affairs and serious thought’ in *Book Makers*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>7</sup> Refers to the George Allen and Unwin Publishing Archives Collection, held by Reading University Special Collections.

<sup>8</sup> Bryan Ryder, ‘The George Allen and Unwin Collection: Reading University Library’, *Publishing History* Vol. 47 (2000), p. 68, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Bhaskar, *The Content Machine: Towards a Theory of Publishing from the Printing Press to the Digital Network* (London: Anthem, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Alistair McCleery, ‘The Return of the Publisher to Book History: The Case of Allen Lane’, *Book History* Vol. 5 (2002), p. 161. Available from: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/37383> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Stark, quoted in Bhaskar, *The Content Machine*, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> McCleery, ‘The Return of the Publisher to Book History’, p. 161.

<sup>13</sup> Rayner Unwin alleges that if his father would sometimes publish for ‘merit rather than market’, if he felt a book was very good but unlikely to make a profit. *Remembrancer*, p. viii.

As a chronological guide, Unwin's autobiography has been consulted, alongside the works of his sons and nephew. There has been an attempt to avoid the 'unctuous, uncritical attention to personality' Alastair McCleery describes as characteristic of these sorts of texts.<sup>14</sup> However, as the 'principled gentleman publisher' whose ideals are central to the thesis's discussion, it is the fiction of Unwin that he, and his family and admirers, created and propagated, that is of particular interest. Specifically, it is his purported publishing and business principles – the foundations of his brand and reputation – that have formed the construction of Unwin as he appears. These principles are observed in his actions in Part One, and in correspondence with authors as well as in the content of their works in Part Two. These principles are important because they inform the study's ideals for 'critical' and socially progressive interaction with the world, and can be tallied both with the American Psychological Association's definition of a 'critical thinker' (endorsed by, for example, Dr Roy Van Den Brink-Budgen, writer of the Critical Thinking A Level syllabus pre-2013), and with Robert Sternberg's criteria for the 'adaptive thinker' (supported by Diane Halpern, an important figure in psychology-orientated critical thinking)<sup>15</sup>:

- Informing oneself with good quality information<sup>16</sup> – 'habitually inquisitive, well-informed'; 'changing oneself to fit the environment'.<sup>17</sup>
- Exposing oneself to differing perspectives<sup>18</sup> – 'open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, willing to reconsider'.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> McCleery, 'The Return of the Publisher to Book History', p. 162.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Sternberg, 'Rethinking What We Mean By Intelligence', *Phi Delta Kappan* Vol 102:3 (November 2020), pp. 37-41. Sternberg asserts the importance to his formulation of 'creating a future [...] leaving future generations a viable and liveable world', p. 38. This is a useful framework because of the aims of the study's interpretation of critical thinking. Available from:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.1177/0031721720970700> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>16</sup> Rayner Unwin describes his reliance on 'intellectuals' as his readers, and his characteristic choice to publish a book because 'it was the best book on the subject'. Jane Potter, 'Interview with Rayner Unwin', *Publishing History* Vol. 41 (January 1997), p. 76, 77. Unwin asserts that, 'in the field of ideas we wished to lead rather than follow', *Publisher*, p. 169. He recommends getting a 'corner' on 'the best books in certain subjects', and implies that he sought to maintain the 'obligation' held by publishers 'in the olden days' to publish the 'first-rate and learned books'. *Publishing*, p. 319, p. 321.

<sup>17</sup> Peter A. Facione, 'Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction: The Delphi Report', *Educational Resources Information Centre* (1990), p. 3. Available from: <https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialsciences/ppecorino/CT-Expert-Report.pdf> retrieved on: 26/01/2023. Sternberg, p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Unwin describes the firm's 'policy of maintaining an open forum' by 'publishing both sides of the argument', *Publisher*, p. 166.

<sup>19</sup> Facione, p. 3.

- Prioritising cooperation over conflict or stasis<sup>20</sup> – ‘flexible’, ‘shaping the environment to better fit one’s own and others’ needs’ and ‘finding a new environment’.<sup>21</sup>

The ‘cognitive mechanisms’ discussed in dialogue with the case studies in Part Two and introduced presently, can all problematise the achievement of these ideals in interactions and thinking.

Part Two is also chronological, and is formed of five chapters. Each chapter is a case study, considering an author and one or more books they published with Unwin’s firm. Each makes an interdisciplinary reading of the texts, exploring how each author engages with one – or a number of – ‘cognitive mechanisms’ that can contribute to the formation of problematic beliefs and compromise a person’s ability to think ‘critically’: to be objective, to consider alternative perspectives, to act on reliable information – the kind of thinking Unwin’s values align with, and seek to facilitate. Except in the Russell chapter’s period, none of the cognitive tendencies discussed had yet been described in their respective sciences.<sup>22</sup> Through these readings, the salience of these mechanisms in human behaviour and interaction is observed, and their importance to human societies, and power over human behaviour – in the text’s moment in time, in our own time, and in the future – is established.

The choices of authors and works have been made for combination of reasons. Each represents a decade in Unwin’s career, from the 1910s (Hilaire Belloc) to the penultimate decade of Unwin’s life and career, the 1950s (Bertrand Russell). Each author and their work touches on a slightly different aspect of the issues the thesis is implicitly concerned with: Belloc’s *Free Press* looks at media bias, Lippmann’s *Public Opinion* considers governance and technocracy, Capek’s fiction engages with individual experience – which the works of social commentary explore less closely, Dewey’s books propose methods for the improvement of the education system, and Russell looks at ideological dogma and international existential crises. Added to these topical justifications, each author brings to the discussion a slightly different aspect of Unwin’s publishing list: Belloc represents Unwin’s publication of works that were unlikely to be financially successful, Lippmann and Dewey demonstrate both the importance of the American market and US voices to British discourse then as now, and the cultural closeness between the two countries. Furthermore, Lippmann’s voice represents a quite

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<sup>20</sup> There are numerous references to Unwin’s work in creating a more cooperative environment in the book industry in his time, and this will be explored in the body of the study.

<sup>21</sup> Facione, p. 3; Sternberg, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> This does not include the former interpretation of group behaviour, often referred to as ‘herd instinct’, now generally associated with Social Identity Theory. Others had been commented on, but not clinically explored and published on.

different cultural and ideological perspective from Dewey's, reflecting Unwin's 'open forum' – and the differences in their stances has parallels in the arguments made in this thesis. Čapek both represents the smaller fiction-base in Unwin's list (Unwin predominantly published non-fiction), as well as being a translated writer. Despite being highly regarded in his native Czech Republic, Čapek is little-known in the UK today, and so his inclusion is also due to an absence of engagement with his work in English-language criticism. Finally, Unwin's 'most important author', Bertrand Russell, was an important choice.<sup>23</sup> Not only was Russell the 'public intellectual' of Unwin's era, but he was also a controversial figure, who twice spent time in prison for acting according to his personal morality. Russell's absence would be conspicuous: although Allen and Unwin are perhaps best-known for being Tolkien's publisher, they published almost all of the philosopher, campaigner and social commentator's works over half a century, probably more than any other author on their lists.

Part Three synthesises the findings and discussions of Parts One and Two and places them in dialogue with the present-day. Each author's observations, and the related cognitive mechanisms, are considered in the context of the contemporary world and the consequences of the modern social and informational environment.

## Methodology

This study is interdisciplinary, and makes use of several different research methods. Parts One and Two employ historical methods, using archival, primary materials, and books and other secondary sources of information about the respective moments in history in question. Part Two (and a little of Part One) employs a further strand, incorporating observations and ideas from the human and social sciences, drawn from discipline-appropriate books and journals, in dialogue with the text discussed. This approach is similar to the comparative method in literary criticism, in which a text (more often a work of fiction) will be read alongside a theory, concept or other text. Part Three maintains this quality of interaction between texts and disciplines, drawing also on recent research, as well as news media and recent events.

The use of the publisher's archives not only informs the 'narrative' being constructed in the study, adding insights from precise moments in time, but also provides part of this thesis's contribution to knowledge. The University of Reading's Allen and Unwin Collection is a vast and incredibly rich collection that has informed a number of publications, but is still

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<sup>23</sup> Philip Unwin, *The Publishing Unwins* (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 69.



relatively untapped.<sup>24</sup> By creating a context around which to explore these archives – following the events of Unwin’s life detailed in his autobiography, and focusing on select books and their authors – over the course of writing this thesis I have discovered some interesting highlights in the long period of Unwin’s career that may otherwise have been forgotten.

The works considered fall broadly into the category of ‘social commentary’, apart from the Čapek chapter. Unwin’s interests were diverse, and this is reflected in the choice to use publications covering a range of subjects. The intention is in part to explore the relationship between social commentary, fiction, and the humanities and social sciences. Each of these areas, in different ways, seeks to better understand the human condition, human behaviour, human operation. It is this quality that brings together each of the disciplinary strands in the study: the desire to interpret, understand, and gain insight into human thought. Julie Klein and Robert Frodeman’s assertion that the ‘humanities’ might be defined as ‘those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods’ is pertinent here in its suggestion that the disciplines dealt with in this study are, to some degree, intrinsically linked and of the same mould.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, there does not appear to be a great deal of academic work dealing with historical social commentary, and therefore this also plays a role in this thesis’s contribution to knowledge.

Interdisciplinarity can be controversial. Simone Murray quotes Robert Darnton, describing the ‘perils of “interdisciplinarity run riot”’<sup>26</sup> in the field of book history while Jerry Jacobs and Scott Frickel describe some commentators’ feeling that it is characterised by ‘amateurism and intellectual voyeurism’.<sup>27</sup> Both, however, also acknowledge the value in the ‘cross-pollination’ of disciplinary strains.<sup>28</sup> While there is inarguable power in the maintenance of a singular methodology and the focus and insight offered by containing work within the norms and structures of a single discipline, Frodeman’s analogy of a jazz musician is apposite

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<sup>24</sup> For example, Valerie Holman, *Print For Victory: Book Publishing in England 1939-1945* (London: British Library, 2008); Nicola Wilson (editor), *The Book World: Selling and Distributing British Literature, 1900-1940* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); David Bradshaw and Rachel Potter, *Prudes on the Prowl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Reading University Special Collections Publishing and Printing Archives’ description of the collection, ‘George Allen and Unwin Ltd Archive’. Available from: <https://collections.reading.ac.uk/special-collections/collections/george-allen-unwin-ltd-archive/> retrieved on: 22/04/2023.

<sup>25</sup> Julie Klein and Robert Frodeman, ‘Interdisciplining the Humanities’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 144.

<sup>26</sup> Darnton, quoted in Simone Murray, ‘Publishing Studies: Critically Mapping Research in Search of a Discipline’ *Publishing Research Quarterly* Vol 22 (2006), p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Jerry Jacobs and Scott Frickel, ‘Interdisciplinarity: A Critical Assessment’, *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 35 (August 2009), p. 51. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228173820\\_Interdisciplinarity\\_A\\_Critical\\_Assessment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228173820_Interdisciplinarity_A_Critical_Assessment) retrieved on: 19/01/2023.

<sup>28</sup> Simone Murray, p. 4.

in the context of this study: ‘while the jazz musician comes armed with knowledge, the real business occurs while riffing with others’.<sup>29</sup> Frodeman writes that ‘the problem interdisciplinarity seeks to solve’ is ‘one of politics, democracy and technocracy’, elaborating that it forms the ‘bridge between academic sophists and the rest of the society’, in its desire to meet the ‘needs of the community’.<sup>30</sup> These sentiments are echoed in Wolfgang Krohn’s piece in which he argues that most interdisciplinary projects are ‘organised around real-world cases’ – because real life, and the real world, is not bounded by arbitrary disciplinary lines – and asserts that ‘reference to real-world cases is the essential cognitive and political dimension of interdisciplinary research’.<sup>31</sup> Since this study’s intention is to explore and understand real-world problems associated with human cognition, and to address problems directly related to ‘politics, democracy and technocracy’ (particularly the politics of human interaction), these descriptions are particularly relevant.

Additionally, the areas with which this study engages are themselves interdisciplinary. The archival element connects with book history in its interest in the ‘back-stories’ of the books discussed. The ‘cognitive element’ (i.e., those concepts with which the study engages that are from the spectrum of sciences that seek to understand the brain and mind) draws on several disciplines: psychology, sociology, and neural science, particularly. These concepts and their integration have parallels in cognitive science and evolutionary psychology, both interdisciplinary areas. Cognitive science situates itself at the boundary between numerous sciences and humanities, as demonstrated by the (now-outdated) ‘cognitive science heptagram’.<sup>32</sup> Evolutionary psychology, which has parallels in its intentions with the interests of this study, finds itself at the junction between the ‘behavioural and social sciences’.<sup>33</sup> Leda Cosmides, John Tooby and Jerome Barkow’s defence of what they term ‘conceptual integration’ – a phrase not dissimilar to Murray’s ‘cross-pollination’ – is also of use here. They describe how ‘crossing such boundaries is often met with xenophobia, packaged in the form of such accusations as intellectual imperialism or reductionism’, but, they argue, by describing

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Frodeman, ‘The Future of Interdisciplinarity: An Introduction to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition’, *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Frodeman, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Wolfgang Krohn, ‘Interdisciplinary Cases and Disciplinary Knowledge: Epistemic Challenges of Interdisciplinary Research’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> The image shows five disciplines then associated with cognitive science, and their relationships in existing research at the time. To view the image, see George A Miller, ‘The Cognitive Revolution: A Historical Perspective’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* Vol. 7:3 (March 2003), p. 143. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613\(03\)00029-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(03)00029-9) retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>33</sup> Leda Cosmides, John Tooby and Jerome H. Barkow, ‘Introduction: Evolutionary Psychology and Conceptual Integration’ in *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 4.

the integration of ideas with this terminology, the intention is better represented: the integration of knowledge from different areas and different ways of viewing similar things might lead to a greater overall depth of understanding. Furthermore, they are critical of the tendency towards claims of autonomy by the social sciences coupled with the ‘institutionalized neglect’ of neighbouring disciplines.<sup>34</sup>

The interdisciplinary nature of the thesis also reflects the broad spectrum of disciplines in which Unwin was interested and of which his lists were composed. The firm’s entry in *Clegg’s International Dictionary of the World Book Trade* illustrates this:

General literature of wide scope and works of scholarship covering all shades of thought. *Specialise in* art, architecture, economics, history, philosophy, politics, psychology, science, sociology, travel and technical.<sup>35</sup>

While the firm did publish some fiction – most notably Tolkien’s works, as well as the work of Karel Čapek – Unwin’s primary interest was non-fiction. In particular, the firm published a great deal of social commentary, and it is this type of work with which this thesis has engaged most heavily, because this type of work can provide insight into historical perspectives on specific moments in time, and more broadly, on particular issues – still relevant today – that were developing their modern character in the period in question.

Furthermore, the study engages with the idea of ‘critical thinking’, an area related to a number of disciplines, most often philosophy, psychology and education. Shaw et al observe that critical thinking has been conceptualised differently in these different disciplines: in philosophy it is the qualities of the critical thinker that are emphasised; in psychology, the cognitive element; in education, the outcome or utility of critical thinking is more highly valued.<sup>36</sup> This study’s conceptualisation of critical thinking, and its intentions, integrate all three of these proposed disciplinary intentions.

The incorporation of ideas related to evolutionary psychology and cognitive science into a literary study is not entirely alien. Tony Jackson explores the advantages and disadvantages of integrating literature with these disciplines. He asserts that, since literary studies situates itself in evolving forms of relativism, and ‘relativism pumps up the significance of rhetoric to the point that the literary becomes the type of all texts’, the ‘literary’ therefore

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<sup>34</sup> Cosmides, Tooby and Barkow, p. 12.

<sup>35</sup> The firm’s listing in *Clegg’s International Directory of the World’s Book Trade: 1950* (London: James Clarke and Co., 1950), p. 417.

<sup>36</sup> Amy Shaw, Ou Lydia Liu et al, ‘Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking: Validating the Russian HEIghten Critical Thinking Assessment’, *Studies in Higher Education* Vol. 45:9 (Oct 2019), p. 1934. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1672640> retrieved on: 28/01/2023.

also becomes ‘the type’ of ‘all knowledge’. With this logic, therefore, ‘literary criticism becomes the type of all criticism’.<sup>37</sup>

Jackson rightly asks, ‘to what extent will arguments in a given discipline be expected to include full knowledge of the key terms imported from other disciplines?’<sup>38</sup> This is an important question and observation on interdisciplinary work more generally, and one that this study is particularly mindful of. Every disciplinary boundary over which the study has strayed has been thoroughly researched, beyond those sources that have been cited directly. This has been motivated both by the intention to only discuss that which I properly understand, and by the educational projects I have embarked upon throughout my degree (see Preface). Finally, while Jackson questions the idea that literature can be reduced to the purely biological, he is open to exploring the ‘difference’ within the boundaries of ‘sameness’ cognitive science has discovered.<sup>39</sup>

### ‘Critical Thinking’

There are numerous approaches, definitions, and conceptualisations of ‘critical thinking’, although most share certain core principles, included in the *OED*’s recent addition of the term:

the objective, systematic, and rational analysis and evaluation of factual evidence in order to form a judgement on a subject, issue, etc.<sup>40</sup>

However, due to the study’s interests and the problems around which it centres its conceptualisation of critical thinking, this definition is not adequate. Because of the nature of the online informational and communicational environment, which exacerbates polarisation and encourages outgroup bias, a dimension that takes into account tolerance and emotional intelligence is necessary. Sternberg’s ‘adaptive intelligence’ provides a useful parallel in its focus on future-building and collaboration, and Facione’s criteria for the critical thinker contains additional appropriate criteria. In particular, Facione’s assertion that a critical thinker must be ‘open-minded’, ‘honest in facing personal biases’, ‘willing to reconsider’, and ‘reasonable in selecting relevant criteria’ has relevance to this study’s interpretation of the

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<sup>37</sup> Tony Jackson, ‘Questioning Interdisciplinarity: Cognitive Science, Evolutionary Psychology, and Literary Criticism’, *Poetics Today* Vol. 21:2 (Summer 2000), p. 320. Available online: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/27818> retrieved on: 28/01/2023.

<sup>38</sup> Jackson, p. 332.

<sup>39</sup> Jackson, p. 346.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Critical Thinking’, *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available from: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44592> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

idea.<sup>41</sup> As Roy van den Brink-Budgen discusses, the quality of ‘open-mindedness’ is comparable to, if not aligned with, the quality of tolerance.<sup>42</sup> Tolerance, and challenging prejudice, is of particular importance to the aims of the study’s approach to thinking in that it seeks to address the problem of social polarisation. Also of particular interest are Edward Hanna’s assertions concerning the lack of critical thinking teaching methodologies that ‘integrate a cognitive emotional approach’.<sup>43</sup> This has specific relevance to the aims of the study’s interpretation of critical thinking in their goal of addressing issues of interpersonal interaction that compromise a person’s ability to think critically, and the notable effect of emotion on cognition.<sup>44</sup>

The study’s approach to critical thinking addresses the Institute for the Future’s assertion that:

To preserve democracy, we need to develop new immune mechanisms, a new immune system, to suit today’s realities. We need to upgrade our “cognitive immune systems” at individual and community levels.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, the study’s proposal that the following cognitive mechanisms, if considered metacognitively by the individual, can come together to form a hybrid, or new, approach to, or form of, critical thinking, is supported by criteria designed and assertions made by other scholars working in the field. Diane Halpern’s particular focus on metacognition is also of note – it might even be argued that critical thinking is, essentially, a form of metacognition.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Facione, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Roy van den Brink-Budgen, ‘Critical Thinking and the Problem of Tolerance’, *Creativity and the Child: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Oxford: Interdisciplinary Press, 2009), pp. 37-46.

<sup>43</sup> Edward P Hanna, ‘A Cognitive Emotional Methodology for Critical Thinking’ *Advances in Applied Sociology* Vol. 3:1 (March 2013), p. 20. Available from: [https://www.scirp.org/pdf/AASoci\\_2013031814214162.pdf](https://www.scirp.org/pdf/AASoci_2013031814214162.pdf) retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>44</sup> This is a well-documented (and intuitive) fact. For some exploration of this, see, for example, See Chai M Tyng, Hafeez U Amin et al, ‘The Influences of Emotion on Learning and Memory’ *Frontiers in Psychology* Vol. 8 (24/08/2017), pp. 1-22. Available online: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01454/full> retrieved on: 23/01/2023. See also, Jonathan D Cohen, ‘The Vulcanization of the Human Brain: A Neural Perspective on Interactions Between Cognition and Emotion’ *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 19:4 (Autumn 2005), pp. 3-24. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4134952> retrieved on: 23/01/2023.

<sup>45</sup> Marina Gorbiss, Katie Joseff et al, ‘Building a Healthy Cognitive Immune System: Defending Democracy in the Disinformation Age’, Institute for the Future (2019), p. 2. The model has similarities with their ‘cognitive biases’ section (p. 5), however the study’s cognitive focus is broader. Available from: [https://legacy.iftf.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/downloads/ourwork/IFTF\\_ODNI\\_Cognitive\\_Immunity\\_Map\\_2019.pdf](https://legacy.iftf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/ourwork/IFTF_ODNI_Cognitive_Immunity_Map_2019.pdf) retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>46</sup> Halpern places particular importance on metacognitive training as a dimension of developing better critical thinking. Diane Halpern, ‘Teaching Critical Thinking for Transfer Across Domains’, *American Psychologist* Vol. 53:4 (April 1998), pp. 449-455. Available from: <https://oce.ovid.com/article/00000487-199804000-00031/PDF> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

## Introduction to Cognitive Mechanisms

The model for the teaching and learning of ‘critical thinking’ outlined in the introduction makes use of a selection of what might be broadly termed ‘cognitive mechanisms’ – aspects of the machinery of human thought and cognition that affect interaction with other people and with information. Each of the concepts has been chosen for its communicability – in order that it might be easily taught and learned – and for its pervasiveness. The premise – to teach learners how to recognise these ‘cognitive fallibilities’ in order to foster a metacognitive awareness of them – is supported by Diane Halpern’s work on explicitness in critical thinking teaching and learning.<sup>47</sup>

As will be shown, the model aligns with Unwin’s principles because, in learning to identify subjective pitfalls and experience-driven peculiarities in one’s own thinking, it becomes easier to accommodate for different ways of viewing the world, thereby allowing for more effective and constructive communication – facilitating cooperation between groups. Furthermore, by encouraging metacognitive awareness of personal biases, an individual should be better able to identify aspects of the information with which they engage that have been adjusted – or fabricated – for the purpose of manipulation, and therefore be better able to come to more informed and critical conclusions – seeking out and engaging with better quality informational content. All of the ideas described below play a role in the case study readings in Part Two.

Metacognition is the essential skill upon which the model rests. Metacognition is defined usefully and succinctly in the *OED* as ‘awareness and understanding of one’s own thought processes, esp. regarded as having a role in directing those processes’.<sup>48</sup> Metacognition is the fourth ‘cognitive dimension’ in the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, and is therefore already considered an important element in the learning process and essential to educational progress. Despite this, it is not as a standard taught explicitly, although this is recommended.<sup>49</sup> Metacognition connects with Unwin’s values in that in order to come to more reliable conclusions, and in order to understand and interrogate one’s beliefs and opinions more effectively, it is necessary to expose oneself to differing points of view: the ‘open forum’ he

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<sup>47</sup> Lisa M Marin and Diane Halpern, ‘Pedagogy for developing critical thinking in adolescents: Explicit instruction produces greatest gains’, *Thinking Skills and Creativity* Vol. 6:1 (April 2011). Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2010.08.002> retrieved on: 10/11/2022.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Metacognition’, *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available from: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/245252> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>49</sup> Marin and Halpern, ‘Pedagogy for Developing [...]’.



attempted to maintain, and his contribution to cross-cultural discourse. It is because of the importance of this concept to the thesis's discussion that in Part One Unwin's values have been considered in connection with his actions – in order to model something of the metacognitive process.

Confirmation bias is defined in *Britannica* as:

The tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one's existing beliefs [...] People are especially likely to process information to support their own beliefs when the issue is highly important or self-relevant'.<sup>50</sup>

Confirmation bias is difficult to identify in oneself, however, metacognitive ability has been shown to mitigate its effects.<sup>51</sup> Unwin's desire to provide a spectrum of perspectives and ideas to his readers can be aligned with a desire to mitigate confirmation bias: the broader an individual's informational intake, the more likely they are to be able to identify flaws in their judgement and to engage with ideas and opinions that are in opposition to their own.

Cognitive dissonance, first described by Leon Festinger in 1957, describes the aversive state created by holding two conflicting 'cognitions'.<sup>52</sup> The strategies used to achieve greater consonance are of particular interest to the thesis's discussion. These include, for example, seeking social support (for the undermined belief or problematic behaviour) or 'fabrication' – creating a new belief that allows the contradictory beliefs to exist concurrently. Cognitive dissonance is particularly interesting because it undermines the idea that humans are innately rational. Unwin's desire to publish only the 'best' and most thoroughly researched information and his investment in the importance of well-founded and articulated arguments might all be associated with a desire to mitigate cognitive dissonance.

George Kelly's theorisations on meaning-making and predictive processing interestingly align with the 'predictive processing' model in cognitive and neural science. According to Kelly, an individual has a unique collection of 'constructs', informed by their experiences, which form the basis of their concept of the world, and these are the basis upon which they predict outcomes and respond to stimuli based on these predictions.<sup>53</sup> According to

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<sup>50</sup> Bettina J Cassad, 'Confirmation Bias', *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/confirmation-bias/627535> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>51</sup> Max Rollwage and Stephen Fleming, 'Confirmation bias is adaptive when coupled with efficient metacognition', *Philosophical Transactions B* Vol. 376 (Oct 2020). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2020.0131> retrieved on: 12/05/2023.

<sup>52</sup> Festinger uses the term 'cognitions' to refer to beliefs, thoughts and feelings.

<sup>53</sup> George Kelly, *A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (New York: W W Norton, 1963).

the Hebbian view, ‘neurons that fire together, wire together’: when an individual experiences stimuli in conjunction, their representations in the brain form connections.<sup>54</sup> The more iterations of connection, the stronger the bond. This conceptualisation of meaning-making, associative cataloguing and predictive processing is supported by, for example, David Eagleman<sup>55</sup>, and Andy Clark, whose *Experience Machine* (2023) explores the model in depth. Many models of sense- or meaning-making acknowledge the primary role experience plays in the formation of individual understanding.<sup>56</sup> While there is uncertainty about how precise this explanation is (because there is much yet to be learnt about the brain), it is an inarguably useful means of communicating the power of experience over perception. Unwin’s open forum’s provision of alternative ways of understanding creates space for challenges to deeply ingrained beliefs and interpretations.

In neuroscience it is widely accepted that emotion plays an important and directive role in cognition. While the specific mechanisms, areas and operations of brain regions associated with emotion are still poorly understood and continuously updated, there is consensus about the primacy of emotion over rationality and behaviour.

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s *Social Construction of Reality* (1967) provides a useful model for social and cultural conditioning. They hypothesised that an individual’s socialisation (which, they argue, is inextricable from their ‘construction of reality’), takes place continuously throughout their lives, beginning with a ‘primary phase’ in which that ‘reality’ is limited to the home; and progressing to the ‘secondary’ phase, which continues throughout the remainder of their lives. Berger and Luckmann posited that the beliefs internalised at the primary phase are the most difficult to challenge. It is possible to overhaul problematic beliefs internalised at this phase (eg prejudiced beliefs) by broadening an individual’s social world throughout adulthood. This clearly aligns with Unwin’s desire to provide broad, multicultural spectra of perspectives.

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<sup>54</sup> According to Christian Keysers and Valeria Gazzola, this paraphrase was in fact coined by Carla Shatz. They argue it is too oversimplistic, however numerous neuroscientists continue to use the phrase for its simplicity. ‘Hebbian learning and predictive mirror neurons for actions, sensations and emotions’ *Philosophical Transactions for the Royal Society B* Vol. 369 (April 2014). Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4006178/pdf/rstb20130175.pdf> retrieved on: 04/02/2023.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, David Eagleman, *Livewired: The Inside Story of the Ever-Changing Brain* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2021). The relationship and similarity between neuroscientific understanding of meaning-making and Kelly’s theory of personal constructs was confirmed in an email correspondence with a Neuroscientist at the University of Reading, Dr Francesco Tamagnini.

<sup>56</sup> See also Karl E Weick, Kathleen M Sutcliffe and David Obstfeld, ‘Organising and the Process of Sensemaking’, *Organisation Science* Vol. 16:4 (July 2005), pp. 409-421. Available from: 10.1287/orsc.1050.0133 retrieved on: 23/02/2023.



Social Identity Theory is a means with which to observe and describe dynamics of in- and outgroup interaction. Prior to Tajfel's work in the 1970s, the idea of social difference and its role in conflict precipitation was already extant, however, it was optimistically assumed to be a tendency that was generated in situations in which there existed a conflict of interest – for example, war – and this belief was held during much of the period the thesis engages with. Based on a series of experiments, Tajfel observed that no conflict of interest was necessary for negative outgroup bias or positive ingroup bias to exist – all that was required was the arbitrary designation of groups.<sup>57</sup> Tajfel's work's finding is important because it demonstrates that humans have an inherent tendency towards 'othering'. Unwin's internationalism is a powerful argument for the concept's alignment with his values – racism is perhaps the most dominant and powerful form of outgroup discrimination.

'Rationality' has been referred to here, however rationality studies has deliberately been avoided in the thesis. System Justification Theory, which has parallels in its formulation, is also avoided. Both are discussed in Appendix.

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<sup>57</sup> See Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation Between Social Groups* (London: Published in cooperation with European Association of Experimental Social Psychology by Academic Press, 1978).

**Part One**  
**Stanley Unwin**

*A book publishing house [...] is much more than a business; it is an institution; it reflects and it influences the life of the whole community; it may even affect even wider destinies.*<sup>58</sup>

CP Scott

*In conformity with our policy of maintaining an open forum, we published books giving both points of view.*<sup>59</sup>

Stanley Unwin

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<sup>58</sup> C P Scott, quoted in *Publisher*, p. 311.

<sup>59</sup> *Publisher*, p. 166.

## 1.1 Introduction to Part One: Why Unwin?

Stanley Unwin is not un-remembered today: his name appears in most histories of twentieth-century British publishing and would be conspicuous in its absence.<sup>1</sup> The University of Reading's archives for his publishing firm, George Allen and Unwin,<sup>2</sup> have already been extremely valuable in various studies of book history. This thesis is, in part, an attempt to address the absence of broader and more focused use of the collection – focussing more explicitly and in more depth on Stanley Unwin's work, and providing background for the case studies in Part Two. Part One will consider his publishing principles as they played out in his actions and decisions; and his work, together with others of his generation, in uniting the then-disparate factions of the book industry.

Davis remarks on the 'surprising' tendency to overlook or neglect the publisher in academic discourse, in light of the industry's 'historical and contemporary significance as a major culture-producing agency'.<sup>3</sup> Publishing has played, and continues to play, a powerful role in introducing important ideas and debates into public discourse. A century ago, most authors had to be 'filtered' by a willing publisher, and relied on that firm's investment in and means of 'amplification'; today the processes of self-publishing and self-amplification are vastly more convenient and affordable.<sup>4</sup> As John B Thompson describes it, publishers are 'cultural mediators and arbitrators of quality and taste'.<sup>5</sup> As cultural mediators, they subtly contribute to the spirit of the moment; they play an important role in the formation of the zeitgeist. Unwin's social contribution was remarked upon by many of his peers, and the testament of his long-term friend and author, Gilbert Murray, is pertinent: 'He has made me realise what a powerful influence a great publisher with ideals and thoughts of his own can exercise in the mind of a whole nation'.<sup>6</sup> Murray's statement is unlikely to have been wholly unfounded. Unwin was an important figure in twentieth-century publishing, whose non-fiction list spanned an enormous number of disciplines and perspectives, whose authors came from all

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Holman's *Print For Victory, Book Makers*; John Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*.

<sup>2</sup> The firm will henceforth be referred to as Allen and Unwin, as it was better known.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Davis, *Print Cultures: A Reader in Theory and Practice* (London: Red Globe Press, 2019), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Bhaskar asserts that 'filtering and amplification' is 'at the heart' of publishing, and discusses how this remains true on small scale of individual publishing as well as the vast world of large publishers; *The Content Machine: Towards a Theory of Publishing from the Printing Press to the Digital Network* (London: Anthem Press, 2013), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> John B Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert Murray, in *Stanley Unwin: Tributes from Some of His Friends* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954), p. 35.

over the world, and who, therefore, probably did, indirectly, have an influence on the country and culture in which he operated.

Unwin's work and firm deserve high regard, not merely for their part in book and publishing history, but for the broader historical insight the firm's vast archives lend the researcher. The archives comprise of around 1300 boxes of correspondence and 250 ledgers, as well as other bound volumes.<sup>7</sup> My own Masters project tracing the history of the pioneering but little-remembered *Art Versus Illness* by Adrian Hill (1945) – which is credited with having played an important role in the development of 'art therapy'<sup>8</sup> – gave me the same feeling as Ryder seemed to have had: that Unwin's reverence in his time was well-deserved, and that his place in book and publishing history warrants exploration.<sup>9</sup> Unwin contributed a great deal to the first-hand history of British publishing in the period of his career, and his family published a number of books about him, but besides this there is little written on Unwin himself. He makes numerous appearances in various histories – of the National Book League, the Publishers Association, and the British Council, for example, as well as histories of publishing – but the only books dedicated entirely to Unwin were written by himself, his children or his nephew. This thesis aims to take a more critical look at Unwin, while simultaneously celebrating his role in fostering a culture of collaboration and cooperation in his industry, and presenting his publishing principles as a foundation for a new approach to the teaching and learning of critical thinking. This section of the thesis follows Unwin's life and career, in order to draw attention to his role in creating and participating in cooperative initiatives, campaigning for the interests of the book trade – and, importantly, for recognition of the value and importance of the printed word – and, most crucially to the thesis's broader aims, his desire to 'maintain an open forum': to create space for constructive, well-informed debate and discourse.

The principles and values that purportedly drove Unwin's work, as outlined in the introduction, play an important role in the thesis's argument and proposed model of critical thinking. His feelings about the respect with which books and the printed word should be treated demonstrate a belief in the power of words and language, a desire to disseminate ideas and precipitate conversation, share knowledge, and make positive progress.<sup>10</sup> Unwin's ongoing

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<sup>7</sup> 'Records of George Allen and Unwin Ltd', University of Reading Special Collections. Available from: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/adlib/Details/archiveSpecial/110014317> retrieved on: 11/05/2023. As stated in the Introduction, this thesis has predominantly made use of correspondence and reader's reports for texts.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Rosalind Stanwell-Smith, 'The art of healing', *Perspective on Public Health* Vol. 138:1 (Jan 2018). Available from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1757913917744155> retrieved on: 11/05/2023.

<sup>9</sup> Brian Ryder, archivist for the collection, quoted in the Introduction.

<sup>10</sup> Having made reference to Wilson's *Miraculous Birth of Language*, Unwin asserts that books are 'by far the most important form in which this instrument (language) is given continuity', and then goes on to describe them

fight against anything that might impinge on the free movement of books and ideas, and his aversion to censorship and conscious manipulation of, and limitations on, thought and its expression in print, is connected with the thesis's approach to critical thinking in its association with pushing back against censorship and the restriction of public debate and national and international public discourse.<sup>11</sup> As his son Rayner described it, 'he resisted every encroachment on the freedom of the printed word'.<sup>12</sup>

The importance Unwin placed in listening to, being aware of and tolerating other people's views and ideas – 'maintaining an open forum', publishing international authors, encouraging cooperation and compromise – is the most important of these principles to the thesis's argument. In the hyper-connectedness of the modern world, populations are becoming increasingly politically and ideologically polarised. Looking to a future that will only sustain life should humanity successfully cooperate, it is essential that tolerance, openness to compromise and cooperation become synonymous with being human. This is in keeping with Sternberg's 'adaptive intelligence', as well as various proposed strategies with which to combat the current ecological crises: without international cooperation and accord, the most pressing issues of the modern era will be insurmountable. The focus particularly on the interpersonal-oriented cognitive concepts – i.e. cultural conditioning and social identity – has been motivated in part by the need for greater tolerance; and Unwin's centrality to the study has been motivated by his investment in tolerance and community – through his internationalism, through his desire to expose readers to differing perspectives, through his drive to foster a cooperative culture among his industry peers.

Unwin's career spanned the middle of the twentieth century, from 1914 to 1968. This was a period of enormous technological and social change punctuated – and to some degree perpetuated – by unprecedentedly large-scale conflict. At the beginning of his career, Britain controlled an enormous empire; by the end of his life, colonial structures were rightly being dismantled. The world of publishing before the First World War was almost exclusively homosocial, culturally elitist, and, in its vastly smaller scale, perhaps more capable of upholding the 'gentlemanly' standards with which Unwin sought to align himself. By the late

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as 'unique and priceless'. *How Governments Treat Books* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), p. 6. Unwin refers to the 'paramount importance of books' in his introduction to *The Book World Today* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> He wrote a great deal about this, particularly during the Second World War, for example in *How Governments Treat Books*, *The Status of Books* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1941), as well as in various articles and lectures on import and export taxation, and criticism of censorship.

<sup>12</sup> Rayner Unwin following his father's death, as an introduction to a small leaflet reproduced to disseminate R H Code Holland's tribute address for Stanley Unwin, p. 1.

sixties, successful independent publishers were a dying breed, and international conglomerates were taking their place. Unwin's refusal to 'move with the times' was blamed for the firm's slow crumble following his death: but what can be learned from a man who, during his lifetime at least, successfully held on to his principles, while all the world changed?

### 1.1.1 Books and Balanced Thinking: A Background to Unwin and the firm

Unwin came from bookish stock: his uncle, T. Fisher Unwin, was a world-renowned publisher, who published such celebrated names as W. B. Yeats and H.G. Wells.<sup>13</sup> Unwin's father was a printer who had inherited his own father's paper firm. His maternal grandfather was James Spicer, also in the business of paper, among whose children were Louisa Martindale, an important suffragist,<sup>14</sup> and Sir Albert Spicer, a Liberal politician.<sup>15</sup> It might be argued that it was this overwhelmingly book-orientated character of his primary socialisation that led him into the field of publishing.<sup>16</sup> Unwin worked for his uncle before founding Allen and Unwin, and spent his first months traveling on a shoestring around Europe. He would later come to connect this experience with his famous interest in and knowledge of international book trade and his belief in promoting and protecting the international 'free flow' of books and ideas. This was, apparently, the first time a publisher had made such a 'world tour' of bookshops.<sup>17</sup> It was as important to him to bring books to England as it was to sell them abroad. According to one account, it took some time for other publishers to catch on to the power of the international trade: Edmund Penning-Rowsell wrote that 'Europe for many years he practically had to himself'.<sup>18</sup> According to his son Rayner, Unwin:

had been an internationalist even before he became an independent publisher [...] Over 40% of our sales came from outside the UK, a far larger proportion than was common

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Unwin, *The Publishing Unwins* (London: Heineman, 1972), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Lori Williamson, 'Louisa Martindale (nee Spicer) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/56459> retrieved on: 03/04/2019.

<sup>15</sup> David J. Jeremy, 'Spicer, Sir Albert, first baronet' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/48204> retrieved on: 27/02/19. Jeremy notes that Spicer chaired the Marconi inquiry committee, and chose to report his findings independently because he disagreed with the self-preservation-motivated conclusions of his own party. This is of interest, since the value Unwin placed in truth and objectivity are central to the study.

<sup>16</sup> 'Primary Socialisation' is the first phase of a person's world formation. Berger and Luckmann: See introduction, or for more information, see Appendix.

<sup>17</sup> [No author given] 'Press Tributes: *Times Literary Supplement*' in *Sir Stanley Unwin: The Celebration of his 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday and Golden Wedding Day* (Special Edition; London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Penning-Rowsell, 'A European Bookman' in *80<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, p. 42.

except among scientific or medical specialists; and father relished his contacts with, and detailed knowledge of, booksellers around the world.<sup>19</sup>

Over the course of Unwin's directorship, the firm was one of the biggest producers of translations in the country, and he wrote extensively on problems with, and obstacles to, the global 'free interchange' – of books;<sup>20</sup> or, as a posthumous tribute to Unwin described it, the 'mutual interchange of knowledge and ideas with other peoples'.<sup>21</sup> Unwin claimed in 1944 that he had 'probably bought and sold more translations than any two or three of [his] competitors put together'.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1930s Unwin commissioned F.A. Mumby<sup>23</sup> to trace the history of the two bankrupt firms his had initially been composed of: Swan Sonnenschein, founded by William Swan Sonnenschein; and George Allen and Sons – a venture embarked upon almost solely in order to address problems John Ruskin perceived in the book industry, and sprung on his assistant George Allen with little warning and at short notice.<sup>24</sup> This, therefore, is a history that is already written, but for the purpose of this thesis and its particular foci, a few details will be highlighted.

The principles on which John Ruskin founded his publishing firm might be paralleled with Unwin's feelings about the availability of ideas, fairness in trade, and the importance and value of the book. Allen and Co. was an extension of his efforts at social reform, Ruskin 'practising what he preached'.<sup>25</sup> He argued that unbounded profit was available to the middleman, the bookseller. Ruskin designed a system, which he felt appropriate and workable on a broader scale, whereby the purchaser was made aware of the bookseller's profit.

His logic was flawed, however: his books were beyond the means of anyone on a low income, which seems somewhat at odds with his feelings about social justice and fairness. To Ruskin's mind, the books in question – lavishly produced books of art criticism – were 'quality' products for those who *could* afford to buy them, luxury goods that cheaper production would ruin. He addressed the imbalance with his *Fors* letters, written for the 'common man'.

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<sup>19</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. 163.

<sup>20</sup> Stanley Unwin, *How Governments Treat Books*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), p. 1. See also 'English Books Abroad' to *The Book World: A New Survey* (Glasgow: Nelson, 1935), pp. 163-180; and 'British Books Overseas' *The Book World Today* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), pp. 212-223.

<sup>21</sup> 'Address by R.H. Code Holland', p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Stanley Unwin, *Publishing in Peace and War* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1944), p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. viii.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Dawson, 'Ruskin and the Book'. Available from: <http://georgeallen.co.uk/ruskin-and-the-book/> retrieved on 04/04/2019.

<sup>25</sup> F. A. Mumby, *From Swan Sonnenschein to George Allen and Unwin Limited* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955), p. 55.

Apparently, he did not want ‘poor people’ to read his books – he wanted them to read these, because these were designed to provide the poor with the tools to take themselves out of poverty, and theoretically one day be in a position to afford such ‘quality’ products. Ruskin believed this was possible, and sometimes invested more than he could afford. He felt that one issue of *Fors* was so important that he made it free, so that it might be read more widely.<sup>26</sup> Ruskin’s idealistic intentions were rooted in the idea that education can provide liberation, a belief shared by both John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, whose works are discussed in Part Two.

William Swan Sonnenschein was also forward-looking: ‘it is remarkable in how many directions Swan Sonnenschein and Co [...] were often in advance of their times’, Mumby states, associating this with the company’s demise.<sup>27</sup> Rayner agrees: ‘A publisher should never be too far ahead of public taste, and never behind it. Swan Sonnenschein failed for the former reason’.<sup>28</sup> His profit-losing prophecy has, however, given him an under-acknowledged place in book history: among the authors Unwin ‘inherited’ from Sonnenschein were Jean-Jacques Rousseau – the firm published the first larger (as opposed to a small batch commissioned by an individual) edition of *Social Contract* on record<sup>29</sup> – Sigmund Freud, and Edward Carpenter; as well as Muirhead’s Library of Philosophy: an endeavour that was not always financially useful, but had immense academic and historic value.<sup>30</sup>

Sonnenschein published the first English edition of Marx’s *Kapital* in 1887. Publication was an uphill struggle that appeared in its time not to have paid off: letters between Engels and the firm demonstrate a lack of enthusiasm on Engels’ part, possibly because of his belief that England was not yet politically ready for the revolution, due to the working class’s lack of

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Dawson, ‘Ruskin and the Book’. Available from: <http://georgeallen.co.uk/ruskin-and-the-book/> retrieved on 04/04/2019. Also, Rayner quotes Ruskin: ‘I don’t want any poor people to read my books...till they are rich enough’, *Remembrancer*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> This goes on to point out how early William Swan Sonnenschein published Freud – long before he or his ideas gained their international fame and influence. *From Swan...*, p. 47. Unwin published an edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* as early as 1915.

<sup>28</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> The firm published the 1895 edition of Rousseau’s *Social Contract*. (*From Swan...*, p. 39). This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in English published in England. Only two others can be traced in the hundred years prior to this: in 1791, a small edition was printed ‘by B Smith, for Adam Jones’, and in 1840(?) an unnamed Manchester publisher produced a small edition. The Sonnenschien edition, therefore, was the first ‘proper’ introduction of this important text to the British reading public. Ref: email: British Library Rare Books Dept to Natasha Robson, 20/03/2019.

<sup>30</sup> Sigmund Freud is mentioned in the University of Reading’s document detailing the Swan Sonnenschein archive. ‘Swan Sonnenschein and Company Archive SSC’, University of Reading Special Collections Service. Available from: [https://collections.reading.ac.uk/special-collections/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/01/Swan-Sonnenschein\\_SSC.pdf](https://collections.reading.ac.uk/special-collections/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2021/01/Swan-Sonnenschein_SSC.pdf) retrieved on: 30/01/2023. George Allen and Unwin published many of Freud’s books, including the first edition of *A Young Girl’s Diary* (1921) and numerous reprints of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (eg. 1915, 1923, 1937 – not exhaustive).



political representation, their subservience to the bourgeois, and the comfort provided by Britain's colonial wealth.<sup>31</sup> The book's lack of success would suggest that he was, at least in principle, correct.<sup>32</sup> Mumby writes that the British were 'profoundly unmoved' by the book at this time.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately much of the correspondence between the firm and Marx and Engels was pulped.<sup>34</sup> Unwin's updated edition of this heirloom did significantly better fifty years later.<sup>35</sup> Sonnenschein published Shaw's early work *An Unsocial Socialist* (1887), in response to which he recommended that Shaw was better suited to writing plays: further testament to his influence on literary history.<sup>36</sup> Unwin would later voice his gratitude for his firm's inheritance of Swan's scholarly lists.<sup>37</sup> In 1902, Sonnenschein left to work for Routledge. The firm became a limited liability company and began to fail, finally merging with George Allen and Co. in 1911.<sup>38</sup>

Unwin opened George Allen and Unwin for business on the inauspicious date of 4 August 1914,<sup>39</sup> after months of 'wringl[ing]' over price and terms.<sup>40</sup> He was unfazed: he had fulfilled his ambition of owning his own publishing firm and was determined to see what he could do with it, 'war or no war'.<sup>41</sup> Beginnings were not altogether smooth: disputes immediately arose from companies wishing to make something extra (or simply back) having worked with the insolvent Allen and Co; and impatient, disappointed or destitute authors whose contracts had not been honoured and who had not been effectively communicated with had been haemorrhaged in the lead-up to takeover.<sup>42</sup> The archives reveal the loss of the Library's publishing relationship with James Mark Baldwin due to lack of communication and finances

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<sup>31</sup> See Friedrich Engels to Karl Kautsky, 12/09/1882, in *Letters On 'Capital'* (London: British Library, 1983), pp. 213-214.

<sup>32</sup> MS 3280/5 and 3280/6, Archives of Swan Sonnenschein, University of Reading Special Collections. Letters SS to FE 25/09/1886 – 19/12/1886. All available letters were sent by the firm, Engels's responses are unavailable. The letters continuously request parts of the book (chapters pages, corrections etc), as the firm were 'anxious to get the book out' and make reference to repeated delays in selection of proofs (1/11/86, 19/12/1886, for example).

<sup>33</sup> *From Swan...* p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> *Publisher*, p. 132; *Book Makers*, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> *From Swan...*, p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> In a letter to Shaw dated 30/12/1887, Sonnenschein wrote: 'If you were to stick to novels, or go in for plays (which are even more suited to you, in my opinion)'. *From Swan...*, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> '[scholarly publishing] was part of the Swan Sonnenschein tradition which I inherited' *Publisher*, p. 312.

<sup>38</sup> 'Biographical History' in 'Archives of Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Available from:

<https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/db4832d4-9afd-315b-856d-28e68bfc3686> retrieved on 27/03/2019.

<sup>39</sup> The date that war was declared in the UK.

<sup>40</sup> *Book Makers*, p. 51.

<sup>41</sup> *Publisher*, p. 131.

<sup>42</sup> For example, a dispute about the heating supply found in AU FSC 40/250.

during Allen's time.<sup>43</sup> Apparently, despite Ruskin's 'high-minded socialism', they had also treated their staff very badly.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Letters between Mark Baldwin and Allen and Co., Feb – March 1914. Baldwin was asked to provide money towards publication of a volume of his work, but was understandably unwilling, and Baldwin left the Library of Philosophy as a result. AU FSC 40/250.

<sup>44</sup> *Book Makers*, p. 51.

## 1.2 1914-1918

*Looking through the regular lists of forthcoming publications, one constantly feels oneself in the presence of new and interesting suggestions in old controversies, or at least of a constant pressure towards the humane and enlightened movement of thought.*

<sup>45</sup>

Gilbert Murray

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<sup>45</sup> Gilbert Murray, in *Sir Stanley Unwin: Tributes from Some of His Friends* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954), p. 35.

### 1.2.1 Spectra of Disciplines and Perspectives: A Model for Healthy Debate

Unwin believed in the importance of creating and maintaining an ‘open forum’.<sup>46</sup> This was probably influenced by one of his favourite writers, G. Lowes Dickinson, who he would come to know personally later in his career. He describes being taken by Dickinson’s *The Meaning of Good: A Dialogue* (1902) as a young man,<sup>47</sup> and refers to *A Modern Symposium* (1905) as ‘one of [his] favourite books’ – the firm later published several editions of both.<sup>48</sup> Of the latter, he comments, ‘in it the full and free expression of thought is seen at its best’.<sup>49</sup> *Symposium* is an imagined conversation between a group of men with different political leanings, outlining and justifying their beliefs about English society. All – except Cantilupe, who admits that he cannot justify it, he simply ‘is’ a Tory<sup>50</sup> – attempt to explain their beliefs. Cantilupe’s incapacity for justification perhaps implies Dickinson’s own politics. This conversation could be described as an exercise in ‘metacognition’ (were the characters real) in its similarity to, and model on, a form of Socratic dialogue: the questions asked of each speaker force them to think about, and justify, their stance. Unwin’s attraction to these books and desire to emulate their character is important: it demonstrates an understanding that the more perspectives we expose ourselves to, the better-informed our conclusions will be. Furthermore, the metacognitive aspect of the dialogues in Dickinson’s books models good practice in forming well-founded and considered opinions: interrogation of one’s own thought processes, openness to hearing alternative perspectives and interpretations.

No ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer completes Dickinson’s books, nor is it necessary. Unwin’s list over the course of his directorship, similarly, was a continuous progression of differing ideas. His friend and advisor A.R. Orage described his list as ‘a liberal education’, referring both to its quality and its broadness.<sup>51</sup> Its entry in *Clegg’s*, quoted in the introduction, gives a sense of this.

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<sup>46</sup> *Publisher*, p. 166.

<sup>47</sup> *Publisher*, p. 34. This was first published in England in 1902, by R Brimley Johnson (London); this is likely the edition Unwin read.

<sup>48</sup> At least four editions of *Symposium* were published by the firm:

<https://firstsearch.oclc.org/WebZ/FSQUERY?format=BI:next=html/records.html:bad=html/records.html:numrecs=10:sessionid=fsapp4-32800-jtfv11js-rigs6u:entitypagenum=3:0:searchtype=advanced> retrieved on: 19/03/2019; and three editions of *Meaning*:

<https://firstsearch.oclc.org/WebZ/FSQUERY?format=BI:next=html/records.html:bad=html/records.html:numrecs=10:sessionid=fsapp4-32800-jtfv11js-rigs6u:entitypagenum=5:0:searchtype=advanced> retrieved on 19/03/2019.

<sup>49</sup> *Publisher*, p. 254. The first English edition was published by Brimley, Johnson and Ince Ltd in 1905.

<sup>50</sup> G. Lowes Dickinson, *A Modern Symposium*, originally published in 1905. Available from:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30432/30432-h/30432-h.htm> retrieved on: 20/05/19.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from Orage to Unwin, quoted in *Publisher*: ‘Your catalogue is so attractive that I wish I were starting life as a reader all over again. Your list is a liberal education’; p. 154.

Interviewing Rayner in the mid-1990s, Jane Potter suggested that the firm's list was a product of Unwin's 'views'. Rayner corrected her, saying that publishers generally publish the products of their interests, but that his father's views were 'one thing but his interests another'.<sup>52</sup> This is an important distinction: Unwin had wide-ranging interests, and his firm understandably published books on subjects that were influenced by these. His *views* did not necessarily inform his publication choices. Unwin's epigraph to Part One of this thesis appears in *Publisher*, referring to the firm's contribution to discourse following the Russian Revolution.<sup>53</sup> This included works on subjects about which he had fixed views. For example, the firm published works that argued against the existence of God – notably Bertrand Russell's *Why I am not a Christian* (1957), discussed in Part Two of the study. Unwin was deeply orthodox in his religiosity, remaining a completely teetotal, practicing Nonconformist throughout his long life. He did not feel that this *view* – this personal belief – should govern or influence his publishing choices.

Russell observed in Unwin something akin to what Rayner seems to have alluded to:

Sir Stanley has the rare merit of being able to perceive excellence in MSS independently of the opinions that they contain. I have myself subjected his broad-minded liberalism to a somewhat severe strain on some occasions when I have had things to say that I knew he must dislike.<sup>54</sup>

To Russell's mind, Unwin's disassociation between informational quality and ideological content was a rare and brilliant thing. Unwin did not seek to publish his personal views – but he did, understandably, publish works he found interesting. The 'liberalism' to which Russell refers is particularly important as evidence of Unwin's willingness to engage with opinions that differed from his own – like the Socratic conversationalists of Dickinson's works. The willingness to publish things he might have found offensive implied by Russell's quote demonstrates an investment in truly contributing to healthy debate, rather than simply paying lip service to it.

Although Unwin's belief in God was not something he was willing to reconsider, he was open to being challenged on other beliefs, and to altering his stance. He would deliberately

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<sup>52</sup>Jane Potter, 'Interview with Rayner Unwin - London, Tuesday, 1 February 1994' *Publishing History*; Cambridge Vol. 41 (Jan 1997), p. 76. Available from: <https://search-proquest-com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/docview/1298000780?accountid=13460> retrieved on: 25/03/19.

<sup>53</sup> *Publisher*, p. 166.

<sup>54</sup> *Sir Stanley Unwin: Tributes from Some of his Friends* (London: Unwin Brothers, 1954) Bertrand Russell, p. 38-9.

expose himself and his readers to alternative, and even unpopular, perspectives.<sup>55</sup> He would publish books that contradicted his own beliefs or personal choices if he felt they were well-argued and ‘the best’ in their subject. One example of this was his choice to publish a book on the biochemistry of malting and brewing, despite never having drunk alcohol.<sup>56</sup> Of course, there would have been a commercial market for such a book, although it is unlikely to have been a bestseller. For him, the priority was to make knowledge and information available, and to provide access to different perspectives, whether or not he agreed with them. Sometimes he would publish ‘for merit rather than market’, as with Belloc’s *The Free Press*, discussed in Part Two.<sup>57</sup> Rayner mentions that most of Unwin’s financial stability came from other investments, like property.<sup>58</sup> That is not to say he did not publish for profit, but rather that he was willing – and able – to make a loss or take a chance if he thought the quality worth it. Besides, and related to his personal principles described in his memoir, this might also be connected with the idea of the ‘gentleman publisher’, ‘who works in small independent firms’, ‘deals personally with authors’ and is motivated by merit *and* profit – ‘balanc[ing] commerce and culture’.<sup>59</sup> The more traditional ideas of both the gentleman and the gentleman-publisher faded with the passage of time and the changed nature of publishing, but these core values have great potency in the cultural milieu of the modern world. It would seem that Unwin was driven more by a love of books and publishing – and, inextricably, the ‘free flow of books’ – than by profit or fame, although he did achieve a modest degree of both.

### 1.2.2 War and DORA: Censorship and Pacifism

The First World War presented publishers with many challenges. Suspicion of the very idea of ‘foreignness’ (particularly ‘Germanness’) was pervasive. Sonnenschein changed his surname to Stallybrass<sup>60</sup> because Sonnenschein sounded ‘too Germanic’; despite the fact that his family had been naturalised for nearly 60 years and were well-respected citizens.<sup>61</sup> Unwin’s

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<sup>55</sup> Rayner believed one of the reasons for his popularity with and trust from the intellectuals he worked with was because of this: ‘they were grateful because he would publish unpopular opinion. And they would give their best to him’. ‘Interview...’, p. 80.

<sup>56</sup> On being questioned about this choice, Rayner relates that his father responded: ‘because he had been told it was the best book on the subject’ (Interview... p. 80).

<sup>57</sup> ‘No financial gain’, *Publisher*, p. 312; ‘merit rather than market’, *Remembrancer*, p. viii.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Interview...’, p. 76.

<sup>59</sup> *Print Cultures: A Reader in Theory and Practice*, p. 16, p. 18.

<sup>60</sup> His mother’s maiden name.

<sup>61</sup> Hanbury, H.G., ‘Stallybrass (formerly Sonnenschein) William Teulon Swan’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36235> retrieved on: 20/03/19.

correspondence demonstrates the pervasiveness of this trend: Smythe, one of his directors, applied for a role in the Ministry of Information in 1917. He requested a reference from Unwin, apologising because Unwin did not know him well. But, he said, all the names he might instead have given sounded ‘too foreign’, which might undermine his chances of securing the post.<sup>62</sup>

On 8 August 1914, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) became law. Originally only a paragraph long, its aim was clear: during the war, the government and monarch would have un-checked power to act as they deemed necessary. The document states only that:

His Majesty in Council has power [...] to issue regulations for securing the public safety and defence of the realm.<sup>63</sup>

Despite its apparent benignity, the insidious potential of such power would soon become clear. Defence of ‘public safety’ would ultimately involve censorship and suppression of dissenting ideas. Unwin found most forms of censorship particularly objectionable, and he thought the way it was implemented in this time ‘stupid’, especially with regard to pacifistic ideas and voices.<sup>64</sup>

Aspects of British culture, such as the strict moralities still ingrained from the Victorian era, created a form of ‘internalised’ censorship, or ‘moral censoriousness’ that perhaps made DORA easier to effect.<sup>65</sup> Books were rejected by circulating libraries and made very difficult to obtain if those in charge of acquisition felt they dealt with ‘corrupting’ material.<sup>66</sup> This mode of operation and manner of thinking contributed to the ease with which pacifistic ideas could be suppressed – ‘public safety’ meant protecting the mental wellbeing of the population, and opposition to the war was seen as damaging to morale, in danger of undermining the war effort, and, ultimately, losing the war. This meant preventing certain themes from being addressed, and certain perceptions from being expressed. It meant not only being prevented from describing the enemy with any positivity, but actively demonising them. Pacifism was not only suppressed, but, like the enemy, maligned by the press and in propaganda to the extent that the implication (or explicit statement) was often made that pacifists were actually in allegiance with the enemy.

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<sup>62</sup> Letter Smythe to SU, 16/07/1918. AU FSC 32/205.

<sup>63</sup> A scan of the revised, November version is available online:

[http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/first\\_world\\_war/p\\_defence.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/first_world_war/p_defence.htm) retrieved on: 19/03/2019. It is quite non-specific at this point, but makes clear the government’s power to seize control of industry and information to whatever extent necessary for the duration of the war.

<sup>64</sup> *Publisher*, p. 140.

<sup>65</sup> Potter discusses Clive Bell’s post-war argument that the British psyche was problematised by a ‘moral censoriousness’. Rachel Potter, ‘Censorship and Sovereignty’, in *Prudes on the Prowl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 79.

<sup>66</sup> See Nicola Wilson, ‘Circulating Morals’, in *Prudes on the Prowl*, pp. 52-70.

In a private letter to J.A. Spender applauding Spender's criticism of pamphlet censorship, Unwin wrote:

The word "pacifist" was discovered in one of Prof Gilbert Murray's articles [to be published as part of a book], and the amazing statement was then volunteered that even an expensive cloth-bound book would be "deemed to be a leaflet" if it had any "pacifist" tendency or was in any sense propagandist literature.

Unwin published the book, and argued his case with characteristic eloquence. All the articles contained in the volume had been published in the *Daily News* without issue. Of pacifism and propagandist literature he wrote:

According to G.K. Chesterton, there is a sense in which every man is a pacifist who is not a homicidal maniac, and according to another distinguished writer, most literature could be held to be propagandist.

Of ineffective and poorly executed censorship he asserted:

It seems to me that the Authorities are trying to kill mosquitoes with a sledgehammer. It is possible they may crush a few but [...] will do irreparable damage in the process. If it is necessary to have any fresh regulation, bona-fide publishers should obviously be placed in the same position as newspaper and magazine proprietors, i.e. left under voluntary censorship. Any other course at once involves the suppression of all original thought or criticism of policy other than through the daily press.<sup>67</sup>

While a fairly minor example, this demonstrates Unwin's perception of the heavy-handedness with which censorship was affected. It implies a Whorfian belief in the power of language to control emotion and behaviour, and feels reminiscent of Orwell's later dystopia, in which concepts were deleted from language, and, by extension, people's minds.<sup>68</sup> Rayner believed that his father's lifelong dislike of censorship was a product of his experiences during the First World War.<sup>69</sup>

Despite his dislike of this and so many other aspects of the First World War, the firm (like most) produced a number of publications for Wellington House, the Ministry of Information's Propaganda Bureau. The texts he did publish, as far as my research has shown, were never out of line with his principles: they did not demonise the enemy, nor did they conform to Northcliffe's 'hyper-nationalistic, insidious [and] manipulati[ve]' rhetoric', unlike

<sup>67</sup> Letter SU to J A Spender, 27/11/1917. AU FSC 32/205.

<sup>68</sup> Refers to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. See Sean O'Neill, 'Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis' *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. Available online: [https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wileylasi/sapir\\_whorf\\_hypothesis/0](https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wileylasi/sapir_whorf_hypothesis/0) retrieved on: 28/07/2022

<sup>69</sup> 'Interview...' p. 79.



those produced by some firms.<sup>70</sup> Potter writes of Unwin's deep discomfort with the 'rabid anti-German propaganda inflamed by newspapers, especially those published by Alfred Harmsworth'.<sup>71</sup> Hitler was later complimentary about Northcliffe's work, allegedly telling his brother, Lord Rothermere, 'Much in our Nazi propaganda is based on the tactics so successfully employed against us by your brother'.<sup>72</sup>

W.H. Smith published and successfully marketed Rudyard Kipling's *Message* – the transcription of an address given by Kipling in February 1918. The text strongly implies that all Germans were torturers, rapists, and child murderers. It was priced at a penny and hugely popular.<sup>73</sup> For most of the War, Wellington House publications were not advertised as propaganda or connected with the government (in fact, their work was so secretive that even parliament was barely aware of their existence<sup>74</sup>), so the publisher's imprint and reputation would have been associated with the ideas printed.<sup>75</sup> Such manipulation of public opinion would likely have been abhorrent to Unwin – 'he hated the imposition of other people's views by any means'.<sup>76</sup> This is important: in order for healthy discussion to be possible and constructive debate to occur, it is essential that public discourse is open and honest, that opinions and facts are not confused, and that citizens are well-informed enough to come to their own conclusions.

### 1.2.3: *I Appeal Unto Caesar*

Unwin was a pacifist 'at that time'.<sup>77</sup> While he did what he felt he could 'conscientiously' do (working for the Voluntary Aid Detachment<sup>78</sup>), he believed people should be allowed total exemption on the grounds of conscientious objection. Unfortunately, despite laws being put in place to allow total exemption, many were not given the opportunity to properly defend

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<sup>70</sup> Jane Potter, 'For Country, Conscience and Commerce: Publishers and Publishing 1914-1918' in Mary Hammond and Shafquat Towheed (editors), *Publishing in the First World War: Essays in Book History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 20-21.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Alfred Harmsworth was Lord Northcliffe's real name.

<sup>72</sup> Bernard Falk, *Five Years Dead* (London: Hutchinson, 1951, p. 169) quoted in Piers Brendon, *The Life and Death of the Press Barons* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1982), p. 122.

<sup>73</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Kipling's Message* (London: WH Smith and Sons, 1918) Full text available online: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435012534715;view=1up;seq=5> retrieved on 25/03/2019.

<sup>74</sup> M. L. Sanders, 'Wellington House and British Propaganda during the First World War', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 18:1 (Mar 1975), pp. 119-146. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2638471> retrieved on: 28/03/2019.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Colclough, 'No Such Bookselling Has Ever Taken Place Before in This Country': Propaganda and the Wartime Distribution Practices of WH Smith and Son' in Hammond and Towheed, p. 42.

<sup>76</sup> 'Interview...', p. 80.

<sup>77</sup> *Publisher*, p. 138. He was not a 'pacifist' with regard to WWII.

<sup>78</sup> *Publisher*, pp. 138-140.

themselves and many were incarcerated. One such man was Stephen Hobhouse, whose mother, Margaret Hobhouse, published a book with the firm in 1917, entitled *I Appeal Unto Caesar*.

Stephen Hobhouse was imprisoned in 1916, having taken the ‘unconditionalist’ stance. His father was a politician: progressive, but not a pacifist. Because he disagreed with his father’s views, Stephen had renounced his inheritance and chosen to live in voluntary poverty.<sup>79</sup> Despite their estrangement, his mother thought his imprisonment deeply unjust. She toured the country’s prisons interviewing other objectors who had been imprisoned for extended periods, and brought them together in her book of ‘case studies’ in an attempt to demonstrate the unfairness of their treatment.

Gilbert Murray’s introduction to the book is a good model for constructive discourse: it is generally gentle, making clear that efforts had been made by the government to ensure that, where objection was founded in true and unshakeable feeling (not limited to religious reasons), it would be possible to avoid service without imprisonment. Even when critical he is forgiving, saying that the local tribunals ‘probably formed as good an instrument as could be reasonably expected’.<sup>80</sup> He does, however, go on to outline some of the terrible behaviour of those within prisons towards the incarcerated. Murray’s use of language demonstrates an un-aggressiveness that invites conversation, rather than conflict; in keeping with Unwin’s feeling that conversations and open fora should be maintained, disparate voices heard and considered, opinions voiced and tolerated.<sup>81</sup>

Despite its popularity, most booksellers refused to stock ‘or even handle’ *Caesar*, because of the danger of being associated with such a controversial book.<sup>82</sup> Its carefully balanced – but ultimately positive – review in the *Times Literary Supplement* by John Macdonnell is therefore understandable. Despite Macdonnell’s disagreement with full-blown conscientious objection (specifically relating to refusals to do war-orientated work; although many of Hobhouse’s interviewees were members of their communities whose work was, she argued, already of fundamental importance, such as teachers), he finishes by recommending that the Home Secretary read it.<sup>83</sup> It was even mentioned in parliament. Unwin did not regret

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<sup>79</sup> Peter Brock, *These Strange Criminals: An anthology of prison memoirs by conscientious objectors from the Great War to the Cold War* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 15.

<sup>80</sup> *I Appeal Unto Caesar: The Case of the Conscientious Objector* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1917), p. vii.

<sup>81</sup> Gilbert Murray’s introduction (and the full text) can be viewed online: [https://archive.org/stream/iappealuntocsa00hobhrich/iappealuntocsa00hobhrich\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/iappealuntocsa00hobhrich/iappealuntocsa00hobhrich_djvu.txt) retrieved on: 21/03/2019.

<sup>82</sup> *Publisher* p. 155.

<sup>83</sup> John Macdonnell, ‘Review of *I Appeal Unto Caesar* by Mrs Henry Hobhouse’, *The Times Literary Supplement*, (Issue 815, 30/08/1917), p. 411. Available from: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/A7hCt4>

the venture.<sup>84</sup> Mrs Hobhouse's name was well-known to those in power, so this was a brave affiliation in such early days.<sup>85</sup> Unwin published her son's book, *An English Prison From Within*, in 1918, another potentially (but less topically) dangerous undertaking.

#### 1.2.4: *Ishmaelites*

Another episode, referenced with ambiguity in *Publisher*, is of interest. Unwin outlines how conscription had left him with only Reynolds, his 'most difficult' director. Any publishing decision had to be agreed upon by both. Two books were submitted close together: *Married Love* by Marie Stopes, and a manuscript by a young woman named Rose Allatini. Unwin describes the latter only as 'a novel by an attractive girl, whom Reynolds had interviewed, dealing with homosexuality and conscientious objection'. Reynolds gave Unwin an ultimatum: he would not agree to publish *Married Love* if Unwin did not agree to publishing Allatini's manuscript.<sup>86</sup>

Allen and Unwin had published Allatini's first novel, *Root and Branch*. Showing unusual forethought and politeness, she preceded this submission with a letter asking if they were still considering fiction, having made a 'careful study' of the firm's preferences.<sup>87</sup> Bernard Miall's reader's report describes it as:

A refreshing exception to the usual run of MSS. It is emphatically worth publishing [...] from a literary point of view it is an excellent piece of work, unusual and original.<sup>88</sup>

Allatini was clearly talented. He finishes by saying that 'the only question is – whether it will pay expenses. I should think it would – just'. Miall understood that Unwin would invest in something of this quality for its merit, rather than for profit. Only one edition was run, and it was rejected by Putnam's, the main American publisher with whom the firm dealt at the time; however, a slow start was not unexpected for a first-time author.<sup>89</sup>

Six months later, Allatini contacted Reynolds again, submitting her latest work *Ishmaelites*, in the hope that it 'might find favour in [his] house'. Her language is implicitly disapproving of the war; she enquires after Reynolds' experience with "The Military" and

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<sup>84</sup> *Publisher*, p. 155.

<sup>85</sup> Mrs Hobhouse was still petitioning the government in 1919, and her name appears on numerous petitions to parliament, for example 01/01/1919, letter to Lloyd George from various prominent literary, political and religious figures, LG F 95/1/16, Parliamentary Archives, London.

<sup>86</sup> *Publisher*, p. 138.

<sup>87</sup> Letter 14/12/16, Allatini to the firm ('Sirs'), AU FSC 1/7.

<sup>88</sup> Reader's report by Bernard Miall on *Root and Branch*, dated 28/12/1916. AU FSRR 1/3/59.

<sup>89</sup> Letter of rejection, 20/02/1917, Putnam's to Allen and Unwin, AU FSC 1/7.

hopes he has not been ‘spirited away to some inaccessible camp somewhere’.<sup>90</sup> Miall’s report on the new MS airs his concerns immediately:

My chief feelings after reading this very interesting and able piece of work are regretful [...] Does the military censor read novels? [...] he would never pass this. And even if he doesn’t...there is the Lord Chamberlain.<sup>91</sup>

After initially calling the manuscript ‘interesting and able’. Miall goes on to attack the author’s treatment of both conscientious objection and homosexuality (which he refers to almost uniquely as ‘perversion’). Miall finds the protagonist’s justification for his objection untenable, and his homosexuality unrealistic. He describes these central themes as ‘both unpopular, and both under official ban’. It was clearly not only Dennis’s pacifism, but – more strongly – his homosexuality, to which Miall objected.<sup>92</sup> His feelings about these subjects take up most of the report. Addressing Dennis’s ‘perversion’, he concedes that it is ‘doubtless a perfectly legitimate subject’, but goes on to illustrate his own misconceptions about homosexuality:

In nine cases out of ten it is due simply to immaturity or repression and has no more significance than the antics of a female puppy riding one’s boot, or a cow backing another cow.<sup>93</sup>

The combination of two controversial and generally avoided subjects seems to have disallowed him any level of objective consideration. In the context of the time, and in his role as Unwin’s reader, this is understandable – sexuality was taboo in literature – as evidenced by the prosecution of Lawrence’s *The Rainbow* in 1915 – and homosexuality would certainly have been considered even more obscenely ‘corrupting’. Certainly, the censorship of Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and James Hanley’s *Boy* (1931) are testament to the unreadiness of the British book world for such themes. Of Dennis’s pacifism Miall is equally critical, calling the character a ‘shirker’ whose reasons were unsound: he had no ‘dependents’ and was not ‘valuable’. His language provides insight into the strength of anti-German feeling: several times he talks of people’s natural aversion to war, but counters this with the apparently generally accepted necessity of ‘smashing’ the Germans. He also makes an odd – racist – aside:

and why connect his fear of music with his fear of sex? Music does not stimulate sex – except for in Germans.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Letter 14/08/17, RA to Reynolds, AU FSC 1/7.

<sup>91</sup> AU FSRR 1/5/03.

<sup>92</sup> Dennis is the name of the protagonist.

<sup>93</sup> AU FSRR 1/5/03.

<sup>94</sup> AU FSRR 1/5/03.

The report is almost more enlightening than the book's fate – even Unwin's trusted, 'intellectual' readers were vulnerable to anti-German propaganda.<sup>95</sup> Miall, as a reader, was expected to channel the opinions of the book-buying public, however with this comment he was not speaking for the firm's customers. Miall's criticisms rest almost wholly on his issues with the character, while generally being complimentary of the book's literary quality. This is as much demonstrative of its place in time as of its reader, and was a strong argument against Unwin's publishing the work: the public were clearly not ready, the book would at best be considered controversial, at worst, open to prosecution. While Miall's comments do seem indicative of his personal feelings regarding Germans, homosexuality and pacifism, his role required him to consider the cultural, and legal, context – and at that time, all three subjects would have been considered problematic. Allatini thanked Unwin for having read it himself on 6 October, apparently with no sense of Miall's feelings.<sup>96</sup> Shortly after an undated letter appears that implies Allatini's awareness of the novel's dangerousness – she requests that she take a pseudonym because she had had 'some upheaval with her military and narrow-minded family'.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps she believed that the rest of the country would be less narrow-minded: Miall's response suggests that she was wrong.

The final letter in the series connects with Unwin's narrative in *Publisher*. Allatini thanks Unwin for his 'trouble in trying to place the MS', and agrees that CW Daniel was the 'most likely-sounding firm'.<sup>98</sup> No reference is made to the book's engagement with homosexuality, and Daniel's version retained this. It appears that Unwin was more forgiving of her subject treatment, but unable to embark on what could be a business-ruining publication (besides, another director, E Skinner, was sent the MS while on war duty and responded scathingly, saying that he could not imagine even the 'most open-minded critic hailing it as a work of art').<sup>99</sup> Despite losing *Married Love* (which was published by Gollancz and was a bestseller),<sup>100</sup> and despite Skinner's disdain, Unwin supported Allatini in finding a publisher. Daniel was prosecuted for publishing Allatini's book – renamed *Despised and Rejected* under the pseudonym A T Fitzroy – despite, apparently, having had Allatini 'tone down' the manuscript.<sup>101</sup> Unwin contributed to his fine because he felt partially responsible. The book

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<sup>95</sup> Rayner describes Unwin's readers as 'intellectuals'. 'Interview...', p. 77.

<sup>96</sup> Early files contain only letters received, not letters sent by the firm, so none of Unwin's correspondence in this episode can be viewed.

<sup>97</sup> Letters between 06/10/17 and 12/10/17, AU FSC 1/7.

<sup>98</sup> Letter RA to SU, 12/10/1917, AU FSC 1/7.

<sup>99</sup> Letter 5/10/1917, Skinner to Unwin, AU FSC 32/204.

<sup>100</sup> *Publisher*, p. 138.

<sup>101</sup> Letter Basil Thompson to Sidney Schiff 07/10/1918. Schiff Papers, Vol. VIII (ff. 191) BL Add MS 52923: 1907-1948.

was originally only banned; and while the prosecution concerned the book's likelihood to 'prejudice the recruiting, training and discipline' of military personnel, the book's engagement with homosexuality was described by the judge as 'morally unhealthy and most pernicious'.<sup>102</sup> Daniel later claimed to have been unaware of the theme of homosexuality – he was happy to defend its pacifism, but not this.<sup>103</sup>

This episode is important. It is demonstrative of the cultural and legal context of the time and Unwin's canniness as a businessman, while also implying his desire to aid in publishing works of literary merit. Unwin was rightly unwilling to take the chance of publishing such a controversial book so early on – he had acquired a business that was the amalgamation of two firms whose poorly-made decisions had contributed to their demise, and his name and new business were not yet well-known enough to take such chances. Unwin's general tolerance of other's opinions, his own objection to military service, coupled with his remark in *Publisher* that 'Conscientious Objectors were most stupidly handled', would suggest that he might have disagreed with Miall, but understood that Miall's opinion was more representative than his own.<sup>104</sup> By operating with an awareness of the censorious climate of the time, and making decisions that did not undermine his reputation, Unwin kept himself able to choose his battles.

It is probable that Unwin was willing to publish *Caesar* because he felt the subject important, whereas Allatini's dual controversy went too far. While Unwin's description of homosexuality as being 'illegal and a perversion' indicates his own discomfort with this theme, these two examples demonstrate his belief in supporting dissident voices.<sup>105</sup> Homosexuality was illegal, and the first edition of the DSM considered homosexuality a mental illness – this was not changed until 1973.<sup>106</sup> Censorship and prosecution of 'corrupting' literature was to continue for many years afterward, and constitutional change would only occur upon the introduction of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, which for the first time made exceptions

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<sup>102</sup> [no author given] 'Despised and Rejected, Publisher of Pacifist Novel Fined', *The Times*, 11/10/1918. A facsimile of the article is available from Persephone Books. Available from: <https://persephonebooks.co.uk/products/despised-and-rejected> retrieved on: 06/02/2023.

<sup>103</sup> Archives Charles William Daniel Company, Collection ID ARCH00279181. Folder 181: 'Documents concerning the prosecution of C.W. Daniel and others for publishing the novel *Despised and Rejected*'. 1917-1918. International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

<sup>104</sup> *Publisher*, p. 154.

<sup>105</sup> *Publisher*, p. 138.

<sup>106</sup> DSM: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. Jack Drescher, 'Out of DSM: Depathologising Homosexuality' *Behavioural Sciences* Vol. 5:4 (Dec 2015). Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4695779/> retrieved on 15/05/2019.

for artistic merit and ‘public good’, and viewed texts as wholes as opposed to judging them on the basis of passages.<sup>107</sup>

In peacetime, books were predominantly censored in Britain for ‘obscene’ content – and ‘obscenity’ had a broad definition. Perhaps in part because of the importance placed in freedom of expression,<sup>108</sup> only the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 held legal sway, although circulating libraries had, for a time, been able to limit exposure in a way not dissimilar to censorship.<sup>109</sup> Unwin makes repeated, scathing references to the 1857 Act in *Publisher*.<sup>110</sup> The 1959 Act which ‘grew out of a reaction to a disproportionate propensity to prosecution’ allowed for dispensation to be made for ‘literary merit’, leading to the famous trial of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.<sup>111</sup> Unwin sat on the defence, although it is possible he had not read the book<sup>112</sup> – it was the principle he objected to; he ‘didn’t like censorship of any shape or form’ and ‘decried censorship of the written word wherever he found it’.<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, his good friend and book-trade colleague of many years, Basil Blackwell, sat on the prosecution, saying that he had been ‘corrupted by it’.<sup>114</sup> This seems odd, considering his vocation, and the defence’s triumph on the basis of the qualities of literary craft and merit.

Richard Espley suggests that Unwin’s distinction, in *Publisher*, between ‘unwarranted’ and ‘justifiable’ censorship had an element of snobbishness, and was representative of a class-like stratification of literature indulged in throughout the modern period described as ‘qualitative categorisation’. Espley finds this hypocritical, and draws attention to Unwin’s statement that ‘the treatment of *reputable* publishers [was] intolerable’, while at the same time believing that the police’s ‘indiscriminate’ seizure of books was often ‘justified’.<sup>115</sup> Unwin’s ‘snobbery’ might instead be interpreted as a combination of personal taste and value judgement, the latter of which was essential to his work. It might also relate to his disinterest in fiction. Unwin’s firm always sought to publish informative or thought-provoking books and

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<sup>107</sup> See J E Hall Williams, ‘The Obscene Publications Act’, *The Modern Law Review* Vol. 23:3 (May 1960), pp. 285-90. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1091621> retrieved on: 11/05/2023.

<sup>108</sup> As discussed in Britannica’s exploration of modern censorship, according to the dominant understanding of democracy, both in the more archaic, community sense and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward centralisation of the individual, too great an infringement on political expression undermines the openness of alternative arguments and viewpoints. Available from: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/censorship/108315> retrieved on 25/03/2019.

<sup>109</sup> See Nicola Wilson, ‘Circulating Morals’.

<sup>110</sup> For example, he describes its definition of obscene as ‘ridiculous’, p. 171, and again on p. 333.

<sup>111</sup> David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, ‘Publishing’, in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, p. 172.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Interview...’, p. 78.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>115</sup> Richard Espley, ‘Alec Craig, Censorship and the Literary Marketplace’ in Nicola Wilson (editor), *The Book World: Selling and Distributing British Literature, 1900-1940* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 140. Own italics.

his preference always lay with non-fiction; and perhaps he found it difficult to appreciate the different value in primarily escapist books.

### 1.2.5 The End of the War

Unwin supported Lord Lansdowne's attempts to encourage the opening of peace negotiations in 1917. He describes his fear of the public's response, because of the 'hysterical mood into which the populace was being worked up by the Northcliffe press'.<sup>116</sup> This was a pivotal moment in the nation's relationship with the Press: Brendon describes the period surrounding Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* career as the 'golden age' of the press barons.<sup>117</sup> As outlined in the Introduction, this was an important period in the development of public manipulation by the press.

While in the context of a war it is desirable to those in power to garner popular support, the degree to which pacifists were silenced and demonised in the First World War implies a troubling restriction of interpersonal discourse, and, at worst, provides a model for more insidious, authoritarian restriction on thought. Unwin believed that disparate voices have the right to be heard. That, in listening to different perspectives, more can be learnt, achieved, and gained. This is in keeping with the notion of 'critical thinking' outlined in the Introduction – by exposing oneself to a variety of sources and perspectives, and by challenging assumptions and confirmation biases, not only can better-informed conclusions be reached, but greater tolerance – through better understanding facilitating more effective communication – can be achieved.

Smythe's and Sonnenschein's experiences demonstrate the power of anti-German feeling in this time: one could not even be nominally associated with the enemy. Miall's odd assertions regarding the nature of 'Germanness' are also indicative of this. The labelling of an entire people as innately evil leads to an absence in a person's – indeed, a nation or culture's – appreciation and understanding of the world. In contrast with the breadth and depth of understanding and tolerance that can be fostered by engaging objectively with 'other', the kind of rhetoric employed against German people in the First World War limited the ability of the populace to engage critically with their contemporary context. Such methods discourage objective consideration of the humanity of the outgroup. Encouraging such thinking, even with

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<sup>116</sup> *Publisher*, p. 157. Potter also refers to his part in this and the repercussions on his popularity. 'For Country, Conscience...' p. 20.

<sup>117</sup> *Press Barons*, p. 125.



the seemingly well-meant intention of creating solidarity, fosters a more pervasive avoidance of critical engagement.

The ‘heavy-handed’ way in which propaganda and censorship were affected in the First World War in Britain undermined those qualities that underpin tolerance and progress in a culture. Censorship mutes the tumult of disparate voices according to the biased judgements and motives of a particular faction or ideology. Censorship and propaganda are closely linked: where an idea’s defence is quieted, attacks on it can be given extra volume. This can be easily observed in hindsight – but it is less easy to identify in the moment. The pervasive fear of German-sounding names, pacifist-shaming, Kipling’s characterisation of the ‘Hun’: these elements of wartime Britain feel uncomfortable today. However, in the contemporary context, it has been observed that, internationally, authoritarian styles of governance are increasing.<sup>118</sup> How will the early 21<sup>st</sup> century’s political rhetoric and public discourse be viewed a century from now?

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<sup>118</sup> See, for example, Roberto Stefan Foa, ‘Modernization and Authoritarianism’, *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 29:3 (July 2018), pp. 129-140. Available from: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/698923/pdf> retrieved on: 11/05/2023.

### 1.3 1920-1968

[Following the First World War] *continental trade was left to the initiative of individual publishers, of whom Stanley Unwin must be acknowledged as a pioneer.*<sup>119</sup>

R J L Kingsford

*He has preached the gospel of cooperation between publishers.*<sup>120</sup>

R H Code Holland

*A willingness to give time to the concerns of the whole book trade, not just to one's own business, was a principle so deeply inculcated into me that I took it for granted. [...] Only gradually did I come to realise that [...] this was a comparatively recent philosophy and owed much to the battles fought by my father throughout the nineteen-twenties.*<sup>121</sup>

Rayner Unwin

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<sup>119</sup> Kingsford, p. 66.

<sup>120</sup> 'Tribute to Stanley Unwin' by R H Code Holland, p. 2. This was a small leaflet produced by the firm following Unwin's passing, dated 13/11/1968.

<sup>121</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. 191.

### 1.3.1 Cooperation, Communication, and International Collaboration

Unwin bemoaned the uncommunicative and unfriendly nature of the extant ‘cooperative’ book-trade organisations in the early years of his career, and through the work of himself and likeminded colleagues, this changed. Through a combination of business acumen, steadily-selling lists, and well-managed property investment, Unwin had the financial freedom to invest time and energy in exercising those principles he asserted were important to him: encouraging cooperation and collaboration between different factions of the book world; publishing high-quality, thoroughly researched books that did not need to turn a profit – and did not need to agree with one another; and nurturing the market for international writers in Britain, and for British books overseas. Robin Denniston asserts that, by his death, Unwin was recognized as:

one of the architects of the British, and indeed the international, book trade as a publisher of the highest standards of probity in business matters as well as in the quality of the books he published [who] contributed importantly to the life and well-being of his country.<sup>122</sup>

My research supports Denniston’s description, and the following pages will discuss his work in promoting and facilitating cooperation, and his efforts at communicating between worlds. In keeping with the thesis’s intention to model the practice of (self-)reflectiveness that is central to its approach to critical thinking, this section will also consider whether Unwin’s behaviour always reflected his purported principles. By tracing Unwin’s career in this way, I hope to create the foundation of the thesis’s argument that an awareness of faulty thinking mechanisms can help create an environment more conducive to cooperation and collaboration; to true, socially just, progress. The model of ‘critical thinking’ proposed is based upon the premise that the most effective means of affecting social change, and of preventing insidious forms of manipulation, is by promoting a habit of self-awareness, objectivity, and empathy; and through effective, constructive communication. By understanding and being open to alternative perspectives, it is possible to expand one’s own world-view, and to learn. Thus, this section celebrates the cooperative efforts of Unwin and his contemporaries in conjunction with his valuable work in publishing a huge spectrum of important works expressing differing perspectives – his promotion, through provision of materials, of ‘critical thinking’.

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<sup>122</sup> Robin Denniston, ‘Unwin, Sir Stanley’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36614> retrieved on: 10/05/2022.

The section has made use of a number of the pamphlets Unwin authored throughout his career. While these are historically useful, his motivations occasionally seem odd: these often appeared to attempt to explain to the book-buying public the difficulties faced by publishers. Viewed in the broader context of Unwin's career, however, they might be understood as a further (sometimes ill-advised) effort at communicating the experience of one aspect of life in the twentieth century to others within and outside it: an additional attempt at improving communication and understanding between different types of experience.

Unwin was considered by many to have played an important role in fostering and facilitating cooperation between the various factions of the book world. As well as participating heavily in – and often initiating – a number of collaborative pan-trade endeavours, he had a 'taste for picking up' insolvent publishing houses, and either merging them with his own firm, or regenerating and selling them on.<sup>123</sup> While none of this was completely altruistic – he was, primarily, a businessman – it seems that he was also motivated by a genuine belief in the social and educational importance of books. These endeavours speak to the ideals at the foundation of the thesis's model for critical thinking: tolerance is a prerequisite for cooperation and compromise, and providing support to others is an essential component of a more equitable and sustainable world. Cooperation is crucial in the achievement of progress: social, educational, and cultural. In order to create an environment in which cooperation can flourish, it is necessary to be 'critical' about subjective motivations and beliefs. In order to better communicate across borders and cultures, a level of respect for differing perspectives is integral. Unwin's dedication to, and success in contributing to the creation of, such conditions in the book world, therefore, can be directly aligned with the approach to 'critical thinking' outlined in the introduction and explored in greater depth in the conclusion of the study.

Cooperation requires parties to, wherever possible, agree; and where it is difficult to agree, to find the capacity to understand the other side's perspective so as to find compromise. The very decision to attempt to collaborate and to cooperate implies the intention to accept compromise: to remove oneself from subjective preferences and priorities enough to acknowledge the validity and utility of other parties' ideas and perspectives, to prioritise a collective larger than oneself. Cooperation, therefore, is enhanced and affected by an individual's ability to achieve a level of objectivity. The concepts outlined in the introduction provide a framework around which the barriers to cooperation might be rationalised:

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<sup>123</sup> J W Lambert and Michael Ratcliffe, *The Bodley Head: 1887-1987* (London: The Bodley Head, 1987), p. 271.

differences in perceived ingroups, differing subjective biases, different emotional responses; are all aspects of cognition that can hamper collaborative efforts.

The First World War had a long-term impact on all industries. Unwin wrote about the increased costs of manufacturing for publishers in a pamphlet titled *The Price of Books*, published in 1925. The pamphlet seems to have been motivated by what he perceived to be a disgruntled but under-informed reading public, as its overwhelming purpose appears to have been to explain and justify the comparatively slight rise in the cost of books for the consumer as compared with production costs. It described how, despite the notable rise in the consumer price of some books – predominantly cheaper books, affecting those less able to accommodate such increases (something Unwin failed to acknowledge) – publishers themselves did not benefit, owing to higher manufacturing and advertising costs, and to the ‘increased discounts demanded by booksellers’.<sup>124</sup>

He writes that ‘the price of books is a matter of such importance to the book-reading public that it is desirable that it should be more widely known not only what are the chief factors controlling prices, but the proportions in which they affect them’.<sup>125</sup> He concludes the first section by arguing that ‘books [were] thus relatively cheaper than before the war’. It might be said that he was asking book-buyers to look more ‘critically’ at the true cost of books, as opposed to being swung by the ‘availability heuristic’: only taking into account the immediately available information (i.e., the increase in the market price of books) in reaching conclusions (concerning the fairness of the price rise).<sup>126</sup> While Unwin might have considered writing a pamphlet to be an effective way of addressing this problem, he failed to consider the fact that a population faced with a huge rise in unemployment and inflation is unlikely to pay an enormous amount of attention to even well-argued and erudite essays about non-necessary commodities, and any reduction in book-buying was likely to be the result of a concurrent reduction in available disposable income.<sup>127</sup> In keeping with the intention to reflect on Unwin’s biases and motivations, Unwin’s blindness to his own privilege should be acknowledged. He came from a comfortable middle-class background with strong connections to the industry. This meant that he was able to access help in building his career by working for his uncle, and had access to a lengthier and better-quality education, and more support – professional and

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<sup>124</sup> Stanley Unwin, *The Price of Books* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1925), pp. 1-5.

<sup>125</sup> *The Price of Books*, p. 1.

<sup>126</sup> Daniel Kahneman deals with the ‘availability heuristic’ in *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2012), pp. 72-73.

<sup>127</sup> Paul R Josephson, ‘Harsh Peace and Hard Times’ in ‘United Kingdom’, *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/United-Kingdom/110750> retrieved on: 31/03/2022.

financial – than much of his generation. His sweeping criticism of the English for prioritising expenditure on alcohol and tobacco over books was blinkered: he did not consider the psychological experience of living in poverty, and the effect on mental health and consequent self-medicating behaviours such conditions can create.<sup>128</sup> Nor does he seem to have been able to understand the very level of poverty many faced. This is perhaps understandable in retrospect: the divide between the classes – particularly in the twenties – was ‘striking’.<sup>129</sup>

It is difficult to argue against the statement that knowledge and ideas are of cultural and social value, but Unwin’s persistent arguments and campaigns concerning the superiority of the printed word over every other commodity, and his oft-reiterated feeling that – particularly in Britain – books and learning were under-valued, are somewhat un-critical and unempathetic. Books in this period were often unaffordable even for those who most needed them. In many state schools, books had to be shared between groups of pupils because they were too expensive.<sup>130</sup> Unwin’s perspective demonstrates a blind spot in his perception of the social world. Unwin strongly advocated the acknowledgement and availability of balanced perspectives on, and approaches to, a broad spectrum of social issues. However, his own understanding of, and compassion for, others’ circumstances was more limited. Despite his desire to challenge bias by publishing differing ideas, he seems to have had a limited capacity to acknowledge his own biases. His accusation that the British public’s general opinion appeared to be that books were an ‘unnecessary luxury’, and that the culture maintained a general ‘distrust of intellect’ fails to acknowledge the broader picture.<sup>131</sup> This consideration is important because it appears to go against Unwin’s purported values – to provide differing perspectives implies that one should try to see things from alternative viewpoints, and refrain from making ill-informed judgements regarding others’ behaviour.

### 1.3.2 Unwin and Cooperative Institutions

The Publishers’ Association (PA) was formed in 1896.<sup>132</sup> According to Unwin’s recollection, in his early career, ‘few members knew one another’, and none would sit near anyone else to ‘avoid contamination’. What little communication there was between the PA and Associated

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<sup>128</sup> *Publishing*, p. 57 (footnote).

<sup>129</sup> Ben Johnson, ‘The 1920’s in Britain’, *Historic Britain*. Available from: <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-1920s-in-Britain/> retrieved on: 31/03/2022.

<sup>130</sup> Johnson, ‘The 1920’s in Britain’.

<sup>131</sup> Stanley Unwin, *The Status of Books* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1941), p. 4.

<sup>132</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 17.

Booksellers he describes as ‘acrimonious’. The PA’s sole function appeared, to him, to be to protect the Net Book Agreement. On any other issue, Unwin describes the Association as acting as ‘a gathering of people who, singly, can do nothing, but together decide that nothing can be done’.<sup>133</sup> Later he described the ‘bitter antagonism to any form of cooperation’ that he and fellow younger publishers had had to face in the early years.<sup>134</sup> Of the PA, Rayner writes that it was his father ‘and a number of young bloods of the post-war generation’ who ‘battled against the inertia and hostility of the establishment’.<sup>135</sup> Of course, both accounts are inherently biased. Allen and Unwin’s application for PA membership was initially rejected, despite both Sonnenschein and Allen and Co. having been members. Apparently, this was due to a misunderstanding regarding Unwin’s treatment of Allen’s son.<sup>136</sup> Unwin refused to reapply for more than a decade, and when he did – ‘under the joint pressure of a group of booksellers and influential publishers’ (a claim it is difficult to verify) – he was immediately accepted and quickly elected to the Council.<sup>137</sup> Unwin was President from 1934-5, and served as an officer throughout the thirties.<sup>138</sup> He spent forty years on its Executive Board.<sup>139</sup> Testament is paid to his enormous contribution to the PA in Kingsford’s history of the Association, in which Unwin is mentioned more than any other member: references to him in the index number 34.<sup>140</sup> This is in part due to Unwin’s prolific writings on book-trade affairs, but is also testament to his apparently inexhaustible dedication to all things book-orientated. According to Kingsford, the PA’s work following the First World War drastically increased in scope and effectiveness, although it is difficult to critically examine precisely how large a role Unwin played in this change, in part because a great deal of this history was written by him. Certainly, Unwin felt that he had been vital; and his belief in his own importance is crucial to his myth. Although Unwin writes positively of his Presidency, Philip asserts that his uncle found it a ‘burden’.<sup>141</sup>

The International Publishers’ Association (IPA) was also formed in 1896, and met every three years until 1914.<sup>142</sup> According to Kingsford, it was T Fisher Unwin, ‘motivated

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<sup>133</sup> *Publisher*, p. 367.

<sup>134</sup> Speech by Stanley Unwin, *80<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, p. 69.

<sup>135</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. 191.

<sup>136</sup> *Publisher*, p. 215. Unwin only met Allen’s son once, and relates that the meeting was pleasant.

<sup>137</sup> *Publisher*, p. 368.

<sup>138</sup> *Publisher*, p. 246.

<sup>139</sup> Referred to in the full title of his Eightieth birthday celebration book: *The Celebration of his 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday and Golden Wedding Day with allusions to 50 Years of George Allen and Unwin Ltd under his direction 40 Years on The Executive of The International Publishers Association and 30 Years on The British Council*.

<sup>140</sup> Kingsford, p. 227.

<sup>141</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 166.

<sup>142</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 19.

perhaps by his nephew' who 'raised the question of the Association's [...] revival'.<sup>143</sup> Unfortunately, there was too little possibility of full membership and 'nothing for a permanent organisation to do' immediately following the First World War; and no progress was made until a conference was held in Berne in 1929 'to consider the re-establishment of the organisation under new leaders and the holding of a new congress'.<sup>144</sup> Unwin and WG Taylor (of Dent's, with whom Unwin was good friends) were elected by the Council of the PA to attend, and remained the British representatives for many years. Throughout the thirties, Unwin served as President and Vice-President of the International Congress.<sup>145</sup> His involvement was certainly in part driven by his genuine interest in furthering international trade and cooperation. Unwin's work with the IPA included the successful prevention of import tax on books between some countries, for example in Iceland, in 1935, when all other imported goods were levied.<sup>146</sup>

The IPA's 1938 Congress was to be held in Leipzig. Many boycotted it because of the political situation, however as outgoing president of the British PA, Unwin felt his attendance was 'inevitable'. He is pragmatic about the experience: he clearly felt that continuing to promote cooperation between his professional counterparts in Europe was important, and perhaps his attendance had utility in maintaining the possibility of restarting those efforts following the Second World War. He was to visit some Czech publishers afterwards, and argued that by refusing to attend he would be 'play[ing] into the Nazis' hands'.<sup>147</sup> As 'guest of honour', Unwin was given use of Hitler's box at a performance of *Die Fledermaus* put on for attendees. Unwin had a soft spot for Leipzig: outside of the World Wars, he was an annual attendee of the German Book Trade Fair held there, an event that he first attended in 1904, being 'probably the first and only representative of the English-speaking world'.<sup>148</sup>

The Society of Bookmen was an effort to encourage greater cooperation between the somewhat disparate factions of the 'book world' – particularly authors, publishers, and booksellers – initiated by Hugh Walpole in 1921. It still exists today under the name 'The Book Society'.<sup>149</sup> Unwin attended Walpole's inaugural dinner, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1921.<sup>150</sup> Membership

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<sup>143</sup> Kingsford, p. 78.

<sup>144</sup> Kingsford, p. 79.

<sup>145</sup> *Publisher*, p. 246.

<sup>146</sup> Kingsford, p. 115.

<sup>147</sup> Kingsford, p. 131; *Publisher*, p. 407.

<sup>148</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 167.

<sup>149</sup> 'The Society has changed its name to The Book Society but maintains very similar aims'. Joshua Farrington, 'Society of Bookmen Changes Name after 100 years', *The Bookseller* (05/12/2014) Available from:

<https://www.thebookseller.com/news/society-bookmen-changes-name-after-100-years> retrieved on: 27/03/2019.

<sup>150</sup> HW to SU, 03/10/1921, AUC 5/28.



was ‘open to men concerned with the creation; distribution and production of books’.<sup>151</sup> Penny Mountain describes it as a ‘talking shop for [male] managing directors’, to which women would only be invited as a man’s guest.<sup>152</sup> No women were allowed until 1972 (although female membership was floated and voted against in 1967<sup>153</sup>), and the new, genderless name was introduced in 2014.<sup>154</sup> Unwin described it as a ‘heaven-sent opportunity’ and quickly became an active member.<sup>155</sup> Walpole felt that the British book trade required better communication and cooperation between its constituent parts: on invitations to the dinner, he wrote that there was ‘less coherence among the various branches of the book business than any other industry’.<sup>156</sup> In *Publisher*, Unwin asserts that it was from this gathering and the Society’s subsequent work that ‘practically all the co-operative developments in the British book trade’ sprang.<sup>157</sup>

Unwin volunteered to participate in a quickly-formed sub-committee, responsible for organising and delivering a series of public lectures on the book trade (his contribution was ‘Book Distribution Abroad’). These lectures were advertised in newspapers, intending to provide insight into, and encourage interest in, the book trade.<sup>158</sup> These sorts of events were similar in character to Unwin’s pamphlets, in that they invited book-buyers to engage more deeply in the processes involved in book production and distribution. Such lectures were perhaps illustrative of a belief that by bringing consumers closer to books, it might be possible to encourage them to buy more.

Another sub-committee was formed to focus on cooperative publicity, although this was ‘not at first officially supported’ by the PA.<sup>159</sup> In 1924, following the joint acknowledgement by members of the Publishers’ Circle and the Society of Bookmen that

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<sup>151</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 21.

<sup>152</sup> ‘Penny Mountain and Suzanne Kendall discuss the networks that helped men to get ahead in the book trade’, *Women in Publishing: An Oral History*. Available from: <https://www.womeninpublishinghistory.org.uk/content/themes/a-gentlemans-profession/6-penny-mountain-suzanne-kendall-discuss-networks-helped-men-get-ahead-book-trade> retrieved on: 06/05/2023.

<sup>153</sup> Letters 25/04/1967 – 13/12/1967, between Ian Norrie and Stanley Unwin, AU FSC 1/7.

<sup>154</sup> Farrington, *The Bookseller*.

<sup>155</sup> *Publisher*, p. 370, and AUC 5/28, minutes from Society of Bookmen meetings. Unwin was not present at every meeting, but his enthusiasm and input are demonstrated in various ways. For example, he gave a number of lectures, and his firm issued a pamphlet of Sidney Dark’s lecture on the ‘New Reading Public’, the proceeds of which would go to the Society (minutes 26/09/22).

<sup>156</sup> HW to SU 03/10/1921, AUC 5/28.

<sup>157</sup> *Publisher*, p. 370.

<sup>158</sup> Newspaper clipping (no date but stating the first lecture would be on the 9<sup>th</sup> May) ‘By Bookmen For Bookmen’. Whole course tickets were available for half a crown, or the general public could buy tickets for individual lectures for a shilling on the door. Unwin’s lecture is listed as part of the series in the Minutes for 14/02/1922. Both sources can be found in AUC 5/28.

<sup>159</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 21.

‘some form of cooperative publicity was advisable’,<sup>160</sup> the National Book Council was finally created.<sup>161</sup> Norrie asserts that this was ‘largely thanks to Stanley Unwin’.<sup>162</sup> Unwin felt a personal responsibility to the project, describing it as his ‘child’, and offering free use of offices he owned for its work. This was deemed suspicious and rejected by some members.<sup>163</sup> The National Book Council’s goal was to ‘promote the reading and wider distribution of books’.<sup>164</sup> By 1928, the NBC had 1575 members, and ‘a reference library of books about books had been founded’.<sup>165</sup>

At first the NBC’s constitution met with friction from the PA, and weaker versions were suggested.<sup>166</sup> Marston, who became secretary, wrote that NBC’s birth had been ‘a very undignified episode in the history of the book trade’, coming into the world ‘amidst the unqualified resentment of the Publishers’ Association, the indifference of the Associated Booksellers and almost without the knowledge of the Society of Authors’.<sup>167</sup> Norrie also writes of a lack of support, particularly for cooperative advertising, that undermined any justification of hope of its success, a sentiment aired in a meeting in January 1931.<sup>168</sup> The difficulties faced by those supportive of the idea are perhaps representative of a more general tendency by people to push back against change – the ‘status quo’ or ‘default’ bias, or the preference for things to remain the same, whether or not change would be beneficial; which is considered an ‘emotional response’. This tendency presents in various contexts, and can often be counter-productive.<sup>169</sup>

In 1944, the NBC became National Book League, which aimed to ‘promote the habit of reading and the wider distribution of books’.<sup>170</sup> Unwin no longer participated directly in the workings of the League in later years, although an exchange between its then Secretary Geoffrey Glynn and Unwin indicates the publisher’s feeling that it was still to some degree ‘his’. Glynn wrote to Unwin stating that ‘according to our records you are not a life member,

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<sup>160</sup> Ian Norrie, *Sixty Precarious Years: A Short History of the National Book League* (London: National Book League, 1985), p. 16.

<sup>161</sup> Unwin describes its inception as a group effort, while Simmons notes that it was ‘primarily owing to the determination of the publisher Stanley Unwin’. Clifford Simmons, ‘The National Book League’, *Elementary English* Vol. 48:2 (February 1971), p. 210. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41386870> retrieved on: 12/12/2023.

<sup>162</sup> *Sixty Precarious Years*, p. 16.

<sup>163</sup> *Publisher*, p. 369.

<sup>164</sup> *Sixty Precarious Years*: p. 21.

<sup>165</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 21.

<sup>166</sup> See Kingsford, p. 95.

<sup>167</sup> *Sixty Precarious Years*, p. 15.

<sup>168</sup> *Sixty Precarious Years*, p. 36.

<sup>169</sup> See, for example, William Samuelson and Richard Zeckhauser, ‘Status Quo Bias in Decision Making’ *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* Vol. 1:1 (March 1988), pp. 7-59. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00055564> retrieved on: 02/02/2023.

<sup>170</sup> Michael F. Suarez and H.R. Woudhuysen, *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 556.

although of course Allen and Unwin are publisher members. Should you [...] wish to take out a life membership the subscription fee is fifteen guineas'.<sup>171</sup> Unwin replied, 'as I contributed I believe £1000 on the formation of the NBL, I was under the impression that that made me a Life Member'.<sup>172</sup> Appropriately, the League was based for a time at Book House in Wandsworth, a property provided by funding from the Unwin Charitable Trust (a posthumous investment in Unwin's memory), who owned the League at this time.<sup>173</sup>

The 'Joint Committee', proposed as a scheme with which to promote greater cooperation between publishers and booksellers, met for the first time in 1927. Unwin was an active member.<sup>174</sup> In its first four years, its achievements were notable: three sub-committees were formed, and each made a survey of the trade concerning various aspects. According to Kingsford, this survey was effective in 'provid[ing] a lasting charter for cooperation between the two branches of the trade'.<sup>175</sup> Unwin's consistent efforts to unite the different factions of the industry, often in the face of strong opposition, are notable.

In 1939 F D Sanders' *British Book Trade Organisation* was published, with an introduction by Stanley Unwin, in which he outlines the need for greater participation in cooperative efforts by members of the trade, describing the 'disproportionate' amount of work done by a 'small group of enlightened and progressive publishers and booksellers' (of whom he considers himself one) in promoting the 'good of the book trade'.<sup>176</sup> He writes, of publishers and their necessary attitudes in this time, that 'the day of the out-and-out individualist has passed, whether we like it or not', asserting that 'to ignore the good of the surrounding community is short-sighted self-interest'.<sup>177</sup>

### 1.3.3 The BBC

John Reith's principles in this new, ephemeral form of publishing, set out in the BBC's charter when it became a publicly-owned corporation in 1927, were comparable to Unwin's. The

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<sup>171</sup> Letter Geoffrey Glynn to SU, 02/10/1959. AUC 843/8.

<sup>172</sup> Letter SU to GG, 15/10/1959. AUC 843/8.

<sup>173</sup> *Sixty Precarious Years*, p. 2.

<sup>174</sup> Kingsford, p. 99.

<sup>175</sup> Kingsford, p. 99.

<sup>176</sup> Stanley Unwin, 'Introduction', in F D Sanders (editor), *British Book Trade Organisation* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939), p. 8.

<sup>177</sup> Stanley Unwin, 'Introduction', in F D Sanders (editor), *British Book Trade Organisation* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939), p. 9.

charter stated its intention to ‘educate, inform and entertain’, and to maintain political impartiality. The triad’s relevance is clear: Unwin’s interest in publishing ‘the best in the field’ and his enormous output of non-fiction books on educational topics demonstrate his investment in ‘educating and informing’. The latter is of interest because of Unwin’s silence with regard to his political views; both this, and the BBC’s intention to be impartial, are discussed in Part Three.

Despite the initial misgivings of some publishers, Stevenson asserts that Unwin immediately grasped the BBC’s potential to become an ‘avid consumer of publishing’s products’, and ‘with characteristic vision’, offered to publish for them, ‘hammer[ing] out a lucrative and exclusive arrangement that less opportunistic competitors loudly and bitterly bemoaned’.<sup>178</sup> This implies a ruthlessness to Unwin – perhaps because of this, it is not mentioned in *Publisher*. As a businessman, cooperation was not Unwin’s only priority, and in this unprecedented context he prioritised profit. Unwin would also come to provide the BBC with numerous authors for their inter-war ‘ten-minute talks’ (to which he contributed), and publish many transcribed talks as pamphlets and collections.<sup>179</sup>

There were, inevitably, teething problems in the relationship between publishers and the broadcasting industry in the early years. In the 1930s, disagreements concerning who should receive remuneration for the use of material from books were a major issue: some authors felt that publishers should not further benefit or profit from the use of their work, with the Society of Authors stating that it was:

Unanimous and emphatic in taking the view that any encroachment by publishers on authors’ broadcasting rights should be resolutely resisted and that save in the most exceptional circumstances publishers should not expect to participate in the proceeds accruing from the exploitation of these rights by the author.<sup>180</sup>

Many publishers felt that they too should receive something for works they had helped create. Norrie writes that the BBC was always willing to pay publishers for materials used, but that the amount precipitated conflict.<sup>181</sup> Unwin contributed to the development of a tentative solution. In 1936 he reported that following ‘unofficial correspondence’ between himself and the Secretary of the Society of Authors, a possible means of agreement had been created. In May 1937, a standing joint committee would be set up to negotiate with the BBC. In March

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<sup>178</sup> *Book Makers*, p. 63.

<sup>179</sup> *Book Makers*, p. 63.

<sup>180</sup> Kingsford, p. 124.

<sup>181</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 23.

1938 an agreement came into force, signed, and agreed to, by all three bodies. This agreement provided greater scope for acknowledgement of the publisher of a book that had been used ‘wherever the nature of the programme made it practicable’. Before the agreement came into effect, the publisher was only acknowledged when the author was not paid. Unfortunately, this agreement led to further in-fighting, but it was an attempt at navigating the new media and rights environment, and is yet another example of Unwin’s dedication to fostering a cooperative environment in publishing.<sup>182</sup>

### 1.3.4 The Thirties

*Trade follows the book*  
Stanley Unwin, various<sup>183</sup>

The Wall Street crash created further economic difficulty for all businesses. In 1931 Britain had to abandon the gold standard, causing the exchange rate to collapse. Unemployment increased. The book trade was, in part, protected by its importance to scholars and professionals. Outside of this market, however, book sales were affected. In 1935, Unwin wrote:

Economic recovery has, we are told, to some extent been achieved in this country, but whether this be or not the book trade would be ungrateful to complain of its position.

The trade has not suffered to anything like the extent as have many others.

However, he countered, this progress had been ‘confined to the home trade’, as a result of increasing difficulties with ‘exchange restrictions, tariffs [...] piracies [etc]’.<sup>184</sup> Kingsford notes that innovations – such as Harold Raymond’s Book Tokens, and promotion by the NBC – helped address the issues created by a stagnant home economy.<sup>185</sup> A new avenue with the potential to improve overseas trade was also created around this time: the British Council.

The British Council was founded in 1934, and was the product of a combination of factors, not least Britain’s waning influence on the world stage. Frances Donaldson is defensive regarding its motivations, pointing to examples of other European countries that had equivalent institutions already in place, but failing to acknowledge equivalent experiences of crumbling

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<sup>182</sup> Kingsford, p. 125.

<sup>183</sup> Described as Unwin’s ‘famous aphorism’ which became a ‘British Council tenet’. Sue Bradley, ‘Interview with Tim Rix, *The British Book Trade: An Oral History* (London: British Library, 2008), p. 37.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted in *Book Makers*, p. 84.

<sup>185</sup> Kingsford, p. 114, pp. 138-143.

imperial power in these countries.<sup>186</sup> In March 1935, Unwin wrote to Taylor alluding to the newly-formed Council's apparent ignorance of the importance of their industry:

book publishers have more to do with cultural relations with other countries than almost any other class of the community, it seems astonishing that the Publishers' Association is in no way represented on the Council.<sup>187</sup>

His complaint was premature: soon afterward he was appointed to the fledgling Council's Governing Board, and attended its inaugural meeting on 2 July 1935.<sup>188</sup> Norrie writes that 'the good sense of such a promotion seemed obvious to publishers'.<sup>189</sup> This was a timely appointment: Unwin had commented that home-trade progress during the depression had been 'offset by the fact that export business ha[d] become increasingly difficult'.<sup>190</sup> Kingsford asserts that it was 'under Unwin's persuasion' that the British Council came to 'see that books could be a powerful instrument for the projection of Britain's image abroad'.<sup>191</sup>

Unwin also enjoyed 'rescuing' failing publishing firms. Among these numerous – and largely successful – projects, two are of particular interest. Phaidon Verlag were an Austrian art books publisher, run by a Jewish man, Doctor Bela Horowitz. When visiting in the mid-thirties, Unwin realized that Phaidon was at risk of being absorbed or destroyed by the Nazis. He observed that when Jewish publishers had been 'purchased by non-Jews' in Germany they were considered 'Aryanized'. He sought confirmation that this would be the case if he were to undertake such a purchase. He was required to produce a family tree in order to prove that he had 'no trace of Jewish blood', and upon doing so received confirmation that, were he to buy a Jewish firm, it would indeed be 'Aryanized'.<sup>192</sup> Allen and Unwin purchased the business and rights to publish so that publications bore their 'Aryan' name, but Horovitz retained control. Horovitz was slow in acknowledging the imminent danger, and only moved to London when forced by the Nazi takeover of Vienna.<sup>193</sup>

Unwin alludes to difficulties in this endeavour in *Publisher*, and this is supported by evidence in the archives.<sup>194</sup> Allen and Unwin received some somewhat aggressive letters from an Austrian paper distributor with whom Phaidon had unpaid debts, Oesterreichische Papierverkaufsgesellschaft. Some letters are missing, but it appears that the Austrian firm's

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<sup>186</sup> Frances Donaldson, *The British Council: The First Fifty Years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), pp. 2-4.

<sup>187</sup> Letter SU to WG Taylor, 12/03/1935, AUC 44/23.

<sup>188</sup> Donaldson, p. 29.

<sup>189</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 27.

<sup>190</sup> Unwin, 'Report of the Council, 1934-5', quoted in Kingsford, pp. 113-4.

<sup>191</sup> Kingsford, p. 114.

<sup>192</sup> *Publisher*, p. 223.

<sup>193</sup> AUC 54/4, various. AUC 53/28, various solicitor's letters; *Publisher*, pp. 223-4.

<sup>194</sup> *Publisher*, pp. 223-7.

tone was threatening in its correspondence directly with Horovitz, which, one might speculate, was due to their allegiance with the (then controlling) Nazi Party in Austria.<sup>195</sup> Despite Allen and Unwin's assurance that Phaidon's debt would be paid in full, they requested that Horovitz, or a representative, visit their offices in Vienna in person.<sup>196</sup> This letter was followed closely by a telegram stating 'expect early arrival your representative', despite no agreement to such a visit having been made. Unwin's letter of reply concluded with the statement that:

[I]t is our desire to carry on the production of these books in Austria, in which case we should probably be able to make use of further large quantities of paper, but naturally our decision will be influenced by the treatment accorded us. We are under no obligation to continue to manufacture these books in Germany, and if we are confronted with troubles or difficulties, should naturally turn elsewhere.<sup>197</sup>

Horovitz's brother-in-law wrote to Unwin thanking him for his 'time', 'help' and 'precious counsel', that had saved Horovitz from being 'lost', 'like so many others', enclosing a 'token' £1000.<sup>198</sup> Unwin's reply expressed the wish that 'what [Horovitz] ha[d] gone through may be soon forgotten like an unpleasant nightmare'.<sup>199</sup>

In *Publisher*, Unwin also describes the regeneration of The Bodley Head, a 'cooperative' project.<sup>200</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe cast legitimate aspersions on Unwin's purportedly altruistic intentions in their history of the firm.<sup>201</sup> In *Publisher* Unwin remarks that despite its insolvency, when John Lane's firm was offered for sale in 1937, 'so great was the prestige that there was competition to acquire it'.<sup>202</sup> He asked two other publishers, G Wren Howard of Jonathan Cape and Taylor, if they would 'join [him] to the extent of, say, one-sixth each'. In *Publisher* he asserts that at the time he was the only director of Allen and Unwin, so could not have taken it on alone. He mentions that it had occurred to him the project would 'be amusing', and that it was 'something new in publishing – a business owned by three competitors'.<sup>203</sup>

Considered more critically, the situation was less balanced than Unwin wished it to appear: his two-thirds stake gave him greater power and control than both his 'partners'

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<sup>195</sup> The tone of the letter 04/05/1938 A+U to Oesterreichische Papierverkaufsgesellschaft notes 'Dr Horovitz has shown us your letter of the 25<sup>th</sup> April', and is more strained in tone. AUC 54/4.

<sup>196</sup> Letter Oesterreichische Papierverkaufsgesellschaft to Allen and Unwin, 12/04/1938. AUC 54/4.

<sup>197</sup> SU to OP, 04/05/1938, AUC 54/4.

<sup>198</sup> Jaques Shupf to SU, 17/12/1938. AUC 54/4.

<sup>199</sup> SU to JS, 20/12/1938. AUC 54/4.

<sup>200</sup> *Publisher*, p. 244.

<sup>201</sup> J W Lambert and Michael Ratcliffe, *The Bodley Head: 1887-1987* (London: Bodley Head, 1987)

<sup>202</sup> *Publisher*, p. 243.

<sup>203</sup> *Publisher*, p. 244.

combined. His ‘collaborators’ simply allowed him to make a higher bid than he would otherwise have been able to justify. He did, however, put a huge amount of work into what was for a long time an unprofitable venture. He asserts in *Publisher* that he took only £127 10s payment for ‘ten years’ daily attendance’.<sup>204</sup> In Lambert and Ratcliffe’s account, little reference is made to either Howard or Taylor, and so perhaps it might be said that it was less a cooperative venture, and more a matter of their humouring Unwin – a choice that was, eventually, profitable. The firm was finally sold off at profit in 1957, following years of struggle. Besides the Bodley Head, Unwin was involved in the regeneration of many other publishers; including Methuen, who still exist today.<sup>205</sup>

Such examples of cooperation and assistance are testament to Unwin’s important contribution to the book industry in his time. The relevance to the thread of this study should be clear: by promoting, encouraging, and facilitating collaboration, and by investing time and effort in regenerating ailing firms, Unwin indirectly promoted a culture of mutual understanding and empathy; and particularly of kinsmanship and camaraderie, in the world of book publishing and production – which would not only have been a positive contribution to its culture, but good for business also. Additionally, the trajectory of technological progress might not have been quite so clear in his time, but it seems to have been clear to Unwin that the world was set to become smaller, and that international trade would become increasingly important and powerful. Today, the interdependence of countries and states is inarguable – as has been made clear by the various international crises of the past several years. The publishing industry itself has become ever-more globalised in the decades since his death, and is today dominated by international conglomerates.<sup>206</sup>

### 1.3.5 Unwin in the Sources

The model of critical thinking, which draws on Unwin’s publishing principles, is based around the concept of self-reflection: an awareness of one’s own particular way of perceiving the world and people, of one’s own biases and perceptual pitfalls, in order to mitigate their impact on interactions with the world. For this reason, since the model is built around Unwin the publisher’s principles, this short section will reflect on Unwin the man, as he was perceived by those around him.

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<sup>204</sup> *Publisher*, p. 245.

<sup>205</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 46.

<sup>206</sup> See David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, ‘Publishing’.



Lambert and Ratcliffe's insight into Unwin's character is one of few accounts not obliged – by context or genealogy – to paint him in a positive light. In their account, Unwin is viewed with a little suspicion. They question why, save 'for the fun of the thing', Unwin would have maintained this difficult and barely profitable project; especially in the first ten years in which the war affected progress and 'profits were ploughed back to finance the growth of the business [but] not until 1947 did they pay any dividend [...] a small one, for that year only'.<sup>207</sup> They describe Unwin as 'parsimon[ious]'<sup>208</sup> and 'gnome-like'.<sup>209</sup> They balance this with more generous descriptors, such as 'small, busy, beaming, teetotal [...] generally a figure of fun', who derived 'a certain malicious pleasure even when pursuing worthwhile causes'. At The Bodley Head, it seems, Unwin was seen as a man who was, overall, 'good', but took himself a little too seriously, and had a streak of egomania. Despite the reference to his 'malicious pleasure', their acknowledgement of his involvement in numerous worthwhile causes demonstrates a recognition of his positive motivations – from a perspective with no motive to be over-complimentary.<sup>210</sup> They also describe his tendency towards stinginess, for example his cutting and reselling stamps, which he apparently described as his 'only untaxed source of revenue' and his reuse of envelopes for rough paper and pay packets.<sup>211</sup> Despite their portrayal of an idiosyncratic, controlling and self-important man, they are generous – his genuine altruism, however motivated by his desire to embody a particular persona and be in control, they acknowledge. Although they poke fun at Unwin, his contribution to the firm's successful regeneration is appreciated: the chapter concerning this period is entitled 'Stanley Unwin to the rescue'. Their portrayal ultimately paints Unwin as a man genuinely driven by a desire to invest in that which would not necessarily directly advantage himself.

In *The Publishing Unwins*, Philip Unwin describes how work had been done to improve the women's lavatories at the firm's offices to prevent them 'hav[ing] to waste time queueing up', and to improve upon the previously 'fairly primitive' accommodations, while Sir Stanley was away on business. Upon his return, Unwin remarked that 'now I suppose the girls will simply spend more time in there gossiping'.<sup>212</sup> Unwin's patriarchal attitude was obviously a product of the period in which he grew up, and the social class he inhabited – as well as the culture of publishing. These are all factors that can be associated with Berger and Luckmann's

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<sup>207</sup> Lambert and Ratcliffe, p. 269.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., pp. 302-303.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>212</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 158.

ideas about socialisation and conditioning, and perhaps also to social identity theory – women and men inhabiting different ‘ingroups’. The Women in Publishing Oral History project contains numerous testaments to the culture of sexism in publishing in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>213</sup>

Rayner describes Unwin’s control of the business as ‘autocratic’ (although folders from the sixties appear to illustrate more delegation in his later years: far fewer letters are written or signed off by him).<sup>214</sup> This is supported in an obituary for Rayner in *The Independent*, which describes Rayner’s career as having been overshadowed by his father’s, and calls his father ‘fussy and autocratic’.<sup>215</sup> Rayner’s obituary in *The Times* describes Unwin as ‘not widely loved’, but ‘recognised as a dominantly able publisher’.<sup>216</sup> Philip’s assertion that his uncle ‘would not have readily subscribed to the idea that a business is *people*’ implies similar.<sup>217</sup> This is, of course, somewhat at odds with Unwin’s feelings about the importance of cooperation, and perhaps denotes a cognitive dissonance, mitigated by the hierarchical nature of a business, in his beliefs. Norrie describes Unwin as a ‘publisher with absolute belief in himself’, who was ‘not accustomed to being wrong’ and had ‘little humour’.<sup>218</sup> Norrie and Stevenson compare Unwin with ‘Pooter’, further supporting the idea that he took himself somewhat seriously and had a high level of self-importance.<sup>219</sup> Stevenson describes a ‘powerful streak of ruthlessness’ underneath an apparently ‘benign exterior’.<sup>220</sup> Stevenson asserts that ‘his prickly and self-righteous nature might have alienated publishing colleagues and competitors’, and that he was viewed with ‘cool respect rather than affection’ in the PA.<sup>221</sup>

Unwin was inarguably a product of his upbringing and conditioning. Born into a book-orientated family, it is natural that he should have become part of that world, and understandable that he should believe books to be of great importance. Norrie mentions Unwin’s sickliness in childhood – apparently, a friend of Unwin’s father’s told him “if you

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<sup>213</sup> See ‘A Gentleman’s Profession’, *Women in Publishing: An Oral History*. Available from: <https://www.womeninpublishinghistory.org.uk/content/category/themes/a-gentlemans-profession> retrieved on: 06/05/2023.

<sup>214</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 164.

<sup>215</sup> ‘Obituary to Rayner Unwin’, *The Independent* (23/12/2000). Available online: <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/obituary-rayner-unwin/docview/311772740/se-2?accountid=13460> retrieved on: 14/04/2022.

<sup>216</sup> ‘Obituary to Rayner Unwin’, *The Times* (25/11/2000). Available online: <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=rdg&id=GALE|A67304283&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon> retrieved on: 14/04/2022.

<sup>217</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 158. Italics in original.

<sup>218</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 50.

<sup>219</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 50; *Book Makers*, p. 50.

<sup>220</sup> *Book Makers*, p. 50.

<sup>221</sup> *Book Makers*, p. 53.

can't do better than that you'd better stop": perhaps this early socialisation experience contributed to his ambition.<sup>222</sup> His humourlessness and occasionally austere nature might also be associated with his strict religious orthodoxy and its effect on his world-view. As has been mentioned, his biases concerning the value of books failed to sufficiently take into consideration other perspectives or life experiences, perhaps even to the point of cognitive dissonance: it is unlikely that he had never observed true poverty when he lived in London for the whole of his life, implying a disjoin between his beliefs about himself and the external world.

### 1.3.6 The Second World War: Paper and Propaganda

*I am not going to let Mr Hitler disturb my holiday plans.*<sup>223</sup>

Stanley Unwin [prior to finding himself and his family stranded in Switzerland following a holiday to Liechtenstein, 1939]

Unwin wrote a great deal about paper rationing, remarking on many occasions how unfairly the book industry had been treated, and finding every opportunity to speak out on behalf of the industry for more paper for books. He was, at this and other times in his career, a campaigner – not only to serve the interests of himself and his own firm, but for the industry as a whole, and on some level, probably led by a belief in its importance to the wellbeing of the culture as a whole. While he avoided discussing partisan politics, he was deeply invested in the politics of publishing.

On 1 August a letter was sent to members of the PA by its Secretary, FD Sanders, in which he asserted that it would be necessary to point out to the Board of Trade that the amount of paper used by the industry was only an 'inconsiderable fraction' of the country's paper consumption, and that 'the importance of, and necessity for' books must be 'stress[ed]'.<sup>224</sup> Unwin took the final message very seriously.<sup>225</sup> Paper rationing was not introduced immediately. When it was, publishers were required to submit their usage for the year prior to the war in order for their wartime needs to be assessed. For some – such as Allen Lane's Penguins – this had been a good year; for others, including Unwin, it had not been the best.<sup>226</sup>

<sup>222</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, p. 48.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 118.

<sup>224</sup> Letter FD Sanders to PA Members, 01/08/1939. AUC 70/1.

<sup>225</sup> Besides numerous letters to newspapers such as *The Times*, Unwin discusses this problem in *The Status of Books* (1941), *Publishing in Peace and War* (1940) and *How Governments Treat Books* (1950).

<sup>226</sup> John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, p. 215.

Publishers altogether had an allocation of 22,000 tons per year, while newspapers received 250,000 and HM Stationery Office 100,000. Unwin felt that, had only around an extra 8,000 tons been granted the whole industry, the situation would have been significantly better.<sup>227</sup> It was not only publishers who spoke out for book-publishing: Valerie Holman cites an article in *The Times* that urged the government to ‘take remedial action’, otherwise the country would ‘soon reach a situation in which few new books will be published, or old ones reprinted, at all – except for works whose propaganda content particularly commends them to the official mind’.<sup>228</sup>

In *Publishing in Peace and War*, Unwin observed that although advertising space was restricted, the demand for books was ‘greater than it ha[d] ever been’, elaborating that ‘normally the demand is quite unequal to the supply, today the supply is quite unequal to the demand’.<sup>229</sup> It is somewhat ironic that part of his campaign involved publishing pamphlets such as *The Status of Books* and *Publishing in Peace and War*, both of which make similar assertions, and would have used up some of his precious allowance (though not a great deal). To Unwin, books were an essential part of the war effort, ‘food for the mind’ in a ‘war of ideas’.<sup>230</sup> Despite the thirst for books, numbers of new titles necessarily decreased substantially – figures dropped from 11327 across the trade in 1937 to a low of 5504 in 1943.

On 29 December 1940, along with some twenty publishing houses, the warehouses of Simpkin Marshall (at that time the biggest book wholesaler in the country) were badly hit by bombing. Unwin alone lost 1.4 million books. Simpkin’s had no hope of revival, and the lost books left an unfillable hole in publishers’ stocks. Unfazed, the PA came together. Unwin and three members of the Economic Relations Committee made an offer on the goodwill of the wholesale and export side of the business, intending to maintain its function in a non-profitmaking capacity. The brothers Pitman took over the agreement to purchase, and Simpkin’s functioned as a distributor for a while. While some publishers were unhelpful, the event overwhelmingly served as an example of cooperation between competitors, and Unwin played an important role – although sources disagree on how great.<sup>231</sup> Importantly, this is an example of cooperation for the good of the industry, rather than individual firms.

<sup>227</sup> *Publishing in Peace and War*, p. 20, *The Status of Books*, p. 11.

<sup>228</sup> Quoted in Valerie Holman, *Print for Victory* (London: The British Library, 2008), p. 60.

<sup>229</sup> *Publishing in Peace and War*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>230</sup> *Publishing in Peace and War*, p. 22.

<sup>231</sup> Valerie Holman, *Print For Victory*, p. 31; *Publisher*, p. 397; Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, pp. 167-8; *Publishing in Peace and War*, p. 25.

In the University's archive there is an exchange between Unwin and the Controller of Paper, Ralph Reed. Reed wrote to Unwin following a letter published in *The Times*, one of many Unwin wrote concerning the unfairness of publishers' paper allocation. Reed asserted that the allocation for books was 'much larger than that for any other comparable form of usage of printing paper in relation to pre-war consumption', explaining that 'the percentage of pre-war consumption allocated for books [was] in fact approximately double the percentage allowed for such purposes as newspapers and periodicals and more than double the percentage allowed for other[s]'. He concluded with the assertion that 'the great importance which the Government attaches to the production of books has been manifestly reflected in the ration of paper provided for your Industry'.<sup>232</sup> Unwin pointed out that Reed's method of comparison was not appropriate for the context, asserting that Reed had not taken into consideration the fact that percentages of pre-war consumption ignored 'destruction by enemy action', the 'vitally important' and soon to be unserviceable increase in export demand, and the 'ever-increasing demands' of the military, 'with which it [was] becoming increasingly difficult to cope'. Unwin concluded by saying that he did not 'underestimate the difficulties of supply', but asserted that it was about the 'relative importance' of the purposes for which the supply was used – heavily implying, as ever, his belief in the immense importance of books to the nation's survival.<sup>233</sup> The exchange brings to mind the title of chapter 19 in *The Truth About a Publisher*, 'How to Make a Nuisance of Oneself'.

The Moberly Pool was set up in order to provide the opportunity for extra paper when allocations ran out, although publishers disagreed about its fairness and utility, and many had concerns regarding its political impartiality.<sup>234</sup> This is important: it implies that, whether deliberately or incidentally, the war situation was utilised as a means of controlling the wider narrative. Unwin's dislike of the 'imposition of others' opinions' might be recalled here, and, indeed, his desire to 'maintain an open forum'. By restricting extra paper allocation to only that which met the government's 'approv[al]' with regard to content and purpose, cultural discourse was further restricted.<sup>235</sup>

An example of the paper-orientated frustrations Unwin describes in his autobiography can be found in correspondence between the firm and Paper Control in 1941. On 5 February, a letter was sent to AP Jackson at Paper Control in response to the rejection of two applications.

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<sup>232</sup> Letter RR to SU, 2/10/1941, AUC 121/5.

<sup>233</sup> Letter SU to RR, 04/10/1941, AUC 121/5.

<sup>234</sup> Valerie Holman, *Print For Victory*, pp. 215-8.

<sup>235</sup> Valerie Holman, *Print For Victory*, p. 216.

The first was for *The Spotters' Handbook*, a book concerning spotting enemy aircraft. The correspondent mentions and encloses the book's excellent review in the *Daily Mail*, and its invaluable quality in the 'uninterrupted continuation of war production', stating that the book 'unquestionably fills a real and urgent need', and the number printed had proved 'inadequate for the constant demands'. The second rejection the letter concerned was for *Poland After One Year of War*, for which the firm was expected to fulfil an official order for 3000 copies from the Polish Ministry of Information. He remarks, 'as [*Poland*] is an official publication, there is hardly any need to comment on it'. A final balance was requested with the two mentioned applications to reprint a book called *Physical Education*, used 'all over the country' by schools, and considered, in light of its constant requirement by 'education authorities', to be of equal importance. He signs the letter off requesting that paper control 'give these three books reconsideration', asserting that the firm had 'practised the greatest economy' since the war began.<sup>236</sup> The response was unsympathetic: T Brown writes that 'owing to the very serious situation with regards to supplies, this [could not] be done'. Brown asserts that 'it is expected that paper for the production of the more essential books should be taken out of the quota', and 'if necessary' the production of less important books should be 'cancelled'. He suggests that the firm request some of their allotment for the following quarter.<sup>237</sup>

This case demonstrates the veracity of Holman's *Times* quote: if a book was deemed 'important' by an authority, or was in demand, then the publisher – a business that needed to turn a profit – would be expected to restrict their publication of other, more lucrative and therefore more sustaining, books. More importantly, the government's control over public discourse – their desire to generate propaganda – in situations such as this, took precedence over all other 'food for the mind' by encroaching on independent publishers' paper supplies.

Similar to the First World War's DORA, the Emergency Powers Act was passed in 1939, giving the government 'special powers' to take 'almost any action' deemed necessary for the war effort.<sup>238</sup> Despite this, Finkelstein and McCleery write that 'censorship was less heavy-handed than in the previous war period'. 'Technical Censors' working for the Press and Censorship Bureau had 'past links with the industry' and were purportedly 'anxious not to

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<sup>236</sup> Letter Production Dept (no name given) to AP Jackson at Paper Control, 05/02/1941, AUC 121/5.

<sup>237</sup> Letter T Brown to Allen and Unwin (no name given, presumably production dept), 12/02/1941, AUC 121/5.

<sup>238</sup> 'Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1939', UK Parliament. Available from: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/yourcountry/collections/collections-second-world-war/second-world-war-legislation/emergency-powers-defence-act-c20-1940-/> retrieved on: 04/05/2023.

prevent the publication of books'.<sup>239</sup> From my analysis, the majority of the firm's proposals for books for use as propaganda were either uplifting and creative – for example *Writing And Action* (a collection of excerpts by writers through the ages on the power and utility of art, which Unwin suggested would be 'good for morale'<sup>240</sup>) and *My Name is Frank: A Merchant Seaman Talks* (1941) (a collection of stories of the author's first-hand experience of war that was originally broadcast by the BBC – the author, Frank Laskier, is considered by some contemporary historians to be an icon of wartime propaganda<sup>241</sup>) – or informative. Those that painted a negative picture of the enemy (or rather, those that have been traceable in the evidence remaining in the archives, in support of Unwin's assertions regarding his respect for other European countries and particularly for Germany) did not demonise populations, and focused instead on their leaders. One example is Frank Owen's *The Three Dictators* (1940). This book is interesting in its humour and gentleness: it observes only the men in question (Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini) and portrays them as flawed, vincible humans. Unwin cites a review for the book that appeared in *Cavalcade* in a letter to Hampden, which asserts that 'the Hitler story, as told by Owen, should be translated into all languages by the Ministry of Information for world-wide distribution'.<sup>242</sup> The character of this sort of propaganda seems in keeping with Unwin's principles: not imposing opinions on others, informative, maintaining a level of objectivity.

Some applications were accepted. Two years after his ground-breaking Report, William Beveridge's *Full Employment in a Free Society* (designed to complement the prior work) was published by the firm, and paper was provided by the Ministry of Information for a reprint for their own use.<sup>243</sup> Churchill's government had initially been unimpressed by the Beveridge Report, and only committed in principle to its suggestions as a result of parliamentary revolt. Possibly because of this, Beveridge published this 'sequel' through Allen and Unwin – only to then have it procured by a government body.<sup>244</sup> Interestingly also, the archives demonstrate how Beveridge's popularity following the international recognition of his report held.<sup>245</sup> in

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<sup>239</sup> David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 'Publishing', in Andrew Nash, Claire Squires and I.R. Willison, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* Vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 165-7.

<sup>240</sup> Palmer, Mary (editor), *Writing and Action: A Documentary Anthology*. Letter SU to Ministry of Information 02/09/1941, AUC 119/4.

<sup>241</sup> Tim Lane, *The Merchant Seamen's War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 55.

<sup>242</sup> Letter SU to John Hampden, 26/02/1940. AUC 93/11.

<sup>243</sup> Letter 15/12/44, W N Beard to SU, AUC 199/6/1.

<sup>244</sup> Harris, Jose, 'William Beveridge', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/31871> retrieved on: 27/03/2019.

<sup>245</sup> Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Pan, 2008), p. 63-4. Marr describes its being 'snapped up' in America, and used as propaganda in Europe. Hitler was also purportedly impressed with it.

December 1944 Unwin received a letter from the Ministry authorising an Italian translation.<sup>246</sup> The Ministry also approved copies to be sent to Sweden, a country whose socialist aspirations have perhaps achieved somewhat more in the decades since.<sup>247</sup>

### 1.3.7 *Herd Instinct: For Good or Evil*

One propaganda-related undertaking is of particular interest to this study in its exploration of what is now termed ‘social identity theory’, a ‘cognitive mechanism’ that plays an enormous role in interpersonal interactions, outlined in the introduction. *The Deeper Causes of War and Its Issues* was a collection of transcribed lectures given by the British Institute of Philosophy. Gilbert Murray’s contribution, ‘Herd Instinct: For Good or Evil’, was requested for use by the Ministry of Information in pamphlet form, and Allen and Unwin undertook this in addition to publishing the collection. The Ministry’s original request has not been possible to locate, however, it has been possible to piece together the story from subsequent correspondence. An agreement was made between Sydney Hooper from the Institute and Unwin regarding the publication of the collection on 1 January 1940.<sup>248</sup> On 31 January, Hooper wrote to Unwin giving him permission to print Murray’s transcript for the Ministry.<sup>249</sup> Unwin’s reply clarifies the position regarding the Ministry’s requested undertaking, saying ‘we are charging the ministry no fee [...] this transaction will not be included in our royalty statement of sales of the complete book’.<sup>250</sup>

Unwin’s correspondence with the Ministry demonstrates a desire to comply while making clear the problems the undertaking would create. He writes that ‘I said I would not stand in the way of the Ministry of Information, though it was going to hamper me when [the collection was published]’.<sup>251</sup> A further issue is outlined in a later letter. On 4 February, the Ministry requested that the pamphlet should bear Allen and Unwin’s imprint, to which Unwin responded that ‘there would not be the slightest objection as far as we are concerned’ and observing that ‘from a propaganda point of view it would clearly be an advantage’.<sup>252</sup> However, he explained, this would precipitate enquiries for the pamphlet. This would require them to

<sup>246</sup> Letter PSU to Betty Ferguson 21/12/1944 in which PSU refers to the conditions given and asks if the transaction is in order. AUC 199/6/1.

<sup>247</sup> Letter A and U to Ministry of Information Distribution (no names given) 09/11/1944. AUC 199/6/1.

<sup>248</sup> Letter SH to SU 01/01/1940. AUC 82/3.

<sup>249</sup> Letter SH to SU 31/01/1940. AUC 82/3.

<sup>250</sup> Letter SU to SH, 01/02/1940. AUC 82/3.

<sup>251</sup> Letter SU to JM Parrish, 15/01/1940. AUC 93/11.

<sup>252</sup> Request: JM Parrish to SU, 04/02/1940. Response: SU to JMP, 06/02/1940. AUC 93/11.



‘put a price on it and [...] publish it’. He points out that the undertaking would therefore be even more detrimental to the collection’s sales because the pamphlet would be ready earlier.

He suggests that the pamphlet be priced at ‘1/-, because if you are going to give the bulk of them away, the higher the price the more impressive the gift’.<sup>253</sup> Parrish wrote to express the Ministry’s gratitude to Unwin and the Institute for ‘waiving [their] interests in the lecture, and co-operating in its production, to make wide distribution possible’.<sup>254</sup> The affair again brings to mind the *Times* quote: the prioritisation of ‘works whose propaganda content commend[ed] them to the official mind’ over the interests of the trade.<sup>255</sup>

Fifteen thousand copies were printed for the Ministry’s use, at home and overseas.<sup>256</sup> Parrish requested Danish and Norwegian translations, and Unwin was able to facilitate an Icelandic translation for his friend, ‘Anglophil’ Snaebjorn Jonsson. The single edition of English-language copies sufficed: Parrish contacted Unwin on 4 July saying that ‘it is very unlikely that we shall need any further supplies of the pamphlet’.<sup>257</sup>

Murray’s piece was informed by an essay he had written in 1915, entitled ‘Herd Instinct and the War’. In his introduction to the new lecture, he remarks that this original piece had been ‘approved by Lord Bryce, but criticised by Prof McDougall as ‘laying too much stress on the bad side of Herd Instinct and not enough on the good’.<sup>258</sup> The Social Psychologist’s description of the ‘instincts’ of man’s predecessors is cited in the original.<sup>259</sup> In the earlier essay, Murray’s approach is noticeably different: he is more critical of the British. He refers to a German poem that had been sent to him that describes a wrathful, warlike character of ‘Germanness’ in its time; saying, ‘the state of mind which these poems reveal – and I dare say they could be paralleled or nearly paralleled in England – is compatible with great self-sacrifice [...] but it is certainly not what one would call wholesome’. This earlier essay is far more engaged with the concept of ‘Herd Instinct’, applying it to all people:

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<sup>253</sup> Letter SU to JMP 06/02/1940. AUC 93/11.

<sup>254</sup> Letter JMP to SU, 08/02/1940. AUC 93/11.

<sup>255</sup> Valerie Holman, *Print For Victory*, p. 60.

<sup>256</sup> Letter JMP to SU 08/01/1940. AUC 93/11.

<sup>257</sup> Letter JMP to SU, 04/06/1940. AUC 93/11.

<sup>258</sup> Gilbert Murray, ‘Herd Instinct: For Good or Evil’ in *The Deeper Causes of the War and its Issues* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1940), p. 28.

<sup>259</sup> Gilbert Murray, ‘Herd Instinct and the War’, *Atlantic Monthly* Vol. 115:6 (June 1915), p. 830. Professor William McDougall was an important Social Psychologist in the period. See Graham Richards, ‘McDougall, William’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34716> retrieved on: 20/06/2022.

In all wild herds we find the strength of this instinct depends upon the need for it. As soon as the herd is in danger the herd instinct flares up in passion to defend it [...] This has happened to us. Our herd is in danger and our natural herd instinct is aflame.

He discusses the problem of groups within a larger herd, such as pacifists in England; he explores the subordination of the individual to the herd in times of war; and he considers the ‘infectious’ nature of emotions within the herd.<sup>260</sup> While Murray worked for the government during the First World War, writing pamphlets for the Bureau of Information and as a civil servant for the Board of Education; he was also invested in the achievement of peace, and sympathetic to conscientious objectors. It might therefore be speculated that this original text was written from a moral standpoint that was complicated by his professional roles.<sup>261</sup>

The original text is of particular interest because of the altered focus and argument in the 1940 lecture. Clearly, McDougall’s criticism had an impact, and, of course, the somewhat different character of the Second World War meant that the negative outlook on human behaviour that characterised the original needed to be altered for an audience in need of a more hopeful perspective. Certainly, Murray’s (like Unwin’s) feelings about the Second World War were quite different from the first. However, this piece seems a little too changed, a little less objective and scientific, because of this. What is particularly interesting is that what Murray refers to as ‘herd instinct’ might today be described as ‘social identity’, thus named by later social psychologists Tajfel and Turner.

Tajfel’s work on social identity was ground-breaking in that it acknowledged the human tendency to positively characterise ingroups and negatively characterise outgroups, even ‘when, in the intergroup situation, neither calculations of individual interest nor previously existing attitudes of hostility could be said to have determined discriminative behaviour against an outgroup’.<sup>262</sup> The understanding prior to this was that only a conflict of interest would precipitate such discriminatory behaviour.<sup>263</sup> Murray’s reference to its ‘strength’ depending on the ‘need’ implies this understanding. McDougall’s criticism that Murray originally placed too much emphasis on the ‘negative’ was likely related to the suppression of anti-war sentiments, but could also be understood as the product of this since undermined interpretation of group

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<sup>260</sup> ‘Herd Instinct and the War’, pp. 831-834. ‘Herd Instinct’ was one of the names commonly given at the time to what is now referred to as ‘social identity theory’.

<sup>261</sup> Christopher Stray, ‘Gilbert Murray’ *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35159> retrieved on: 26/04/2022.

<sup>262</sup> Henri Tajfel et al, ‘Social Categorisation and Intergroup Behaviour’, *European Journal of Social Psychology* Vol. 1:2 (April 1971), p. 149.

<sup>263</sup> Naomi Ellemers, ‘Social Identity Theory’, *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/social-identity-theory/604139> retrieved on: 06/02/2023.

behaviour. Obviously, adopting a negative perspective regarding one's own country is bad press in wartime. The irony is that, by specifically denouncing Murray's negative characterisation of the British – Murray and McDougall's own ingroup – McDougall himself was indulging in ingroup favouritism.

In the 1940 essay, Murray writes that 'war [...] involves an inordinate stimulation of Herd Instinct'.<sup>264</sup> This quote implies support of the conflict of interest-orientated interpretation of group behaviour. Interestingly, in Bertrand Russell's 1948 Reith Lectures, he discusses an understanding of 'herd instinct' more in line with Tajfel's work, however this might have been complicated by the Cold War.<sup>265</sup>

The 1940 piece remains interesting in its intuitive psychological insight, and, considering its use by the Ministry, its criticism of Empire. Murray notes that 'there are in the world [...] well-known seeds of possible war or sources of discord', and observes that 'practically all of these are to be found working inside the British Empire'. He then discusses the subjugation of other countries by white races, and the possibility of a 'war of colour', asking 'how long before the yellow or the brown races tolerate the general supremacy of the white?' and observing that colonial Africans had been 'at times half-enslaved and at times gravely ill-treated', that '[Britain] presents the contrast of white ruler and coloured subject on the greatest scale'. He then asserts that:

if we claim that [...] the cause of Britain represents the Right, or Good of humanity, that does not mean that Englishmen are by their nature specially unselfish or virtuous; it means that owing to historical causes it has come about that the chief interest and aim of the British Empire is wrapped up with the general good of the human race.

He finishes by suggesting that 'our care for peace' is 'due to the circumstances of our history', which was 'aggressive'.<sup>266</sup> In this way, Murray manages to make an astute observation regarding the character of his own ingroup, while maintaining the positivity necessary to the Ministry's purposes. This is also interesting in that, by implying that the British feel themselves to be 'unselfish', and by observing imperialism's subjugation of other races, he – objectively – observes ingroup favouritism and outgroup prejudice.

Murray is also interested in the importance of objectivity, another important element in this thesis's approach to 'critical thinking'. He writes:

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<sup>264</sup> *Herd Instinct: For Good or Evil?* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1940), p. 1.

<sup>265</sup> This whole series of lectures is available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUS2QVHJWBk&list=PLx8tKM6zpSqX6OT1xnD9mbufNaqkpGc4N>  
retrieved on: 07/06/2022.

<sup>266</sup> 'aggressive', *Deeper Causes*, p. 35; 'circumstances', *Herd Instinct*, p. 9.

If we are to collect and scrutinise the moral history of nations, are we sure that our own record is so good that when the Prime Minister asks God to “defend the right,” we can take for granted that “the right” means Britain?<sup>267</sup>

Murray’s observation of the importance of ‘destroy[ing] the ingrained belief that war is inherently noble’ also connects with his general observations of the negative nature of social identity in its connection with belief in national superiority.<sup>268</sup>

*Philosophy*’s review for the collection acknowledges a theme relevant to the thesis as a whole:

The background common to all these writers is the profound disturbance of the ways of thought and life in the modern world. Nothing in previous history is at all comparable to the revolution in material and moral conditions wrought in a few recent generations.<sup>269</sup>

The collection was also submitted to the Book Censorship Division of the Ministry, but no modifications were requested.<sup>270</sup>

Other Ministry paper releases were less interesting but provide insight: there were a number of books for which he was granted paper for Ministry purposes later in the war, such as Byas’s *Government by Assassination*,<sup>271</sup> concerning Japan’s recent political history; and *East Prussia*,<sup>272</sup> a study on the history of this area of land’s contentious ownership.

### 1.3.8 Purchase Tax

To help cover the domestic cost of war, a scheme to introduce ‘purchase tax’ on certain commodities – predominantly luxury goods – was proposed. The scheme, now considered a precursor to VAT, was proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, as part of the 1940 Budget. Sir Kingsley Wood succeeded him and was left to effect it. The scheme proposed not to levy tax on ‘food, drink or foodstuff’.<sup>273</sup> Many took issue with the inclusion of books in the scheme, which would have made them prohibitively expensive for the home trade

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<sup>267</sup> *Deeper Causes*, p. 33.

<sup>268</sup> *Deeper Causes*, p. 49.

<sup>269</sup> ‘Review: The Deeper Causes of War and Its Issues’, J A Spender. *Philosophy* Vol. 15:60 (October 1940), p. 441. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3746095> retrieved on: 07/04/2022.

<sup>270</sup> Letter Production Dept to BCD (no name given), 26/03/1940. AUC 93/11.

<sup>271</sup> Hugh Byas, 1942.

<sup>272</sup> Robert Machray, 1943.

<sup>273</sup> John Simon to the House of Commons, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1940. ‘Hansard 1803-2005: Purchase Tax’. Available online: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1940/apr/23/purchase-tax> retrieved on: 31/03/2022.

on which all were now reliant.<sup>274</sup> Unwin took advantage of the parallel he discerned between ‘food for the body’ and ‘food for the mind’. He wrote a number of letters to *The Times* and the *TLS* on the subject, and refers to it in *Publisher*. In a letter to *The Times*, capitalising on his role as the Vice President of the International Publishers’ Congress, he wrote:

Sir, the tax on purchases.

Emphasis has properly been placed on the fact that this tax will not be levied on food for the body, but in characteristically English fashion there has been no reference to food for the mind [...]

The book trade is staggering under a series of blows [...] It would indeed be very ironical if it were completely knocked out by a levy on the purchase of books – in effect a tax on knowledge.

[...] It would be humiliating if in a war for freedom of thought the sale of books in which man’s highest thoughts are enshrined should be hampered by taxation.<sup>275</sup>

To the *TLS*:

That the taxation of knowledge and education should even be contemplated reveals once again all too clearly the secret contempt with which the things of the kind are regarded by some of our rulers. But it is a contempt in which we indulge at our peril [...]<sup>276</sup>

Unwin’s use of the word ‘peril’ indicates his powerful feelings about the importance of books to the wellbeing of the nation. He goes on to draw on his experience in the British Council and the importance he felt the Council’s work demonstrated that British books had. He felt that the tax would create a ‘disast[rous]’ situation in which there would be insufficient books for international trade to continue, stating that ‘without the home market there would be no books for export’. He projects a knock-on effect, whereby the increased tax would reduce demand, leading to increased cost of production and inevitable further price increases. This, he asserted, demonstrated that taxing book-buyers would be detrimental to the country’s economy. To this practical argument he added a moral element, asserting explicitly that books were ‘vital to the country’s mental and spiritual wellbeing’ and asking whether there was ever ‘a moment when [it] mattered more’. He refers to the ‘moral, educational, cultural and recreational value’ of books which exempted them from import duties during the Depression in 1931. Finally, he

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<sup>274</sup> Valerie Holman, *Print For Victory*, pp. 22-24.

<sup>275</sup> Letter SU to the Editor of *The Times*, 17/05/1940, AUC 100/14. Also quoted (not fully) in *Publisher*, p. 394. Underline in original.

<sup>276</sup> Letter SU to the Editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*, 04/06/1940, AUC 100/14.

describes this possibility of a ‘tax on knowledge’ as a ‘menace’.<sup>277</sup> These letters exemplify Unwin’s feelings about books and their importance, while perhaps also demonstrating something of his personal bias in this regard. Importantly, what seems to have driven this campaign, as with others, was not only an interest in the wellbeing of the trade as a whole, but his belief in the importance of books – to facilitate public discourse, to inform and educate, to entertain in dark times.

According to Norrie, Wood had ‘reckoned without Unwin, and the PA, under Geoffrey Faber, which called upon the Archbishop of Canterbury, MPs, academics and authors to keep up the pressure’. Norrie describes it as ‘a peculiarly British situation. Europe was disintegrating around them, at any moment those concerned for books might be fleeing from the Gestapo, but they [the collective fighting against purchase tax on books] were able to concentrate on this issue. And they won’.<sup>278</sup> Unwin refers to this battle in *Status*, and suggests that the government’s change of mind was encouraged by the power of public opinion driven by a generation who were ‘less prepared to do without books’.<sup>279</sup> By this time, it seems, Unwin was willing to acknowledge that at least some Britons recognised the importance of books.

Rayner believes that without the efforts of his father, Taylor and Howard<sup>280</sup> in the thirties that created an environment of comradeship, cooperation and mutual interest, such battles as these would not have been possible; of course, his commentary is inherently biased.<sup>281</sup> Philip believed that the whole PA’s efforts in this battle ‘gave the PA deserved stature and influence, which made it the envy of other and larger trade associations’.<sup>282</sup> This is another example of Unwin as a campaigner for the availability of knowledge, and a contributor to a cooperative effort by the book trade.

Unwin published *Publishing in Peace and War* in 1944. In it, he expressed his disappointment in the British government’s handling of book publishing during the ongoing War, asserting that ‘they w[ould] be condemned [...] by future historians’ and speculating that a contrast would be drawn between the ‘excellent’ way with which ‘food for the body’ had been dealt with and what he described as the ‘deplorable neglect of food for the mind’ – a parallel he had previously drawn in the Purchase Tax affair.<sup>283</sup> He stated his surprise that ‘in a war of ideas, in a scientific age, books were not recognised as essential tools’, which was a ‘sad

<sup>277</sup> Letter SU to the Editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*, 04/06/1940, AUC 100/14.

<sup>278</sup> Norrie, *Publishing and Bookselling*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>279</sup> *The Status of Books*, p. 9.

<sup>280</sup> Howard worked for Jonathan Cape, and was part of the Bodley Head buyout.

<sup>281</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. 191-2.

<sup>282</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 125.

<sup>283</sup> *Publishing in Peace and War*, p. 22.

reflection of England's attitude to books'. He felt that this 'attack' had largely been borne by the 'better type of publishing' and such treatment would lead to Britain having only the 'kind of publishers and the kind of books we deserve'.<sup>284</sup> This, he felt, was because it forced publishers to make decisions purely on the basis of sales, as opposed to 'intrinsic merit'. He aligns this with the 'cult of the bestseller', a phenomenon he felt was dominant in America; the result of which was that 'scholarly work st[ood] little chance of acceptance by a commercial publisher unless it ha[d] mass appeal'.<sup>285</sup> Once again, he demonstrated a snobbery and elitism concerning books, but one that was rooted in concern for the future of publishing the full spectrum of writing, rather than purely criticising 'popular' books. It could be argued, however, that his fears were warranted – with the increasing prominence of global conglomerate publishers, the 'gentleman publisher' and his publishing principles were a dying breed.

#### 1.4 Towards the End, and After

*He was regarded by many young publishers as part of the 'Establishment', but the reason for this was not that in later years he lost his zeal and became more conservative, but that in the publishing world he created the 'Establishment'.*<sup>286</sup>

R H Code Holland

Unwin's dedication to all things bookish was rewarded handsomely in his lifetime. He was awarded an honorary degree of LL.D in 1945; knighted in 1946; made KCMG in 1966; and decorated as an officier de l'Academie Francaise; given the order of the White Lion in Czechoslovakia; and the order of the Falcon in Iceland.<sup>287</sup>

For Unwin's 70<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> years, marking George Allen and Unwin's 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> years, Philip Unwin organised parties; the first a dinner, the second a lunch.<sup>288</sup> For each gathering, a small, limited-edition book was made with transcriptions from some contributions on the day, and in the case of the latter, a number of telegrams sent from around the world to honour Unwin's birthday. Immediately after making a long-intended pilgrimage to a place in

<sup>284</sup> *Publishing in Peace and War*, p. 22-3.

<sup>285</sup> *Publishing in Peace and War*, p. 23.

<sup>286</sup> R H Code Holland's 'Tribute', p. 2.

<sup>287</sup> There are various sources that mention these decorations; however, Unwin's entry in the *ODNB* mentions them all together. Robin Denniston, 'Unwin, Sir Stanley' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-36614?rskey=m3D90L&result=3> retrieved on: 11/02/2023.

<sup>288</sup> Philip mentions that he organised these in *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 169.

Switzerland loved by G Lowes Dickinson in 1968, Unwin passed away.<sup>289</sup> His funeral was held in St Martin-in-the-Fields in London, and according to Philip, was the ‘greatest party which ever came together in his honour’, and was attended by over a thousand people.<sup>290</sup> One tribute described Unwin as the ‘Gibraltar of publishing’.<sup>291</sup> It is clear from the volume of testaments to him that Unwin was an important and highly respected figure in his sphere.

Following Unwin’s death, Rayner and Philip attempted to keep the firm afloat. Rayner attributed the firm’s slow failure in particular to Unwin’s failure to relinquish sufficient control towards the end of his life; and also to a changed world and a changing industry not suited to a ‘style of over-extended, indulgent, distinguished publishing that [...] was not sufficiently agile to adjust’.<sup>292</sup> Of the latter, Philip describes the expansion of conglomerate publishing companies making the industry much more challenging for independent firms.<sup>293</sup> Finkelstein and McCleery describe a similar experience across the industry in the later decades of the century.<sup>294</sup> Rayner mentions, in a short tribute, that Unwin:

founded th[e] firm in the belief that it should be entirely independent, that it should provide an open forum and a wide range of intellectual expression in book form, and that quality was the only editorial criterion.<sup>295</sup>

The firm’s independence was maintained until a merge with Hyman was made in the mid-1980s, following a spate of years in which it found itself ‘increasingly overdrawn’.<sup>296</sup> Unwin-Hyman existed for only four years until the financial difficulties were no longer tenable. The UK arm of the business was finally bought out by HarperCollins in 1990. The firm’s extensive academic list was sold to Routledge.<sup>297</sup> Allen and Unwin still exists in Australia, and is a successful and popular independent publisher there.<sup>298</sup>

Unwin’s will requested that his family found a charitable trust in his name; in 1975, Rayner founded the Unwin Charitable Trust. The Trust still exists today, and supports ‘publishing, bookselling and literacy’ particularly.<sup>299</sup> Among its original beneficiaries was the

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<sup>289</sup> David Unwin, *Fifty Years with Father* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 136-143.

<sup>290</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 169.

<sup>291</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 170.

<sup>292</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. 272.

<sup>293</sup> Philip Unwin, ‘Prologue’ in *The Truth About Publishing* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1975; 8<sup>th</sup> edition), pp. 228-229.

<sup>294</sup> Finkelstein and McCleery, ‘Publishing’, pp. 170-90.

<sup>295</sup> Rayner Unwin, taken from the Spring Announcements list published in 1968; used as an introduction to R H Code Holland’s Tribute to Sir Stanley Unwin, p. 1.

<sup>296</sup> *Remembrancer*, pp. 268-274, p. 288.

<sup>297</sup> *Remembrancer*, pp. 275-277.

<sup>298</sup> The company’s website is available from: <https://www.allenandunwin.com/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>299</sup> The Unwin Charitable Trust’s tagline on the front page of their website. Other details taken from the ‘About Us’ page, available from: <https://www.unwincharitabletrust.org.uk/about-the-trust/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.



National Book League<sup>300</sup> and Book Trust, a children's reading charity originally founded at the same time as the Society of Bookmen, which today is the largest charity of its kind in the UK.<sup>301</sup> The Unwin Trust continues to contribute significantly to Book Trust, among various other book and reading orientated causes; and was one of the initial funders of Bookstart (run by Book Trust).<sup>302</sup> Unwin's name, therefore, maintains its importance to the world of books and reading in the UK. Unwin's grandson, Rayner's son Merlin, today owns a small book publisher in Ludlow, founded in 1990 – the year of the firm's sale. Stanley Unwin's legacy – as the publisher of a vast and diverse catalogue of historically and socially important books, as a powerful cooperative force in his industry, and as a spokesperson for the value of maintaining an open forum – lives on, over half a century after his death.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> *Sixty Precarious Years*, pp. 68-9.

<sup>301</sup> The Unwin Charitable Trust's website mentions Book Trust as one of its first beneficiaries. See 'About the Trust', available from: <https://www.unwincharitabletrust.org.uk/about-the-trust/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023. Book Trust claims on its website to be the biggest in the UK. See 'what we do', Book Trust. Available from: <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>302</sup> Email Georgina Miller at Unwin Charitable Trust to Natasha Robson, 29/03/2019.

<sup>303</sup> See Merlin Unwin Books' website, available from: <https://merlinunwin.co.uk/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023. Merlin Unwin has communicated with me a little over the course of the thesis, however we were unable to meet due to the pandemic restrictions.

**Part Two:**  
**Case Studies**

Part Two of the study is divided into five case studies. Each chapter explores the author's engagement with one or more of the cognitive mechanisms described in the introduction, and the commentary they offer on its effect on human interpersonal interactions and interactions with information. Each author's focus is slightly different, but all share in their concern for the future and their implicit message of optimism: that by addressing these issues, individually and as societies, it might be possible to mitigate their negative effects and create a more tolerant and cooperative world.

## 2.1: Belloc

### The Press and Public Information

Belloc's *The Free Press* (1918) considers the problem of press bias. In the early 20th century, newspaper media grew to unprecedented size and enjoyed a period of perhaps equally unprecedented power over government. Belloc's concerns were connected both to the interplay between power and reality, and to the commercial interests that undermined journalism's access to impartiality. His observations regarding how to address the problem of press bias particularly acknowledge one of the major issues of cognitive 'fallibility' introduced in the introduction: confirmation bias. His proposal – to expose oneself to differing points of view – aligns with Unwin's principle of providing alternative perspectives.

His *House of Commons and Monarchy* (1920) is of interest in its connection with Lippmann's almost contemporary work asserting a similar concern: that democracy is fragile and does not serve the best interests of all who participate in it. While his suggestion to return the UK to absolute monarchy is problematic, the book provides insight into an alternative perspective – which can be of great value in understanding the 'bigger picture'.

Belloc provides a unique perspective among the chosen authors because of his unapologetic racial prejudice, and because of his desire to publish with Unwin only because other publishers were not interested in these works. Unwin mentions Belloc several times in *Publisher*, particularly in connection with *The Free Press*. This chapter's discussion links to the final chapter's contemporary discussion both directly in its discussion of the press, and indirectly with regard to today's more complex informational environment.

### 2.1.1 Hilaire Belloc, *The Free Press*

*For he among the fools is down full low,  
Whose affirmation, or denial, is  
Without distinction, in each case alike  
Since it befalls, that in most instances  
Current opinion leads to false: and then  
Affection bends the judgment to her ply.<sup>1</sup>*

Dante Alighieri

Two new publications written by Hilaire Belloc were undertaken in the first decade of Unwin's directorship. *The Free Press* voices anxieties about the press's credibility and bias and its influence on public opinion: concerns that are far from alien today. Belloc's suggestions about how to combat this dovetail with Unwin's feelings about exposing oneself to differing perspectives. *The House of Commons and Monarchy* provides an interesting insight into Belloc's feelings about the UK's peculiar democratic and monarchic system.

Unwin was in regular correspondence with A.R Orage, editor of *The New Age*, of which Unwin was an admirer. Occasionally he would deem an article he had read 'important' and approach Orage and the contributor with a request to publish – thus bridging the gap between the more ephemeral periodical form of publishing and the more permanent publication of books, while 'cross-pollinating' ideas between readerships. Two such articles were written by Belloc; the first, originally titled 'The Present Position and Power of the Press' being of interest to this study for its insights and parallels with contemporary culture.

While popular in his time, and, in some ways, progressive, some of Belloc's ideas were problematic. His comic work – specifically rhymes for adults (generally published in periodicals) and children (in a number of full-length books) often exhibited what would today be interpreted as racism. In *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts*, for example, appears the short rhyme (accompanied by a caricatured illustration): 'The Dromedary is a cheerful bird/I cannot say the same about the Kurd'.<sup>2</sup> His more direct anti-Semitism – especially notable in *The Jews*<sup>3</sup> – is particularly problematic. Although *The Jews* ostensibly seeks to be sympathetic, it

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<sup>1</sup> Dante Alighieri, Canto XIII, *The Divine Comedy* (Project Gutenberg). Available from: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/8800/pg8800-images.html> retrieved on: 12/02/2024.

<sup>2</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts* (London: Duckworth, 1896). Available on Project Gutenberg. Available from: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/27175/27175-h/27175-h.htm> retrieved on: 05/11/2019.

<sup>3</sup> London: Constable, 1922. Antisemitism referenced by Bernard Bergonzi in 'Belloc, (Joseph) Hilaire Pierre Rene' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Available from:

creates an other-ness and a separatist mentality that does not seem to be illustrative of any true empathy for Jewish people on Belloc's part. It is also representative of a widespread problem of antisemitism characteristic of the time. The book was described as desperately under-researched and poorly put together, and his argument 'distinctly pathetic'.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to acknowledge Belloc's personal prejudices – and those of the society he was writing for and in – when considering his work: his ideological stance regarding racial 'other' was certainly inconsistent with what we know of Unwin's feelings about internationalism, and Unwin's work with Horowitz would imply that he did not share Belloc's antisemitism. Unwin's desire to publish these books about entirely different subjects by an author with some views he almost certainly would have baulked at is therefore illustrative of that 'broad-minded liberalism' to which Russell later referred.

Belloc preferred to maintain 'type-specific' publishing relationships – Duckworth for children's, Foulis for political, Methuen for autobiographical. Unwin made several requests that his firm might publish later political pieces. Belloc had already published *The Servile State* with Foulis, so they were his preferred political publisher.<sup>5</sup> No precursory letters remain for *The Free Press*, but later correspondence shows Unwin to have been the driving force in its publication. The article was originally serialised in *The New Age* in December 1916.<sup>6</sup> Unwin later proposed a publication of an essay on Capital Levy 'in a similar vein to *The Free Press*', which suggests this was probably how he originally came to propose the venture to Belloc.<sup>7</sup> The firm only published one other first edition full-length book by Belloc – his translation of *Tristan and Iseult* (1936) – and included one essay on Catholicism in an anthology, *More Points of View: A Second Series of Broadcast Addresses* (1930). Unwin approached him several times requesting further political pieces, and at one point asserted that, in light of the unprofitable nature of the two extended political essays in question, not that they were 'not well worth doing', but, he said, 'it would be a great encouragement to us if occasionally we were privileged to publish one of your more popular books'.<sup>8</sup>

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<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30699> retrieved on: 14/12/2023.

<sup>4</sup> Lucien Wolf, 'Review: *The Jews*, by Hilaire Belloc' in *The Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs* Vol. 1:5 (Sept 1922). Wolf also describes it as 'pathetic', and says Belloc 'knows very little about the Jews'. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3014638> retrieved on: 14/11/2019.

<sup>5</sup> Letter 29/03/19, HB to SU: 'PS it was, by the way, Foulis who published my work on *The Servile State* and if I were ever to write a pendant to it I should send it to them'. AU FSC 4/23.

<sup>6</sup> *The New Age*, Vol. 20:7 (Dec 1916). Available online: <https://modjourn.org/issue/bdr446773/> retrieved on: 06/01/2020.

<sup>7</sup> SU to HB, 16/01/18, AU FCS 4/23.

<sup>8</sup> AUC 1/10 SU to HB, 01/06/22.

Unwin's request for the use of an article published in the periodical *Land and Water* was refused because Belloc had written it 'with some difficulty in order to fulfil a contract'. He said that he could not 'write freely' in such a paper since it was owned and controlled by 'people with quite different views from [him]self', and therefore 'could not contemplate' setting them to a book.<sup>9</sup> Belloc wrote weekly pieces for the publication during the First World War.<sup>10</sup> It is unlikely that the anti-German sentiment Belloc was known for in his wartime writing would have been noticeable in the text Unwin requested, since Unwin was defensive of German culture and considered the war unnecessary. Interestingly, despite Belloc's distaste for German-ness, he was very willing to accept a German translation be made of *The Free Press*.<sup>11</sup>

Analysing the ideas of social commentators from another time is an interesting challenge. While in both *The House of Commons and the Monarchy* and *The Free Press* there are elements that are inarguably distasteful to the modern reader, they are ultimately designed to be (relatively) objective pieces on problems he conceived might be possible to address in the ways he proposed. This is a problem that must be considered in any historical study, although there appears to be little work explicitly dealing with this.<sup>12</sup> What was regarded as progressive a century ago can appear incredibly backward today. As Jansen asserts in her consideration of the Dewey-Lippmann debate, such differences require engagement, but with appropriate knowledge of their context.<sup>13</sup> Belloc was a product of his conditioning: the 'institutions' pertaining to nation, class, religion and politics with which he was affiliated impacted his world-view.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, his identification with anti-German and antisemitic ingroups will have affected his prejudices.<sup>15</sup>

The article on which *The Free Press* was based went through a number of alterations and updates during the publication process. Belloc was at first unenthusiastic to push forward

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<sup>9</sup> AUC 1/10 HB to SU, 09/10/19.

<sup>10</sup> 'Belloc, Joseph Hilaire Pierre' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* [2<sup>nd</sup> edition] Vol. 2. Available from: <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3407701280/GVRL?u=rdg&sid=GVRL&xid=3d6d70ff> retrieved on 14/01/2020

<sup>11</sup> AUC 1/10 SU to HB 10/01/22 requesting, HB to SU 13/01/22 consenting ('Yes, certainly').

<sup>12</sup> I hope to address this in future work.

<sup>13</sup> She describes the issue of evading such conversations and idealising 'moments' in intellectual history as 'escapism', with reference to the fact that in doing so we ignore the progressiveness of the commentators about which we are arguing. Sue Jansen, 'Phantom Conflict: Lippmann, Dewey and the Fate of the Public in Modern Society' *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* Vol. 6:3 (Aug 2009), pp. 223-4. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14791420903049751> retrieved on:

<sup>14</sup> This refers to Berger and Luckmann's work on the 'Social Construction of Reality' and the role of 'institutions' in an individual's reality.

<sup>15</sup> This refers to Tajfel's Social Identity Theory.

with the book, saying he was ‘too busy’;<sup>16</sup> then a year later that he had yet to ‘add a considerable amount’ before it could be set up.<sup>17</sup> In December 1917, close to the end of a publication process that had overwhelmingly been moved along by Unwin’s efforts, Belloc asserted that ‘[Unwin would] appreciate the sooner publication [was] possible the better’, because his ideas concerning the ‘nature of the present government’ were becoming ‘commonplace’ and he was in danger of appearing to ‘follow instead of leading’.<sup>18</sup> Belloc’s abrupt and superior tone throughout their correspondence suggests that Unwin’s determination to see through the publication of texts he felt ‘important’ went beyond his desire to be dealt with politely. Furthermore, there was little chance the book would be profitable; Belloc even stated that he was not publishing the book ‘with the object of gain’.<sup>19</sup> Changes Belloc made late in the process cost the firm, although Belloc offered to take a proportion of this out of his royalties.<sup>20</sup> Belloc, therefore, was a difficult author whose work was almost guaranteed *not* to make the firm money. Unwin’s desire to publish the text for its insight and contribution to debate were, in this instance, more important – from a business perspective, but perhaps also from a social one.

The book is of interest because of its main argument: *The Free Press* could be interpreted as being thematically related to Unwin’s principle of publishing ‘both points of view’.<sup>21</sup> Belloc feels that the ‘Official Press’ is unreliable, due to its reliance on advertising subsidy and its being at the whim of those in power. He asserts that the ‘Free Press’ (a phrase Belloc uses to describe publications written for specific audiences, such as radicals, socialists, etc; ‘free’ because they are free from advertising subsidy and more editorially independent – though all had to toe their particular line) has the potential to provide a less obfuscated version of ‘the truth’, but only when read widely and variously, by an objective reader who is able to separate the bias from the fact. What is perhaps most interesting about this is that it asserts that the only way to have a valid and informed opinion is to expose yourself to a spectrum of perspectives and come to a conclusion informed by them all. Certainly, Belloc was not the only public figure to criticise the mainstream narrative and advocate wider reading in the 30’s. Virginia Woolf, for example, documented her own wide reading of different newspapers and their problematic reinforcement of problematic ideology.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Letter 06/05/1916, HB to SU, AU FSC 3/17.

<sup>17</sup> Letter 11/05/1917, HB to SU, AU FSC 3/17.

<sup>18</sup> Letter 08/12/1917 HB to SU, AU FSC 4/23.

<sup>19</sup> Letter 11/07/1917, HB to SU, AU FSC 3/17.

<sup>20</sup> Letter 06/07/1917, HB to SU AU FSC 3/17.

<sup>21</sup> *Publisher*, p. 166.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Karin E Westman, “For Her Generation the Newspaper was a Book”: Media, Mediation and Oscillation in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*, *Journal of Modern Literature* Vol. 29:2 (Winter 2006), pp. 1-18. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831789> retrieved on: 06/02/2023.

The First World War sparked the popularity of newspaper culture in the UK, the habit of newspaper reading being commonplace only after 1918.<sup>23</sup> In 1918, Norman Angell described how the influence of Northcliffe's papers had ruined politicians' attempts at truces and ultimately driven the government out of power. Angell went on to describe the problem as being a product of the insufficiency of information provided to the public, the one-sidedness and evasions of truth: similar to Belloc's commentary.<sup>24</sup> Angell's comment about the insufficiency of information is particularly interesting in the context of our contemporary world, in which there is often too much information: media bias and misinformation have perhaps even more power over public opinion and political ideology today. Alongside the sharp rise in newspaper reading, Belloc's concerns were further met: as the target audience became more widespread, the news necessarily targeted more broadly, and 'corrupted' more easily, according to concerns voiced at the time.<sup>25</sup>

There is a major flaw in Belloc's thesis: he suggests that the Official Press is completely unreliable, too inextricable from the powers that influence it to be of value. The 'Official Press' was certainly heavily influenced by the biases of its proprietors and advertisers; however, to entirely ignore its perspective would limit one's exposure to the more dominant view in society, i.e. that which has been informed by the mainstream press. Belloc criticises Northcliffe's manipulation of politicians, but does recognise that his recommendation to entirely avoid engagement with Northcliffe's publications would prevent readers from exploring this.<sup>26</sup> Whether the biases and prejudices voiced by the popular press were effective in altering the public's stance is a subject of debate: in some instances, public opinion seemed to be affected; in others, the effect was more nuanced. Bingham argues that such influence is immeasurable. This seems sensible: the press's narrative might not have immediately altered a person's voting habits, but could certainly have reinforced prejudices and affected public perception on matters of social import. Furthermore, Bingham's observations about the importance of the popular press are relevant: it was read by, and to some degree the 'voice of', the majority of the population.<sup>27</sup> Conceding the validity of exposing oneself to the popular press might have felt too close to a diminishment of his argument for Belloc, but he was mistaken: even those perspectives which we know to be heavily biased or factually incorrect are important to be

<sup>23</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (1961), quoted in Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers?* p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Norman Angell, 'Freedom of Discussion in War Time', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 78 (July 1918), p. 196.

<sup>25</sup> Bingham *Family Newspapers* p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The Free Press* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1918) Various. For example, p. 37.

<sup>27</sup> Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 3-5.



aware of, in order for more effective communication to be fostered between ideologies and world-views. Belloc, unfortunately, was less able to be critical in his own thinking than his critics, less able to be critical with himself than with others.

Despite their shortcomings, many of his observations are particularly useful and relevant to this discussion. On the problem of the headline, he writes:

Ninety-nine people out of a hundred retain [the headline] and nothing more, because the matter below is but a flaccid expansion. Now the Headline suggests, of course, a fact (or falsehood) with momentary power<sup>28</sup>

He then asserts that this is not a problem experienced by the Free Press, that it is ‘really read and digested’ by its readership: they must work harder to acquire their choice of publication.<sup>29</sup> Modern research suggests not only that Belloc’s feeling concerning the primacy of the headline was correct; but that many social media users will share news stories they have not read to ‘signal expertise’, and consequently internalise a belief in the veracity of their subjective expertise ‘signal’.<sup>30</sup> His belief that this was not a problem in the ‘Free Press’ is unsupported by evidence, and fails to consider the unlikelyhood of those readers exposing themselves to any counter-bias.

Related to this issue, Belloc points out that:

Most men will only read that which, while informing them, takes for granted a philosophy more or less sympathetic with their own.<sup>31</sup>

Belloc uses this assertion to argue that the Free Press suffers not only from ‘an audience restricted in the case of each organ, but from preaching to the converted’.<sup>32</sup> While he refers specifically to the consumption of news media, this observation has far broader application: he is describing ‘confirmation bias’. Humans are more inclined to actively seek confirmation than falsification of preconceived beliefs, and are more inclined to accept confirmatory and reject contradictory evidence, particularly when the issue has high ‘self-relevance’.<sup>33</sup> Gorman and

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<sup>28</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The Free Press* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1918), p. 81

<sup>29</sup> *The Free Press*, p. 82

<sup>30</sup> Adrian F Ward, Jianqing Zheng and Susan M Broniarczyk, ‘I share, therefore I know? Sharing online content – even without reading it – inflates subjective knowledge’, *Journal of Consumer Psychology* (14/07/2022). Available online: [https://myscp.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jcpy.1321?saml\\_referrer](https://myscp.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jcpy.1321?saml_referrer) retrieved on: 09/02/2023.

<sup>31</sup> *The Free Press*, p. 67.

<sup>32</sup> *The Free Press*, p. 67.

<sup>33</sup> See Bettina J. Casad, ‘Confirmation Bias’, in *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/confirmation-bias/627535> retrieved on: 14/11/2019. See also Jonathan St. B. T. Evans, ‘Reasoning, biases and dual processes: the lasting impact of Wason (1960)’ in *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* Vol. 69 (2013). Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470218.2014.914547> retrieved on: 14/11/2019.

Gorman observe the polarising effect of confirmation bias. They assert that (outside of science) ‘people stridently defend [their] own position, [...] increasingly driving everyone further apart’.<sup>34</sup> Sperber and Mercier describe it as defensive. Humans are naturally inclined to reason in such a way as to protect themselves and their perspectives, internally and communicatively, and so in the process of digesting information we proactively create reasonings that accord with our prior beliefs.<sup>35</sup> Diane Halpern and Dana Dunn’s description of confirmation bias as ‘failing to consider information that does not conform to one’s preferred view of reality’ comes particularly close to Belloc’s quote above.<sup>36</sup> Belloc recognised this as damaging to one’s understanding of world events; these later commentators support him by demonstrating how this tendency promotes unnecessary divisiveness, largely as a consequence of psychological self-protection. What is particularly interesting about Belloc’s description here is how well it aligns with the present-day manner in which information is fed to consumers – it is fed according to the ‘philosophy’, perceived through behavioural data, of the consumer; the consumer is not required to make a conscious choice concerning the information they consume. This is of particular importance in Part Three.

While the concept has been acknowledged indirectly throughout history (evidenced by the Dante epigraph), Belloc’s understanding of its power is astute, and his application relevant. Later he describes how this affects our perception of reality, when one experiences first-hand things previously encountered in media:

The truth confirms itself. Half a million people read of a professional politician, for instance, that his oratory has an "electric effect," or that he is "full of personal magnetism," [...] uncontradicted falsehood sufficiently repeated [has a] curious power of illusion. A man having heard [him speak], if there were nothing but the Official Press to inform opinion, might [say]: "I was not very much impressed [...] I cannot but believe that the general reputation he bears is well founded. He must be a great orator, for I have always heard him called one."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Sara E Gorman and Jack M Gorman, *Denying to the Grave: Why We Ignore the Facts That Will Save Us* (Oxford: University Press, 2017). Available from: <https://publicism.info/psychology/denying/4.html> retrieved on 12/03/2020.

<sup>35</sup> Dan Sperber and Hugo Mercier, ‘Why do humans reason? Arguments for an argumentative theory’ *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* Vol. 34 (2011), p. 57. Available from: [http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2011\\_mercier\\_why-do-humans-reason.pdf](http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2011_mercier_why-do-humans-reason.pdf) retrieved on: 12/03/2020.

<sup>36</sup> Diane Halpern and Diane Dunn, ‘Critical Thinking: A Model of Intelligence for Solving Real-World Problems’, *Journal of Intelligence* Vol 9:2 (June 2021), p. 1. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8167750/pdf/jintelligence-09-00022.pdf> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>37</sup> *The Free Press*, pp. 88-89.

While he over-generalises, his point is valid. With most political figures, the only experience the majority of people have of them is designed solely for purpose; public broadcasts are scripted – sometimes to the point of losing relevance or meaning – crafted explicitly to convey a particular idea or character. As Lippmann later asserted, humans have a tendency to reinforce the ‘fictions’ they consume, in part because of confirmation bias.<sup>38</sup> Thus, a politician, public or popular figure appears to be ‘known’ by the people, when in fact, often, little or nothing at all is truly known of who they actually are.

Belloc maintains that the idea that a newspaper is an organ rather than director of public opinion is hypocritical, but concedes that this is only ‘mainly’ the case, asserting that:

if a large paper went right against the national will in the matter of the present war it would be ruined [...] the strength of a newspaper owner lies in his power to deceive the public and to withhold or to publish [...] if he does not command a large public this power to blackmail does not exist; and he can only command a large public [...] by interesting that public and even by flattering it that it has its opinions reflected—not created—for it.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, according to Belloc’s understanding, a newspaper must have a large readership to command power over public opinion; otherwise, as a result of the tendency towards confirmation bias, its stance is governed by it; and that even when a newspaper does have some power it is still necessary for it to ‘flatter’ its readers. His assertions are supported by subsequent events: in the 1930s, Northcliffe’s brother and successor Lord Rothermere lost a great deal of the *Mail*’s popularity by loudly supporting Fascism and Oswald Mosley; a fact still remembered, and occasionally criticised, today.<sup>40</sup> His suspicion that a newspaper has the power to tangibly swing general opinion if its circulation is large enough is arguable, it might instead be said that there is more of a symbiotic relationship between the reflection and redirection of public feeling than he was able to perceive. Belloc understood how this might be used: today, consumers are ‘flattered’ by media directed specifically at their preferences,

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<sup>38</sup> *Public Opinion*, ‘The Pictures in Our Heads’, particularly pp. 7-8.

<sup>39</sup> *The Free Press*, p. 30.

<sup>40</sup> For example: Robert Philpot, ‘How Britain’s Nazi-loving Press Baron Made the Case for Hitler’, *The Times of Israel*, 05/08/2018. Available online: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-britains-nazi-loving-press-baron-made-the-case-for-hitler/> retrieved on: 13/11/2019. See also Roy Greenslade, ‘Don’t Damn the Daily Mail for its Fascist Flirtation 80 Years Ago’, *The Guardian*, 06/12/2011. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2011/dec/06/dailymail-oswald-mosley> retrieved on: 13/11/2019.

serving to reinforce them, and, more worryingly, having the capacity to steer them towards more extreme and problematic views.<sup>41</sup>

*The Free Press* is not ground-breaking in modern terms, although it made an intuitive point in its time. His essay makes clear anxieties that did not begin at this time, but were becoming more prominent as news media became more widely read. The timing, also, is relevant: as previously discussed, both the press and book publishers were heavily censored during the First World War, meaning that not only was output affected by advertising subsidy, but also by what was deemed acceptable. What Belloc requested news-media consumers do, over a century ago, is perhaps of even greater value today: there is an ever-growing number of ‘news’ sources that go un-questioned and un-challenged because they voice the already-held opinions and prejudices of those whose preferences lead them to engage with them. Read as a standalone argument, it is a good illustration of the early stages of an ongoing preoccupation with the media’s power to manipulate at a time when its reach was growing, but was still infinitely smaller than it is today.<sup>42</sup>

Later commentators have remarked on similar issues: Hoggart describes the ‘corrupt brightness’, and ‘improper appeals and moral evasions’ of media in the late 1950s, Merton and Lazarsfeld describe the ‘narcotizing dysfunction’ promoted by the media; or its precipitation of political apath[y] and inert[ia]’ that (American) newspapers invoked in the 1940s.<sup>43</sup> ‘Self-satisf[action]’ seems in keeping with Belloc’s idea that people interpret in the news that which chimes with their preconceptions, ‘moral evasions’ with his anxieties concerning partial truths and bias. Furthermore, Bingham asserts that the social status quo has often been buttressed by the press since 1918 in its perpetuation of stereotypes – an assertion that can be aligned with Social Justification Theory’s observations.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This refers to the algorithmic ‘cherry-picking’ of media. The tendency to align towards stronger views is explored in Cass Sunstein’s *Going to Extremes* (Oxford: University Press, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, System Justification Theory might connect this with maintenance of the social status quo.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto and Widnus, 1957), quoted in Bingham, *Family Newspapers?* p. 5. Paul F Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton, ‘Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action’ in Paul Marris and Sue Thornham (editors), *Media Studies: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 22-23.

<sup>44</sup> *Family Newspapers* p. 6. ‘System Justification Theory’, see John T Jost and Mahzarin R Banaji, ‘The role of stereotyping in system-justification and the production of false consciousness’, Vol 33:1 (March 1994). Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1994.tb01008.x> retrieved on: 31/10/2022. See also Appendix.

### 2.1.2 *The House of Commons and Monarchy*

In 1920, Unwin asked whether Belloc might consider publishing in book form a series of articles also from *The New Age*, a matter he pre-emptively aired with Orage.<sup>45</sup> Belloc had already approached Foulis, since it was ‘parallel rather to *Servile State* than *The Free Press*’,<sup>46</sup> but accepted following Foulis’s rejection.<sup>47</sup> Unwin pointed out the unlikelihood of its being profitable, saying ‘it is probably unnecessary to remind you that books dealing with political questions are by no means easy to sell’, but pointing out that his firm had been ‘fortunate enough to obtain a larger market for them than most Publishers’.<sup>48</sup> Belloc commented that ‘a book like this is not published [by the author<sup>49</sup>] for the money it may bring but for the advantage of propaganda’.<sup>50</sup>

Belloc’s description of the book as ‘propaganda’ implies an assumed readiness by the reader to agree with him. Unwin, ‘maintaining an open forum’, was at the same time publishing texts advocating very different answers to the problem of democracy’s dysfunctions: this book supports the reintroduction of absolute monarchic power, while groups like the Fabians, for whom Unwin also published, had quite different views.

Despite their probable disagreement on some matters, the two men found common ground in their perception of the treatment of the written word. Belloc wrote:

if printers are going to charge these sorts of prices [...] it will not be worth anybody’s while to write books of the studious sort at all. It is one thing not to make money out of a book, it is another to lose heavily on it [...] if typewriting, postage and corrections are to come to much more than the book brings in no one will write them except rich men; who are not as a rule capable of writing them to any public advantage.<sup>51</sup>

The idea that ‘studious’ books would one day no longer be financially viable to publish was an anxiety Unwin shared. Belloc’s point is also related to his concerns about the press: if intellectual debate is ever-more expensive to participate in, and the marketing-driven press ever-cheaper to consume, then naturally those with lower incomes will be limited to that which they can afford. This problem of cultural elitism remains an issue today, and compounds

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<sup>45</sup> AUC 1/10 SU to HB, 05/02/1920.

<sup>46</sup> AUC 1/10 HB to SU, 06/02/1920.

<sup>47</sup> AUC 1/10 HB to SU, 18/02/1920 ‘I have heard back from those upon whose judgement I told you I had to wait’.

<sup>48</sup> AUC 1/10 SU to HB 23/02/1920.

<sup>49</sup> The parenthesised phrase was added in handwriting as an afterthought, the rest of the letter was typed.

<sup>50</sup> AUC 1/10 HB to SU 07/05/1920.

<sup>51</sup> Letter 16/10/15, HB to SU. Letters BEE to BER, AU FSC 2/11.

problems such as public trust in scientific knowledge and in institutions.<sup>52</sup> As implied by his final statement, leaving social observation to the privileged is likely to be unproductive. Thus, the general public is further discouraged to challenge, and not given sufficient opportunity to do so; further widening the gap between the general public and the so-called elite. Furthermore, Bingham observes that, as newspaper readership increased exponentially between the wars and beyond; political, social and cultural authority was conferred upon them – despite, and in part because of, the elite’s disdain for their commercialism and sensationalism.<sup>53</sup> Bingham’s assertion relates to a number of the cognitive mechanisms related in the introduction, in particular the relationship between social identity, culture and class.

Belloc’s feeling that intellectual debate and disparate opinions should not be available for broadcast solely by those that are able to afford to do so is particularly relevant to the interests of this thesis: only by creating and maintaining open fora in cultural discourse, only by creating the space for differing perspectives to respectfully hear one another, can social progress be effectively made. Much political and academic argument was, and still is, obscured, to the detriment of the possibility of broader conversation, as a result of a belief that such conversations are the privilege of the elite. *The House of Commons*, in its opposition to many other voices published by Unwin (such as, particularly, the Fabians and Trade Unions), is emblematic of Unwin practicing this belief. Furthermore, the concerns Belloc – and subsequently Lippmann – raised surrounding the democratic model maintain relevance today. Unwin’s concerns about unprofitability were justified: a letter concerning the forthcoming *House of Commons* claims that sales of *The Free Press* had by this point reached only 1692 in two years – not a complete failure, but not a financial success, even at this time. Unwin asserts that they would need ‘either to sell more than 2000 copies or publish at [...] an artificially high price if [they were] to show any margin of profit’ for the work-in-progress.<sup>54</sup>

The first chapter’s title outlines the book’s argument:

The thesis: the house of commons was formed by, and is essentially part of, an aristocratic state. England having ceased to be an aristocratic state, the house of commons is ceasing to function.<sup>55</sup>

Belloc argued that the United Kingdom’s democracy no longer functioned in a useful way – because it was a plutocracy in the guise of a democracy, and was therefore not motivated or

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<sup>52</sup> This will be considered in Part Three.

<sup>53</sup> *Family Newspapers*, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> SU to HB, 23/02/20. AUC 1/10.

<sup>55</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The House of Commons and the Monarchy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1920), p. 9.

naturally inclined to act in the people's interests. He argued that most people were not well enough informed or educated to make important democratic decisions, asserting that:

When the masses have [...] lost their desire to be ruled by a special class [...] the old feelings are not replaced by any new desire in the masses to govern themselves [...] out of citizens who have always been passive in nature, and whose passivity was the very cause of Aristocracy among them, you will never get the democratic spirit of corporate initiative [...] [or] a permanent individual interest in public affairs'.<sup>56</sup>

His conclusion: rather than restructure the existing system, the only solution would be to reinstate the absolute power of an unelected leader. His feelings about the powerlessness of the ordinary man were not uncommon, although attributing this to natural passivity is problematic. The passivity he describes might, however, be paralleled with or reinterpreted as political apathy, which, it might be argued, is in part generated by its absence in the education system. *The House of Commons* demonstrates a shift in Belloc's thinking – in *The Servile State* (1912), he advocated a more distributionist/collectivist approach that assumed greater intelligence in the public. Belloc's thesis concludes that democracy and progress are mutually incompatible, and that a monarchy that presides and has power over the government is the only practicable prevention for the inevitable breakdown of British democracy. Belloc believes that the 'common man' must have decisions made for him, not by him – a similar sentiment to the next chapter's author, Walter Lippmann.

Belloc's ideological stance on the government of large populations appears more conservative than many of his fellow Allen and Unwin authors (among them being a number of Fabians, Guild Socialists and Labour Unionists), in keeping with Unwin's belief in publishing alternative points of view. There were numerous factors involved in commentators' preoccupation with democracy in this time that are less relevant today, not least the broadening of the electorate.<sup>57</sup> Beers asserts that progress in communications and media created a levelling-out that was in fact healthy for democracy:

The ubiquity of mass media eroded previous barriers between high and low culture, with the result that, with the newly democratized Britain, citizens not only voted together but increasingly took their news and entertainment from the same sources.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The House of Commons and the Monarchy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1920), p. 176.

<sup>57</sup> Beers estimates that the electoral franchise almost quadrupled in the decade following the First World War. Laura Beers, 'Education or Manipulation? Labour, Democracy, and the Popular Press in Interwar Britain' *Journal of British Studies* (48:1, January 2009), p. 129 Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25482965> retrieved on: 15/11/2019.

<sup>58</sup> Beers, p. 130.

Belloc contradicts himself. In *Servile State* he argued that populations deserved fairness, education, a voice; in *House of Commons* he argues that the less-educated and less informed were not capable of making important decisions – of having a voice. While people will always be critical of others' personal politics, the argument that the vote is not deserved by those who have it no longer holds ground. There is a classism and a sexism in Belloc's thesis. However, the argument that the public were poorly informed remains relevant today.

Its reception was mixed. Edward Sait remarks that:

treating his problem as a purely local English problem, has overlooked the facts which in America or France or Italy, indeed throughout the Western world, might well have made his investigation something more than an exercise in dialectics'<sup>59</sup>

Sait also criticises Belloc for his attempt to 'subdu[e]' the 'critical faculties' of his readers.<sup>60</sup> It is interesting that Belloc should be criticised for undermining the very faculties he sought to stimulate in *The Free Press*. Had Belloc been able to appraise his own work in the same way he criticised others', he might perhaps have found greater support.

Just as today, in Britain and America and across the world, questions of the true definition and implications of democracy and its associated freedoms were being asked, and rhetoric employed to expand and to undermine this conception, so too was the world uncertain about the future of democracy 100 years ago; and the ensuing decades – with the continuation of the 'communist experiment', with the rise of fascism – proved such anxieties to be founded.

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<sup>59</sup> Edward McChesney Sait, 'Review: House of Commons and Monarchy' in *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 37:3 (Sep 1922), pp. 532-4. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2142158> retrieved on: 21/06/2022.

<sup>60</sup> Sait, p. 533.



## **2.2 Walter Lippmann**

### **Governance and Mass Manipulation**

Lippmann's *Public Opinion* has maintained popularity since its publication in 1922. The most striking aspect of this book is its insight into human behaviour – Lippmann comments on numerous aspects of human thought and cognition that were as yet undescribed in the human sciences. His proposals for the resolution of these pervasive human fallibilities have been widely criticised. However, considered in parallel with extant surveillance-driven manipulation by market interests, they are in fact oddly accurate predictions of the present. The parallels between his proposals for coercive technocracy and the realities of today's world seem to have received little acknowledgement.

Although little remains of Lippmann in the Allen and Unwin archives, Unwin mentions him twice in *Publisher*. In the second instance, he describes how Ramsay MacDonald spoke highly of the young social commentator, and, as a result, Unwin had had the luck to 'approach a future author of distinction before everyone wants to publish for him'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Publisher*, p. 214.

### 2.2.1 Background

The American writer, journalist and commentator Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) has rarely been out of print on either side of the Atlantic and is considered his most influential work. Allen and Unwin acquired the text through the American publisher, Harcourt, Brace and Co. Following *Public Opinion*, the firm published most of his later works in Britain, except *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in the USA*, which was considered irrelevant for a British audience.<sup>62</sup> Before *Public Opinion*, Lippmann had already published several books (and many articles), one of which had achieved relative international success: *A Preface to Politics* (1913).

*Public Opinion* has been a continuous source of academic dialogue, engagement, and controversy. Particularly since the latter half of the twentieth century, there has been an ongoing perception that Lippmann and John Dewey were in direct conflict, framed as the 'Dewey-Lippmann debate'. While some hold that Lippmann and Dewey were ideologically polarised,<sup>63</sup> Jansen argues that interpreting the dialogue as an 'argument' misunderstands both.<sup>64</sup> Dewey and Lippmann observed similar problematic aspects of the democracy in which they both lived but proposed different solutions. Dewey was optimistic: he saw opportunity for improvement, through better understanding of psychology, better education, better communication. Lippmann, in contrast, accepted what he perceived to be innate and immutable characteristics of human nature at the base of the same problems, and so his conclusion was to work with, rather than against, these. Dewey referred to the book as 'the most effective indictment of democracy' he had read, and wrote a response, *The Public and its Problems*, in 1927, which is quoted in the introduction to this study.<sup>65</sup> Dewey acknowledged Lippmann's influence on this book, saying that Lippmann provided 'the ideas involved in [his] entire discussion, even when it reach[ed] conclusions diverging' from Lippmann's.<sup>66</sup> Jansen correctly

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<sup>62</sup> AUC 556/10, Various.

<sup>63</sup> Lana F. Rakow explores the history and ongoing problem of the perception of this debate in her article 'Family Feud: Who's still fighting about Dewey and Lippmann?' in *Javnost – The Public* Vol. 25:1 (2018). Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2018.1423945> retrieved on: 25/03/2021.

<sup>64</sup> Sue Curry Jansen, 'Semantic tyranny: how Edward L Bernays stole Walter Lippmann's mojo and got away with it and why it still matters', *International Journal of Communication* (2013), pp. 1094-1111. Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A331005506/AONE?u=rdg&sid=AONE&xid=22709d6a](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A331005506/AONE?u=rdg&sid=AONE&xid=22709d6a) retrieved on: 25/03/2021.

<sup>65</sup> John Dewey, quoted in Leonard S Newman, 'Was Walter Lippmann Interested in Stereotyping?' *History of Psychology* Vol. 12:1 (2009), p. 15. Available online: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26649438\\_Was\\_Walter\\_Lippmann\\_interested\\_in\\_stereotyping\\_Public\\_Opinion\\_and\\_cognitive\\_social\\_psychology](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26649438_Was_Walter_Lippmann_interested_in_stereotyping_Public_Opinion_and_cognitive_social_psychology) retrieved on: 13/04/2021.

<sup>66</sup> John Dewey, quoted in Tony DeCesare, 'The Lippmann-Dewey Debate Revisited: The Problem of Knowledge and the Role of Experts in Modern Democratic Theory', *Philosophical Studies in Education* Vol. 43 (2012), p. 106. Available online: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1000304.pdf> retrieved on: 25/03/2021.

argues that the commentators did not disagree about the issues they observed, they simply disagreed about their solution.

*Public Opinion* has also received unfair comparison with another work, named in deliberate allusion to it: Edward Bernays' *Crystallizing Public Opinion*.<sup>67</sup> Bernays is often described as the 'father' of PR, and was influential in many famous (and sometimes morally problematic) marketing campaigns, such as the 'torches of freedom' slogan used by the tobacco industry to encourage debutantes to smoke (Bernays later opposed smoking).<sup>68</sup> Bernays is often looked upon unfavourably by historians because of the nature of his work and his advocacy of manipulation, and this association has adversely affected Lippmann's reputation, despite his lack of any true association with Bernays. As Jansen argues, Lippmann was not an advocate of propaganda (nor, indeed, PR's 'engineering of consent'), whereas Bernays' work explicitly defended and promoted the use of manipulation for profit.<sup>69</sup> Whereas Bernays proposed that the democratic process necessitated the 'freedom to persuade and suggest', Lippmann offered persuasion and suggestion as means with which to make governance provide more positive and effective service to populations.<sup>70</sup> Where Bernays perceived a free-for-all, Lippmann recognised the human vulnerability to suggestion and proposed it be used *only* to the intended advantage of publics.<sup>71</sup>

Lippmann's best-known and most vocal contemporary critic has been Noam Chomsky. Chomsky's main criticism is Lippmann's advocacy of manipulation, and among other arguments has drawn parallels with Lenin's ideas about how to control publics, 'leading the masses to a better life that they cannot conceive or construct on their own'.<sup>72</sup> While this parallel is not unfounded in light of Lippmann's proposals, in his oversimplification of *Public Opinion* Chomsky does Lippmann a disservice. Just as Dewey was able to disagree, but simultaneously find value in, Lippmann's ideas, so too might Chomsky have acknowledged the utility and insight in Lippmann's observations despite his disagreement with Lippmann's conclusions. It

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<sup>67</sup> Edward Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923). Bernays references Lippmann's work and ideas heavily in the book.

<sup>68</sup> Stewart Kampel, 'Bernays, Edward L' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587502747/GVRL?u=rdg&sid=GVRL&xid=4b523e84](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587502747/GVRL?u=rdg&sid=GVRL&xid=4b523e84) retrieved on: 25/03/2021.

<sup>69</sup> Sue Curry Jansen, 'Semantic tyranny: how Edward L Bernays stole Walter Lippmann's mojo and got away with it and why it still matters', *International Journal of Communication* (2013), pp. 1094-1111. Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A331005506/AONE?u=rdg&sid=AONE&xid=22709d6a](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A331005506/AONE?u=rdg&sid=AONE&xid=22709d6a) retrieved on: 25/03/2021.

<sup>70</sup> Edward Bernays (1947), quoted in Stephen Duncombe, 'Politics Past Reason: Walter Lippmann and the Manufacture of Dissent', *Radical Society* Vol. 32:2 (2006), p. 25.

<sup>71</sup> Bernays' university degree was in Agriculture. He made very effective use of the fame and renown of his maternal uncle, Sigmund Freud.

<sup>72</sup> Noam Chomsky, 'Force and Opinion', *Z Magazine* (July 1991). Available online: <https://chomsky.info/199107/> retrieved on: 25/03/2021.

is interesting to note that Chomsky attended an experimental school akin to those attempted by John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, which encouraged self-directed learning and curiosity and rejected the systematic, rote-learning model.<sup>73</sup> It might be argued that Chomsky's distaste at Lippmann's proposals was in part affected by his experience of 'primary socialisation'<sup>74</sup> of this sort, and the critical and anti-manipulatory mentality this might have provided him with.<sup>75</sup>

As Jansen and others have argued, to take only from Lippmann's conclusion is almost entirely to miss the value of the book.<sup>76</sup> *Public Opinion* does not offer a perfect answer, it simply poses a great many important questions about how we manage ourselves, our interactions, and our relationship with the world. The following discussion will focus primarily on sections one to five of the work, since these explicitly deal with the cognitive mechanisms with which this study's discussion is concerned.

### 2.2.2 *Public Opinion*

*Behold! Human beings living in an underground den [...] here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, for the chains are arranged in such a manner as to prevent them from turning their heads.*<sup>77</sup>

*Public Opinion*'s epigraph is an extract from Plato's *Republic*. The passage provides a backdrop for the book's thesis: it appears to assert that, throughout history, men have recognised that their 'truths', or the perceptions by which they lived, were merely simplified and reinterpreted forms of what existed in the external world.

The introductory chapter is titled 'The Pictures in our Heads'. Lippmann refers again to *The Republic* to quote St Ambrose's assertion that, were the prisoner to turn his head to the outside world, 'it [would] not help [him] in [his] hope of the life to come'.<sup>78</sup> Lippmann thus states the belief at the essence of his argument: that the world is inescapably more complex and unintelligible than individuals are able to make sense of, and that this must therefore be made

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<sup>73</sup> Russell and Dewey's schools are discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>74</sup> See Berger and Luckmann, discussed in the thesis's prologue.

<sup>75</sup> James A McGilvray, 'Noam Chomsky' in *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Noam-Chomsky/82316> retrieved on: 05/04/2021.

<sup>76</sup> Newman asserts that many who cite Lippmann's work have not, in fact, read the full volume and misunderstand or oversimplify it. Leonard S. Newman, 'Was Walter Lippmann Interested in Stereotyping?' *History of Psychology* Vol. 12:1 (2009), p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. vii. The quote is from the Jowett translation of Plato's *Republic*.

<sup>78</sup> St Ambrose, quoted in *Public Opinion*, p. 5.

use of, to humanity's advantage. It is this conclusion and its ramifications with which many disagree.

These 'pictures' are the constructions with which people make sense of the world. Often, as he illustrates, these are different or distinct from the world as it 'actually' is. Sometimes, these pictures have been deliberately manufactured because they are more convenient or useful than 'reality'. Sometimes these become outdated: Lippmann uses the example of an island composed of German, French and English nationals living in harmonious ignorance for six weeks after war was declared in 1914. He writes:

the picture of Europe on which men were conducting their business as usual, did not in any way correspond to the Europe which was about to make a jumble of their lives.<sup>79</sup>

This example is demonstrative of Lippmann's thesis: the world as it is perceived is largely composed of sets of assumptions and constructions based on the information that is available at a given moment, which only relates to 'true' reality to varying degrees.

Furthermore, Lippmann asserts, those people who garner popular admiration and respect are ultimately fictions, only vaguely based on true human beings, as are those who are feared or hated. There is a clear parallel with Belloc's assertions regarding the public perception of popular figures. Heroes and villains exist only because their existence is desirable: 'by the same mechanism through which heroes are incarnated, devils are made'.<sup>80</sup> Such heroes and villains were a necessary aspect of the experience of war for the ordinary man: their image was created in response to it, and gratefully received in order to make sense of it. Lippmann uses Wilson and Roosevelt among his examples of 'heroes' in America, and Kaiser Wilhelm and Lenin among his exemplary villains. To most, these people were not flesh-and-blood humans: they were embodiments of ideas. They were pictures in people's heads – reconstructed simplifications of reality. Furthermore, he describes, like Belloc, how public figures are largely comprised of ideas designed by others; pictures largely unrelated to the reality of the person to which they are connected. Jerome Barkow discusses this phenomenon in terms of evolutionary psychology and its function in social interaction – Lippmann was not only interpreting a simplification, but the malfunction, driven by mass media (an 'evolutionarily unanticipated' event), of an evolved mechanism of social bonding.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Public Opinion* p. 4.

<sup>80</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 10.

<sup>81</sup> Jerome Barkow, 'Beneath new culture is old Psychology: Gossip and Social Stratification' in *The Adapted Mind* (Oxford: University Press, 1995), pp. 627-638 (quote p. 627).

Lippmann does not find this entirely negative. As he later argues, the complexity of the world is too great for any human mind. By defining ‘good’ and ‘evil’ through caricatures, some of the problem of understanding the broader context is decreased. Instead of pursuing the minutiae of public affairs, humans live by sets of simple assumptions: if one ‘knows’ that one’s side is the ‘good’ side, and the other is the ‘bad’, then one can feel safe, morally comfortable. With this ‘knowledge’, one may go about one’s business as usual, unconfused by the confounding nature of reality as it ‘truly’ is.

Lippmann acknowledges that his ‘heroes’ and ‘villains’ are extreme examples, and describes how pervasive these symbolic representations are, on smaller scales, throughout the world. In so doing, he introduces the idea of the ‘symbol’, an important aspect of the book. His understanding of the function of the symbol, like the hero – and later the stereotype – is that it is primarily for the purpose of simplification. This is insightful: humans have, throughout history, used stories to understand the world, to communicate their experience through simplification, using stories, scenes, images. This is why literature and the arts are of such fundamental importance to our understanding of one another, and to society. This is such an entrenched aspect of human interaction that it is encoded in language. Metaphors, for example, might be defined as simplificatory parallels that communicate something through a shared knowledge of something else. To use a modern example, the framing of the virtual world in spatial terms allows people to navigate an otherwise fairly unintelligible world of complexity with relative ease, using verbs of movement (eg to go, or to navigate) and physical space (such as web ‘site’) in order to create pictures with which we can understand the virtual world to a useful, but not unnecessarily in-depth, degree. Furthermore, the modern, online phenomenon of the ‘meme’ is a super-condensed storytelling mechanism – a highly shorthand way of communicating a specific aspect of the world that can be understood by millions of others.

Lippmann broadens his conception of humanity’s ‘fictitious’ inner worlds further, through his description of the ‘pseudo-environment’ and the ‘pseudo-universe’. These, too, are expansions on the cave metaphor: an individual’s reality is composed of a collection of beliefs about the world that are useful in making sense of it. Their ‘pseudo-environment/universe’ is their subjective representation of the world. Problems arise when there is dissonance between the ‘real environment’ in which their actions play out, and the ‘pseudo-environment’ to which they are responding.<sup>82</sup> Today’s social media ‘universes’ (Facebook’s ‘metaverse’ is a

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<sup>82</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 15.

particularly interesting linguistic choice) create a new form of ‘pseudo-environment’ that would have been barely conceivable in Lippmann’s time.

The rest of the book expands on these ideas, exploring these fictions, representations, simplifications and interpretations from various perspectives. Lippmann’s ideas can be related to every one of the concepts outlined in the introduction. His most succinct elaboration of how he understands these phenomena is also an argument in his defence. He writes that:

By fictions I do not mean lies. I mean a representation of the environment which is in lesser or greater degree made by man himself.<sup>83</sup>

This is not only an acknowledgement of the abstracted world in which humanity resides, but a reference to what he perceives as its necessity. The distinction between ‘fictions’ and ‘lies’ is important: Lippmann argues that to interpret a ‘picture in our heads’ as a lie is self-defeating, since the pictures are a required aspect of successful social functioning – or, indeed, functioning at all. The latter sentence’s statement that this is, to varying degrees, ‘made by man himself’ could be interpreted either to mean the individual man or the species, but perhaps – as his ongoing discussion suggests – this ambiguity is deliberate.

#### 2.2.2.1 Personal Constructs

*There are many variables in each man’s impressions of the invisible world [...] The living impressions of a large number of people are to an immeasurable degree personal in each of them, and unmanageably complex in the mass.*<sup>84</sup>

*What reaches him of public affairs [...] he conceives through his set of patterns and recreates with his own emotions.*<sup>85</sup>

The idea that a person’s interpretation of the world is unique and the product of their experiences certainly connects with Lippmann’s assertions about pseudo-realities. Whereas Kelly’s theory of Personal Constructs looks specifically at the individual as independent and their world-construction as unique, Lippmann’s assertion that the process of meaning-formation is inextricable from previously-created meanings, and inescapably affected by

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<sup>83</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 193.

<sup>85</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 171.

individual and unique external factors, is related, and in keeping with neuroscientific understanding of meaning-making.<sup>86</sup>

Kelly's ideas can be read into various aspects of Lippmann's work. In his discussion of language (chapter V, 'Speed, Words and Clearness'), he describes how words read in newspapers are 'the cue for a whole train of ideas'. He uses examples such as 'imperialism' and 'capitalism', 'about which we so readily take sides "for" and "against"', despite their complexity and the very subjective meaning they often have. The train of ideas, the individual interpretation of those words, are necessarily – because they are abstracts – 'constructed in the imagination'.<sup>87</sup> They are therefore unique and distinct from one person to another.<sup>88</sup> Lippmann examines the problem for the manufacturer of public opinion later in the same chapter:

The stream of public opinion is stopped [by people in a spectrum of contexts] in little eddies of misunderstanding, where it is discolored with prejudice and far-fetched analogy.<sup>89</sup>

Experience affects understanding. Personal 'fictions' colour meaning. To Lippmann, this is a problem that those in power must solve in order to create an effective shared 'area' in the pseudo-reality; for Dewey, this is a problem that can be overcome through education and clear, effective communication.

In chapter twelve, Lippmann writes:

The identical story is not the same story to all [...] since no two experiences are exactly alike, [each person] will re-enact it in his own way, and transfuse it with his own feelings.<sup>90</sup>

Thus, even as Lippmann argues that the 'public' is manipulable *en-masse* and that the ebb and flow of its opinion must necessarily be 'conditioned' or moulded, he acknowledges the deeply personal character of 'reality'. Lippmann does not propose a solution to the 'immeasurabl[y] [...] personal' construction of reality, but instead turns to politics, and the election-campaign's manufacture of an 'oversoul': the 'collective soul, national mind, spirit of the age' that has the power to 'impo[se] order upon random opinion'.<sup>91</sup> There is an argument in this assertion that goes further than Lippmann's postulations about governance. Were it possible to manufacture

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<sup>86</sup> Refers to George Kelly, *A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (New York: W W Norton, 1963). As described in the introduction, this theory marries well with current neuroscientific understanding of an individual's 'constructed' world.

<sup>87</sup> *Public Opinion*, pp. 68-9.

<sup>88</sup> As discussed in the Glossary in the Appendix, Kelly's theory is a useful way of communicating current neuroscientific understanding of meaning-making and behaviour.

<sup>89</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 75.

<sup>90</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 170.

<sup>91</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 197.



a ‘spirit of the age’ that necessitated greater introspection, tolerance and understanding of difference; were it, indeed, possible for the collective soul’s outlook to cast itself simultaneously inwards and outwards, then perhaps a more Dewey-like conclusion could be drawn. Lippmann’s ‘oversoul’, however, must by necessity draw on what is already present in a national ‘character’.

This idea was not new. Alfred Harmsworth, Viscount Northcliffe, used his lower-middle class origin ‘Britishness’ to sell his newspapers, observing that ‘most of the ordinary man’s prejudices are m[ine] [...] and therefore the prejudices of my newspapers’.<sup>92</sup> It was not only in the popularity of his newspapers that his ability to manipulate was demonstrated: he received his title in 1917 ostensibly for his work during the war, however some argue that his and others’ titles – such as Max Aitken’s appointment as Lord Beaverbrook – were truly made out of government anxiety concerning the power of the press to manipulate public opinion.<sup>93</sup> Brendon asserts that Northcliffe also found success in the manipulation of other national psyches (although Lippmann disagreed<sup>94</sup>), and refers to Hitler’s alleged quote regarding Nazi use of Northcliffe’s propaganda techniques, referred to in Part One of the thesis.<sup>95</sup> Such power was held by Northcliffe and others that David Lloyd George was heavily criticised for allowing newspaper-owners to become so closely entwined in, and able to exercise power over, the world of politics.<sup>96</sup> Clearly Northcliffe was able to use ubiquitous images and tools such as those Lippmann describes. Northcliffe’s power in Britain – for at least some of his career – was precisely the kind that Lippmann argued must be harnessed for good, as opposed to profit. Lippmann’s exploration of the explicitly personal might also be paralleled with Berger and Luckmann’s *Social Construction of Reality*, which argues that an individual’s understanding of the external world is heavily influenced by their experience of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ socialisation.<sup>97</sup> His assertion that ‘each new generation is the casual victim of the way a previous generation was conditioned, as well as the inheritor of the environment that resulted’

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<sup>92</sup> Alfred Harmsworth quoted in Piers Brendon, *The Life and Death of the Press Barons* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1982), pp. 113-4.

<sup>93</sup> Various. Bingham makes reference to this in various texts, as well as drawing on it in ‘An Organ of Uplift: the popular press and political culture in interwar Britain’ *Journalism Studies* Vol. 14 (2013), pp. 651-662. Brendon also makes this connection in *The Rise and Fall of the Press Barons*, p. 116.

<sup>94</sup> In a 1936 article Lippmann describes the inefficacy of Northcliffe’s propaganda in America. Walter Lippmann, ‘Rough-hew Them How We Will’ *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 15:1 (Jan 1936), p. 589.

<sup>95</sup> Brendon, *Press Barons*, p. 122.

<sup>96</sup> ‘An Organ of Uplift’, p. 652.

<sup>97</sup> Berger and Luckmann.

connects with this understanding of world-view formulation.<sup>98</sup> The latter statement is oddly, and depressingly, relevant today.

### 2.2.2.2 Stereotypes

*What will be accepted as true, as realistic, as good, as evil, as desirable, is not eternally fixed. These are fixed by stereotypes, acquired from earlier experiences and carried over into judgement of later ones.*<sup>99</sup>

*They establish a new form which is endlessly copied until it, too, becomes a stereotype of perception.*<sup>100</sup>

Lippmann is arguably most famous for his conception of the stereotype, although he did not actually ‘invent’ its modern meaning. While he did popularise the term, ‘stereotype’ had been used to describe something akin to a cliché for at least sixty years by this time.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, the idea of the stereotype plays an important role in *Public Opinion*, and one that has utility in this discussion.

His ‘pictures in our heads’ are to some degree the same as, if not closely related to, stereotypes. He writes:

Each of us lives and works on a small part of the earth’s surface, moves in a small circle, and [...] knows only a few intimately. Of any public event that has wide effects we see at best only a phase and an aspect. [...] inevitably our opinions cover a bigger space, a longer reach of time, and a greater number of things, than we can directly observe. They have, therefore, to be pieced together out of what others have reported and what we can imagine.<sup>102</sup>

This is his justification for stereotyping: that it is impossible for a person to know everything about which they have an opinion, and their understanding of many things is therefore necessarily composed of assumptions and information (not necessarily factual) communicated to them by those who are (apparently) better informed (such as newspaper publishers), and ‘filled out’ by the ‘stock of images’ held in their mind. Lippmann’s examples are to varying degrees sound: while it is probably not (or perhaps no longer) true that ‘strangers of another race [...] look alike to the visiting stranger’, it is certainly true of most observers that a ‘flock

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<sup>98</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 188-9.

<sup>99</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 166.

<sup>100</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 167.

<sup>101</sup> Newman, p. 11.

<sup>102</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 79.

of sheep' are largely indistinct from one another for anyone but their shepherd.<sup>103</sup> It might, perhaps, be argued that the present-day lessening in truth of his former assertion due to greater international communication and travel is an argument that such stereotyping is not as necessary, or fixed, as Lippmann believes.

His observation does, however, evoke another concept described in the introduction: social identity. By perceiving those of another race, or 'group' as amorphous, in contrast with the distinctness of the individuals of those from one's own race or 'group', stereotyping of this sort certainly finds parallel in ideas concerning ingroup bias. Islam also makes this observation.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Lippmann later acknowledges that 'man has an instinct of fear, but what he will fear and how he will try to escape, is determined not from birth, but by experience'.<sup>105</sup> As Islam relates, outgroup perception is often associated with perceived threat to the collective ingroup identity, which in turn is perceived as threat to the self.<sup>106</sup> Such threat perception, as Lippmann asserts, is a product not of innate fear of 'outsiders', but of learnt behaviours regarding in- and outgroup membership.

Jansen describes stereotypes as 'blind spots, obstacles to critical thinking and reasoned judgement' and interprets Lippmann's stance positively: that these should be subjected to interrogation and corrected wherever possible. She reinforces this reading by asserting that 'much of [Lippmann's] lifelong work', besides undermining harmful manipulations and coercive operations, was dedicated to 'exploding harmful stereotypes and uncovering counterfeit realities'.<sup>107</sup> As Tell observes, however, not all stereotypes might be interpreted as harmful, and he argues that Lippmann sees them as 'an essential component of human communication'. He reads into Lippmann's statement that 'we define first and then see' an acknowledgement of cultural influence on that pre-definition.<sup>108</sup> Importantly, Tell interprets the originality of Lippmann's point in his awareness of the fact that they 'precede the use of reason', thereby making them 'particularly resistant to critique'.<sup>109</sup> Tell's observation of this aspect of Lippmann's assertions about stereotypes is useful in understanding their relationship

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<sup>103</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 80.

<sup>104</sup> Gazi Islam, 'Social Identity Theory', *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology* (Springer-Verlag, 2014), p. 1781. Available online: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281208338\\_Social\\_Identity\\_Theory](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281208338_Social_Identity_Theory) retrieved on: 13/04/2021.

<sup>105</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 188.

<sup>106</sup> Islam, pp. 1781-2.

<sup>107</sup> 'Semantic Tyranny', p. 1102.

<sup>108</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 81.

<sup>109</sup> Dave Tell, 'Reinventing Walter Lippmann: Communication and Cultural Studies' *The Review of Communication* Vol. 13:2 (April 2013), p. 120. Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15358593.2013.789120?needAccess=true> retrieved on: 31/03/2021.

with modern cognitive science, which Bottom and Kong assert Lippmann's conception of the stereotype has been instrumental in developing.<sup>110</sup> Lippmann was certainly ahead of his time, and his ideas concerning stereotypes have become part of the fabric of social science.

Stereotyping, as Lippmann observed, was already used by newspaper proprietors. One of the reasons for Northcliffe's success was his ability to utilise cultural stereotypes to his advantage. He recognised the potential profit in targeting a female audience, and so made use of female stereotypes to create a 'Magazine Section' specifically for women, containing such pieces as 'Is Love-Making Pleasanter in Town or Country' and 'What a Girl Should Know (how to keep the house clean)'.<sup>111</sup> According to Brendon, these stories were primarily designed to appeal to husbands, and would therefore have sold on the basis that they appeared to be about things women would wish to read: on the basis of stereotypes.<sup>112</sup>

The stereotype was also affected successfully during the First World War in Britain. As observed in Part One, anti-German propaganda in England was very successful. Kipling used his hero-like status in the national psyche and perceived wisdom as an expatriate of imperial India to compound this, through his previously-mentioned 'Address', in which he reinforced an image of the un-civilised, barbaric 'Hun' by accessing another stereotype – that of the uncivilised, barbaric imperial subject, a stereotype that had been created and maintained in order to justify colonialization.

### 2.2.2.3 Confirmation Bias

*If we believe that a certain thing ought to be true, we can almost always find either an instance where it is true, or someone who believes it ought to be true.*<sup>113</sup>

*In the same situation one side saw progress, economy, and a splendid development; the other, reaction, extravagance, and a restraint of trade.*<sup>114</sup>

Like Belloc, Lippmann was aware of the human tendency towards a desire to maintain an internal status quo. The quote above is from chapter X, 'The Detection of Stereotypes'. If a belief is held as a result of seemingly reliable evidence, he asserts, it is simpler to maintain this

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<sup>110</sup> William P Bottom and Dajun Tony Kong, 'The Casual Cruelty of our Prejudices: On Walter Lippmann's Theory of Stereotype and its Obliteration in Psychology and Social Science', *Journal of the History of Behavioural Sciences* Vol. 48:4 (Autumn 2012), pp. 363-394. Available online: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jhbs.21565> retrieved on: 13/04/2021.

<sup>111</sup> Brendon, *Press Barons*, p. 114.

<sup>112</sup> Brendon, *Press Barons*, p. 114.

<sup>113</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 153.

<sup>114</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 118.

belief than to seek conflicting evidence. He follows by observing that ‘when the first six people we meet agree with us, it is not easy to remember that they may all have read the same newspaper at breakfast’.<sup>115</sup> This foreshadows the modern phenomenon of the ‘echo-chamber’, which, although it is predominantly discussed in the context of social media, has always existed to some degree in social contexts: a person’s beliefs and values – the foundations of their world-view constructions – will, to a greater or lesser degree, be shared in fundamental ways and therefore reinforced by many of the people with whom a person is socially surrounded.

For Belloc and Lippmann, the constructions created by their respective national presses were a point of reference. In Britain, the most widely-read newspaper in the early inter-war years was *The Daily Mail*, followed closely by *The Daily Express*, which was owned by Lord Beaverbrook by this time. Beaverbrook kept the Harmsworth brothers close<sup>116</sup> and, before the thirties, rarely made editorial decisions that opposed the politics or stance of his main competitor<sup>117</sup> – although in later years Beaverbrook wrote disdainfully of Northcliffe’s lack of intellect.<sup>118</sup> Editorial decisions also had to be made according to advertisers and their political leanings and preferences, since it was only through securing advertising capital that papers could be sold cheaply. This led Hannen Swaffer, a journalist working for Northcliffe, to assert that ‘freedom of the press in Britain means freedom to print such of the proprietor’s prejudices as the advertisers don’t object to’. He tested this by quietly slipping a piece into the paper asking whether oatmeal (an important source of advertising revenue) was poisonous, and it nearly cost him his employment.<sup>119</sup> Britain’s most-read newspapers in 1922 were similar in their particular brand of reality.

According to studies Lippmann cites, most people (in America) would devote not much more than fifteen minutes a day to their chosen news source.<sup>120</sup> Lippmann’s hypothesis that a perceived truth would go unchallenged through a combination of ease and the lack of availability of contradictory evidence appears accurate. This combination of factors would naturally have lent itself to entrenching confirmation bias, since there was little to contradict any perception created by newspapers, and since, as Lippmann observed, most people’s

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<sup>115</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 153.

<sup>116</sup> Northcliffe died in 1922 and Rothermere took over *The Times* and *The Daily Mail*.

<sup>117</sup> Correspondence between Beaverbrook and the Harmsworth brothers was often brazenly sycophantic. As a latecomer, Beaverbrook felt it necessary to be overly complimentary towards them at the time, for example by calling Northcliffe the ‘greatest journalist’. Parliamentary Archives, Beaverbrook Papers, BBK/L/30 various.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Northcliffe had not the capacity for understanding [...] he had to be told in so many words’. Quoted in J M McEwen, ‘Northcliffe and Lloyd George at War, 1914-1918’ *The Historical Journal* Vol. 24:3 (Sep 1981), p. 663. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2638887> retrieved on: 05/04/2021.

<sup>119</sup> Brendon, *Press Barons*, p. 115.

<sup>120</sup> *Public Opinion*, pp. 58-63.

understanding of international affairs was a product of their engagement with print media. This also evokes Festinger's assertion that one of the ways cognitive dissonance is mitigated is through the belief that 'if other people believe it, it must be true', or what Festinger describes as 'social support'.<sup>121</sup>

Another example can be found in Lippmann's discussion of the 'American view of Progress and Success'.<sup>122</sup> He describes the traditional economist's view of how American society must function was simplified so as to be 'not so different in principle and veracity' from 'a child's drawing of a complicated cow'.<sup>123</sup> Those for whom the model worked were those who profited by it. Confirmation bias is most powerful when a belief is 'highly important or self-relevant', and the model's self-relevance to those with economic power, Lippmann asserts, prevented its being subjected to scrutiny, despite its being a 'pure fiction' that was damaging for the majority.<sup>124</sup> Lippmann thus describes the utility of confirmation bias in positions of power: if an idea fits comfortably with and justifies the choices of the powerful, it will be reinforced and 'confirmed' through the 'evidence' of their actions, whether or not such confirmation maintains veracity under scrutiny. Lippmann quotes James, saying that 'No one [...] sees further than his own knowledge of detail extends'.<sup>125</sup>

Besides reinforcing Lippmann's point, James's quote also brings to mind the Dunning-Kruger effect: when 'people with limited knowledge or competence [...] greatly overestimate their own knowledge or competence [...] relative to objective criteria or to the performance of their peers or of people in general'.<sup>126</sup> This might be connected with Lippmann's broader discussion of the tendency towards oversimplification. In order for an individual to convince themselves of their superior knowledge, they must believe that their understanding is of a higher-than-average level, and therefore must assume that the subject in question is less complex than it is. As Lippmann argues, this is at the centre of the democratic problem: it is impossible for anyone to fully understand everything that affects them, but, unfortunately, by necessity of the democratic model, this is under-acknowledged. Instead, there is often too great a strength of belief in the stereotyped and oversimplified representation of reality, in the

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<sup>121</sup> Festinger, various.

<sup>122</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 116.

<sup>123</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 117.

<sup>124</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 118.

<sup>125</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 118.

<sup>126</sup> Brian Duignan, 'Dunning-Kruger Effect', *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Dunning-Kruger-effect/631901> retrieved on: 05/05/2021. See also, J Kruger and D Dunning, 'Unskilled and Unaware of it: how difficulties in recognising one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments' *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology* Vol. 77:6, Dec 1999), pp. 1121-34. Available online: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10626367/> retrieved on: 10/06/2022.

veracity and precision of beliefs based on shallow understanding and generalisation – in combination, in the democratic context, with the ‘fiction’ of a party’s figurehead taking precedence over their policies.<sup>127</sup>

#### 2.2.2.4 Signs and Symbols

*A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands for it.*<sup>128</sup>  
*transformation into a human interest requires first abstraction from the original, and then animation of what has been abstracted. [...] we paint pictures, stage dramas and draw cartoons out of the abstractions.*<sup>129</sup>

Lippmann’s description of the use of symbols in a ‘triangular’ formation has distinct parallels with Piercian semiotics. While semiotics was recognised as an interdisciplinary science by this time, no mention is made of the term, nor Pierce or Saussure, in the book.<sup>130</sup> The only connection I have been able to find between Lippmann and these scholars is Auerbach’s mention of Pierce’s influence on Lippmann’s pragmatism.<sup>131</sup> Since Auxier argues that Pierce sought to found a ‘truly general theory’ covering ‘all cases of meaning-generation’, and *Public Opinion* engages with meaning-making in its various contexts, the relationship seems self-evident.<sup>132</sup>

Oddly, there appears to be little engagement with this. Botan and Soto acknowledge Lippmann’s contribution to the study of publics, but assert that his work ‘do[es] not address publics from a communication perspective’, and is thus not otherwise discussed in their essay concerning using semiotics to approach the understanding of the internal functioning of publics. They find Dewey’s response more suitable. While Lippmann’s work may not have

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<sup>127</sup> Antonio Reyes discusses the political cult of personality with regard to Donald Trump in ‘I, Trump: The cult of personality, anti-intellectualism and the Post-Truth era’, *Journal of Language and Politics* Vol. 19:6 (Oct 2020), pp. 869-892. Available online: <https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/10.1075/jlp.20002.rey> retrieved on: 06/02/2023.

<sup>128</sup> Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 7.

<sup>129</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 161.

<sup>130</sup> Charles Sanders Pierce died in 1914, Ferdinand de Saussure died in 1913. Both were integral to the discipline.

<sup>131</sup> Jonathan Auerbach, *Weapons of Democracy: Propaganda, Progressivism, and American Public Opinion* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), p. 95.

<sup>132</sup> Randall E. Auxier, ‘Eco, Pierce and the Pragmatic Theory of Signs’, *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* (2018). Available online: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.1112> retrieved on: 10/04/2021.

suitably supported their arguments, it seems odd that this connection was not observed.<sup>133</sup> Roderick refers to Lippmann when discussing the role and function of metaphor in discourse, but, again, does not explore Lippmann's usefulness in a simplified understanding of the triangular semiotic framework. It may be that the assessment of signs and symbols and their use in public communication described in *Public Opinion* is not related explicitly enough to semiotics, or that it is too simplified. However, as some have stated, Lippmann's work, while complex in its trajectory, is written in such a way as to make it accessible. His formulation's simplicity, therefore, is its greatest attribute.

In the first chapter, Lippmann describes behaviour, as opposed to more obviously defined signs, used in order to communicate. He describes the 'triangular relationship between the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture working itself out upon the scene'.<sup>134</sup> According to Pierce, a sign is 'anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former'.<sup>135</sup> In this scenario, Lippmann's Piercian 'Object' is the true 'scene of action', the 'sign' is the 'human picture of that scene', and the 'interpretant' is the human experiencing their 'response to that picture'. The response is not directly related to the action itself, but to the 'picture' or sign that is their understanding of it. This understanding is the product of their interpretation of the action, which is a consequence of their stereotyped and/or simplified, 'symbolic' formulation of it.

Later Lippmann similarly alludes to a Pierce-like description of how meaning is created and understanding achieved. As with the scene of action, the symbol – or, in this case, the stereotype itself – resides in the mind. He asserts that 'few facts in consciousness seem to be merely given. Most facts in consciousness seem to be partly made'.<sup>136</sup> He then states that 'for the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see [...] we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture'.<sup>137</sup> The cultural 'definitions' might arguably be identified as signs, since they are not the thing as it 'truly' is, but a representation of the thing that has been collectively created within the sign-sharing arena (or shared 'pseudo-

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<sup>133</sup> Carl H Botan and Francisco Soto, 'A Semiotic Approach to the Internal Functioning of Publics', *Public Relations Review* Vol. 24:1 (1998), p. 24.

<sup>134</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 16-17.

<sup>135</sup> Charles Sanders Pierce, quoted in Albert Atkin, 'Pierce's Theory of Signs', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/> retrieved on: 10/04/2021.

<sup>136</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 80.

<sup>137</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 81.



environment') of a culture. Because 'a sign signifies only in being interpreted', and 'the meaning of a sign is manifest in the interpretation that it generates in sign users', it might be more convenient to this interpretation to describe the sign itself as the cultural symbol, which is to some degree shared in attributes between interpretants, and then interpreted by the 'users' of those signs.<sup>138</sup>

He later discusses symbols that take the form of images, or visual metaphors, shared by a culture. These might not be images when they are used, but linguistically invoked, such as in a speech. Thus the 'migration of a people' might appear to some as the 'meandering of a river', courage 'may be objectified as a rock', an individual's purpose in life 'as a road'.<sup>139</sup> When such images are invoked in language, the relationship between object, sign and interpretant can be more clearly associated with their Piercian definitions.

While these interpretations might seem somewhat loose (and therefore justify the scarcity of discussion), Lippmann's direct engagement with symbols has more clear links with this idea. In chapter XIII, 'The Transfer of Interest', Lippmann discusses the job of finding symbols with which to unite people with disparate beliefs and priorities. Here he discusses the need in such instances to find a unifying symbol that can be used to inspire the necessary emotion, while not necessarily acquiring precisely the same meaning to all interpretants. Successfully creating such a symbol, he asserts, allows the user to evoke conformity of feeling. Such symbols are designed not to truly signify any specific, singular idea, but a 'junction between' many.<sup>140</sup> Because this manipulation of meaning and its distinctness is achievable within communities that share underlying stereotypes or symbols, he asserts, 'a leader or interest that can make itself master of current symbols is master of the current situation'.<sup>141</sup> This ability, as implied by Lippmann and demonstrated throughout history, can be used both positively and negatively. Decades later, Umberto Eco asserted that 'if something [a symbol] cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth, it cannot be used "to tell" at all'.<sup>142</sup> Thus, read in this way, Lippmann's assertions are not altogether dissimilar to those of the more modern scholars of semiotics.

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<sup>138</sup> Albert Atkin, 'Peirce's Theory of Signs'.

<sup>139</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 160.

<sup>140</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 206.

<sup>141</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 207.

<sup>142</sup> Umberto Eco, quoted in Auxier, p. 8.

### 2.2.2.5 Collective Cognitive Dissonance

*Men cannot act in a way that they know is a contradiction of the environment as they conceive it [...] if in their presence, there is an insistent fact which is so obtrusive they cannot explain it away, one of three courses is open. They can perversely ignore it, though they will cripple themselves in the process [...] They can take it into account but refuse to act. They pay in internal discomfort and frustration. Or [...] they adjust their whole behaviour.*<sup>143</sup>

The above quote is remarkably similar to *Britannica*'s definition of cognitive dissonance.<sup>144</sup> Cognitive dissonance is a phenomenon whereby a person (or group of people) will either hold, or ignore conflict between, two opposing premises or 'cognitions'. The 'dissonance' itself is the mental experience of conflict, however its presentation in the external world is observable in behaviours that mitigate the experience of dissonance. For Lippmann, this tendency is clear, most obviously in historical forms of governance such as monarchy, but also in any known attempts to evade the very coercive force that characterises such governance.

Coercion, according to Lippmann, is necessary to the functioning of any culture that maintains any kind of power hierarchy. Since most larger groups of humans have historically required a central force in order to organise themselves and function effectively, this applies to most modern human contexts. He dedicates an entire chapter to explaining this controversial stance. It is this interpretation of human communities, and the conclusions he draws – that are only justifiable in light of his feelings and observations regarding coercion – that I believe has been instrumental in the misunderstanding and rejection of this book by commentators such as Chomsky.

Lippmann remarks upon the inefficacy of reformers – although he refrains from criticising their idealism – and writes that they have always had to 'choose between two great alternatives'. The first is a 'Roman-esque' imposition of peace, which is by its nature forceful and coercive because it relies on the centralisation of power. The second, more frequently attempted in modern history, is the 'path to isolation, to autonomy and self-sufficiency'.<sup>145</sup> He explains how these simplified summaries can be applied across the political spectrum. The problem with decentralising the assessment and application of individual rights is that this leads

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<sup>143</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 383.

<sup>144</sup> Festinger created the term; *Britannica*'s definition is a useful succinct articulation of the idea.

<sup>145</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 293.

to ‘floundering in a chaos of local opinions’, which necessarily leads to the defence, by some form of force, of ‘one local right against another’.<sup>146</sup>

The problem, Lippmann asserts, is that any idealist, any reformer, wholeheartedly rejects the idea of coercion, and this is where the ‘dissonance’ exists. Reform seeks to create either greater equality or greater freedom, and in either ideal, the use of force seems counter-intuitive. However, he argues:

They are all established by some form of coercion, they all exercise coercion in order to maintain themselves, and they are all discarded as a result of coercion. Yet they do not accept coercion [...] as part of their ideal.<sup>147</sup>

He explains that, for the individualist, ‘self-enlightened self-interest would bring internal and external peace’, while for the socialist ‘the motives to aggression will disappear’.<sup>148</sup> These statements acknowledge central tenets of both doctrines that recognise a temporary need for force or coercion, but reject its necessity in their projected, idealised society. As Lippmann points out, however, it is never truly temporary, because in order to maintain any social model among different humans with differing ‘pseudo-universes’ it is *necessary* to use some manner of force. For Lippmann, the only non-contradictory social theory is the openly coercive Machiavellian. As he describes, the rejection of the necessity for forcefulness of some sort ultimately leads to any other model’s downfall, since it rejects its own design. This is a good example of cognitive dissonance on a massive scale.

It is with this argument that Lippmann justifies his conclusion. According to his observations, coercion is inescapable and necessary to social progress. Therefore, he argues, it must be put to more appropriate and effective use: peacefully, and with benign intentions. It might be argued that commentators such as Chomsky are unable to acknowledge their cognitive dissonance regarding coercion’s role in cooperation. It would perhaps be more credible to argue that Lippmann bases his argument on what ha[d] thus far been achieved, rather than what is, potentially, possible. As Duncombe argues, the book must be read objectively, not disregarded because of those aspects with which one might disagree.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 293.

<sup>147</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 295.

<sup>148</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 295.

<sup>149</sup> ‘We can learn from his prescient understanding [...] while at the same time rejecting his pessimistic conclusions’ Duncombe, p. 26.

### 2.2.2.6 Lippmann's Proposed Solution

*It is on the men inside, working under conditions that are sound, that the daily administrations of society must rest. [...]*

*The outsider can ask experts to tell him whether the relevant facts were duly considered; he cannot in most cases decide for himself what is relevant or what is due consideration.*<sup>150</sup>

Lippmann proposes that public opinion must be ‘nudged’ towards supporting decisions and actions that have been verified through research, data and expert knowledge to be advantageous to the population, and that governance operates entirely according to this model.<sup>151</sup> Chapter XXVI, ‘Intelligence Work’, discusses already-extant aspects of sub- and non-governmental groups that have similar utility (to his proposed governmental bodies) in the improvement of social conditions. He understands that even specialist groups might be motivated by conflicting interests, but uses the example of a diplomat’s role, in that it seeks to be primarily objective, and asserts that the ‘the power of the expert depends upon separating himself from those who make decisions, upon not caring, in his expert self, what decision is made’.<sup>152</sup>

Lippmann is aware of the difficulty inherent in maintaining such objectivity. Still considering the diplomat, he observes that ‘when he begins to care too much, he begins to see what he wishes to see, and by that fact ceases to see what he is there to see’.<sup>153</sup> However, he argues, this is less likely when using experts to inform, but not make, decisions, despite his acknowledgement that they will ‘remain human beings’. It is rather a problem of parameters: their function must be ‘correctly defined’.<sup>154</sup> Those who ‘investigate’ must be kept as separate as possible from those who ‘execute’ the decisions that result from investigation. Furthermore, he argues, such a hypothetical ‘machine’ must be transparent, the work of each faction or ‘bureau’ must be subjected to analysis by and comparison with others, in order to maintain the necessary level of scientific objectivity.<sup>155</sup> He recognises the difficulty in managing such a

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<sup>150</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 400.

<sup>151</sup> This is a deliberate allusion to the idea of ‘nudge theory’, described by Sunstein and Thaler in *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), which has definite parallels with Lippmann’s proposed actions and will be discussed in the concluding chapter. For further observations on the idea, see Mark Kusters and Jeroen Van der Heijden, ‘From Mechanism to Virtue: Evaluating Nudge Theory’, *Evaluation* Vol. 21:3 (2015), pp. 276-291. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1356389015590218> retrieved on: 13/04/2021.

<sup>152</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 381-2.

<sup>153</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 382.

<sup>154</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 384.

<sup>155</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 386.

system, observing that it ‘might become a dead weight and a perpetual irritation’ but arguing that its openness and dynamism, its reliance on experts with specific and defined roles, would in fact make it less fallible and susceptible to ‘dry rot’ than other systems.<sup>156</sup>

It is around this idea that Lippmann asserts the need to manipulate, or ‘manufacture consent’. He argues that finding the best, non-partisan, non-subjective answers to every problem avoids ‘burden[ing]’ the citizen with unnecessary – and usually unwelcome – extra, often fairly unintelligible, information.<sup>157</sup> Should the ‘private citizen’ wish to invest themselves in an area in which they are interested, they have the opportunity to belong to those ‘voluntary societies’ that are in place to check the functioning and objectivity of officialdom.<sup>158</sup> Therefore, he argues, should public opinion be harnessed and manipulated within the confines of such a system, those who wish to participate are able to, and those who do not wish to be burdened can allow it to act for them.

Lippmann argues that, in creating such a system, better education could be made available. Through harvesting ‘social knowledge’ in a systematic way, the ‘body of data’ accumulated would allow social scientists, and ultimately schools, to create a more true-to-life ‘conceptual picture of the world’.<sup>159</sup> His proposed system, therefore, would ultimately work towards mitigating against those fallibilities that created the need for it.

### 2.2.3 Lippmann’s Legacy

*As our minds become more deeply aware of their own subjectivism, we find a zest in the objective method that is not otherwise there. We see vividly [...] the enormous mischief and casual cruelty of our prejudices.*<sup>160</sup>

*Public Opinion* has had an enormous impact on the social sciences, and was a canny publishing choice by Unwin. According to Newman, many who read Lippmann ‘properly’ use his observations in order to study, understand, and ultimately combat problems in society, such as prejudice and discrimination.<sup>161</sup> Newman summarises Lippmann’s conclusion in modern terms: that humans are ‘limited capacity motivated processors of information who are prone to

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<sup>156</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 394.

<sup>157</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 399.

<sup>158</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 400.

<sup>159</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 408.

<sup>160</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 410.

<sup>161</sup> Leonard S. Newman, ‘Was Walter Lippmann interested in Stereotyping?’ *History of Psychology* Vol. 12:1 (Feb 2009), p. 13. Available from: <https://oce.ovid.com/article/00120507-200902000-00002/HTML> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

biases’ and describes Lippmann’s pessimistic outlook as ‘alarmist’. However, Newman’s alternative proposed descriptions for human cognition do not reject this summary, and instead seek to emphasise the intended pragmatism with which mental representations are made and functionality achieved ‘despite the biases to which [humans] are prone’.<sup>162</sup> It seems, then, that Lippmann’s astute observations about human behaviour have only found greater legitimacy and acceptance as the understanding of cognition has progressed.

The discomfort many feel with Lippmann’s advocacy of coercion appears self-contradictory: the modern world operates almost entirely on a coercive basis. ‘Surveillance capitalism’ is by its nature coercive. In any society with a hierarchical structure (i.e. every society) coercion exists, and manipulation is inherent. It is inarguably true that the level of complexity in any given political decision is far more complex than most who feel strongly about it understand, whether or not they are aware of this. As Koster and Heijden observe – in their evaluation of ‘Nudge’ theory (an area very much related to Lippmann’s proposed solutions, discussed in Part Three) – individuals ‘lack the capacity to store the voluminous information needed [to make far-reaching decisions] as well as the cognitive ability to process that information’.<sup>163</sup>

While what some interpret as Lippmann’s ‘implicit advoc[acy] of fascism’ is uncomfortable, his intended solution was not, as many interpret it, truly ‘fascistic’.<sup>164</sup> As Auerbach asserts, such interpretation misunderstands Lippmann. Auerbach sees in the ‘Dewey-Lippmann debate’ two commentators with similar outlooks: both ‘believed in science and the experimental method’ and felt strongly that the answer lay in the ‘collective accumulation of knowledge’.<sup>165</sup> For Dewey, this was through better and broader education for all; for Lippmann, this was through an objective, ‘big data’ led system. Auerbach attributes their divergent concepts of the ‘public’ and resultant differing notions of its capacities to the men’s different backgrounds: Dewey was a professor, and so his ‘public’ was interactive, interpersonally informative; Lippmann was a journalist, and so his ‘public’ was a collective of ‘solitary citizen[s] reading a newspaper’.<sup>166</sup> Both desired a better-functioning version of democracy, but could only conceive of their particular versions of this because of the

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<sup>162</sup> Leonard S. Newman, p. 15.

<sup>163</sup> Mark Kusters and Jeroen Van Der Heijden, ‘From Mechanism to Virtue: Evaluating Nudge Theory’ *Evaluation* Vol. 21:3 (July 2015), p. 278. Available from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/1356389015590218> retrieved on: 07/02/2023.

<sup>164</sup> Weingast, quoted in Newman, p. 14.

<sup>165</sup> Jonathan Auerbach, *Weapons of Democracy: Propaganda, Progressivism, and American Public Opinion* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), p. 95.

<sup>166</sup> Jonathan Auerbach, p. 96.

limitations of their own perspectives – their ‘socialisation’ experiences. This is perhaps ironic, given Lippmann’s in-depth discussion of interpersonal differences and their effect on outlook. Belloc’s somewhat backward proposal for governance was far-removed from both, and perhaps also a product of his personal experience of socialisation – demonstrating the enormous problem of personal perspective in attempting to achieve social progress, which Lippmann understands, and attempts to avoid in his proposal.

For many the problem lies in his solution. Having considered the justifications Lippmann provides, the problem seems instead to be characterised by the very thing he criticised reformers for. His proposal that ‘objective’ actors utilise data collected in order to make decisions for the public is itself idealistic, since no such entirely objective agents can exist, *because* of the cognitive pitfalls that he observes. Even if such independent experts as he describes could be found, their very role would either be compromised by those who did seek power, or they themselves would inevitably be subject to their own biases or desire for power. Lippmann’s seminal work does not give a suitable answer, but it most definitely continues to provide both scholars and would-be reformers with a number of important questions.

In terms of the arguments of this thesis, *Public Opinion* outlines an enormous number of reasons to advocate greater criticality and objectivity, and greater public awareness of ‘cognitive fallibility’. Lippmann’s text exploring the idiosyncrasies of human cognition is perhaps still unmatched in its scope and breadth, at least in terms of publicly accessible work. His insightful observations will be revisited in the final chapter.

### **2.3 Čapek**

#### **Human Selfishness; Plurality and Tolerance of Difference**

Karel Čapek was a prolific writer whose work is highly regarded in his native Czech Republic and Slovakia, but is somewhat neglected in English-speaking scholarship. His science fiction's characteristic concern about the human tendency to seek convenience and self-service at any cost has clear power in the context of today's environmental emergencies. His realism, considered here in terms of the *Three Novels* collection, is more timeless. Individually, the stories speak to our connections with one another and ourselves; in combination, I read them to tell a broader story about the importance of compassion and communication, of, particularly, acknowledging and allowing for the huge spectrum of human experience and its manifestation in the vastly different, and yet inherently similar, people of the world. This highlights another of the 'problems' the study seeks to engage with in terms of its proposals for the reimagining of 'critical thinking' in education: with greater and deeper interpersonal awareness and tolerance, it is possible to live in greater harmony.

Unwin thought very highly of Čapek, and of Czechoslovakia. His feelings about the Munich Agreement are demonstrative of his concern for fairness and for cooperation.



### 2.3.1 Karel Čapek: The Interesting Czech

Karel Čapek had the relatively unusual ability to capture Unwin's attention and imagination with fantasy. Unwin's overwhelming preference was for publishing non-fiction, and he makes little reference to any fiction or fiction authors in *Publisher*, but mentions Čapek several times. Unwin published Čapek's works from the 1920s until well after Čapek's death in 1938 – continuing into the era of the Iron Curtain that separated Čapek's native Czech Republic from Western Europe. As Čapek and Tomáš Masaryk's publisher, Unwin felt he was always regarded highly in Czechoslovakia,<sup>167</sup> and when invited by the Czech Publisher's Association to visit the country, Unwin took lunch with Čapek at his home.<sup>168</sup>

Little information remains in the archives about how Allen and Unwin came to publish their first Čapek text, *The Absolute at Large*, which was translated by Paul Selver for Macmillan in the USA. Selver translated only a few texts for Allen and Unwin; it appears that he was a man whose skills were in high demand.<sup>169</sup> Unwin thought him among the best, as evidenced by his assertion that 'we should not want to be rushed into finding a substitute when we should much rather have you'.<sup>170</sup> The exchange that led to and followed this statement, however, explains why the firm subsequently sought alternative translators: Selver appeared disinterested in doing translating work for the firm on top of his work at the Czechoslovak Legation (although he did find the time to write numerous reviews for *The Times Literary Supplement*).<sup>171</sup>

Macmillan published most of the American editions of Čapek's books, and, following acquisition of *Absolute*, translations were undertaken by Allen and Unwin and sent in Macmillan's direction. Unwin acknowledged what a 'satisfaction [it was] to be [Čapek's] English publisher'.<sup>172</sup> He believed that it was important for both publisher and author to maintain a 'singular' relationship of this sort; as he put it, 'you cannot maintain a fire with a single piece of coal'.<sup>173</sup>

The firm began correspondence in 1931 with a Mr and Mrs Weatherall, teachers at Eton with a penchant for Czech literature and fluency in the language. The pair originally

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<sup>167</sup> He describes (among other references, eg p. 146, p. 263) his 'unique position in the eyes of the Czechs' as an internationalist English publisher. *Publisher*, p. 427.

<sup>168</sup> *Publisher*, p. 409.

<sup>169</sup> Ref to various rejections because he could not commit. See AUC 29/3 (numerous).

<sup>170</sup> Letter 10/11/1931, SU to PS, AUC 29/3.

<sup>171</sup> AUC 29/3, various. Letters headed Czechoslovak Legation. A number of reviews by Selver are referenced later in the chapter.

<sup>172</sup> *Publisher*, p. 147.

<sup>173</sup> *Publisher*, p. 164. He was referring to Čapek and a number of other authors in this quote.

approached the firm with, and subsequently translated, Čapek's most popular publication in England in his lifetime, the humorous non-fiction book *The Gardener's Year* (1931). Following this, Unwin requested that they might draw the firm's attention to anything by Čapek that was similar, or appropriate for an English audience; in return they would get first refusal of the translation work. This relationship led to the publication of his *Fairy Tales* (1933), later *The War with the Newts* (1937), and, finally, the trilogy that is regarded as Čapek's most enduring work in English: *Hordubal* (1934), *Meteor* (1935) and *An Ordinary Life* (1936), published as a trilogy in 1948.<sup>174</sup>

Robert Weatherall wrote to Skinner in February 1932, following publication of *The Gardener's Year*:

I have before me an old letter of yours asking me to look out for another book by Čapek to follow "The Gardener's Year". Actually, my wife and I have read about 4 books by Čapek [...] in the past four months, but we are fairly certain they would not suit an English reading public, for they are too full of allusions to Czech conditions.<sup>175</sup>

Weatherall's mention of 'Czech conditions' is interesting. He might have been referring to specifically Czech cultural references and allusions – as William Harkins finds in *Hordubal* – or he might have been referring to Czechoslovakia's economic and social difficulties in the early 1930s.<sup>176</sup> At this time, cultural tensions were beginning to brew as a result of the Great Depression and its disproportionate effect on German-speaking areas of the country, and Hitler's rise to power in neighbouring Germany.<sup>177</sup> The letter went on to propose a collection of fairy tales by Čapek and his brother Josef.

A short paragraph written by Marie Weatherall to accompany these stories communicates her feelings about Čapek's writing. She describes his ability to 'discover in modern life more wonders than we should expect'; a 'freshness' and 'zest' that is 'infectious'; and an ability to bring 'the sunshine of sanity and good humour'.<sup>178</sup> When Catbird released a

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<sup>174</sup> AUC 34/5. Various.

<sup>175</sup> AUC 34/5 RW to ELS (Skinner), 29/02/1932.

<sup>176</sup> In 'Imagery in Karel Čapek's *Hordubal*', William Harkins describes various details that might have been (and continue to be) lost on British readers, for example the choice of names and geographical allusions to indicate character traits. *PMLA* Vol, 75:5 (Dec 1960), p. 617. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.2307/460674> retrieved on: 26/01/2021.

<sup>177</sup> See Milan Hauner, 'The Crisis of German Nationalism' in 'Czechoslovak History', *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Czechoslovak-history/109748> retrieved on: 26/01/2021.

<sup>178</sup> MW to SU [undated] AUC 34/5.

new edition of Čapek's trilogy, Bradbrook's review described the Weatheralls as still 'among the best' of Čapek's translators; which would have pleased Unwin.<sup>179</sup>

Čapek was a philosopher. His doctorate in and passion for the subject seems somewhat removed from his humorous writing, but can be easily connected with his science fiction and realist works. Commentators attribute varying degrees of importance to his belief in pragmatism and relativism in his fiction, but most agree that his philosophical interests played a significant role in his themes and stories. For example, Harkins alludes to various Czech critics' acknowledgement of this in his 'Introduction' to the *Three Novels*,<sup>180</sup> Badia describes his science-fiction as 'philosophical',<sup>181</sup> and Bradbrook mentions the critic Salda's reservations about Čapek's work because of its philosophical nature.<sup>182</sup> His *Britannica* entry asserts that 'almost all [of his] literary works were inquiries into philosophical ideas'.<sup>183</sup>

Čapek was close friends with Tomáš Masaryk, the first President and founder of the then united country of Czechoslovakia. Čapek wrote a biography of Masaryk, which was subsequently banned by the Communist Party – support for Masaryk would have been subversive in its implication of the national and cultural separation of Czechoslovakia from the Communist bloc.<sup>184</sup> The pair shared an idealism that has been described as unhealthy: Culik discusses how some misinterpreted their optimism as a belief that they were 'helping to save the world'.<sup>185</sup> They died within a year of one another, although Masaryk did not live long enough to witness the 1938 Munich Agreement.<sup>186</sup> This was probably a blessing: the Munich Agreement, a settlement reached between the British, French and Italian governments and the Nazis in an attempt to prevent a (by then probably inevitable) war, permitted German

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<sup>179</sup> B. R. Bradbrook, 'Review, *Three Novels: Hordubal; Meteor; An Ordinary Life...*', *World Literature Today* Vol. 65:2 (Spring 1991), p. 324. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40147231> retrieved on: 12/10/2020.

<sup>180</sup> William Harkins, 'Introduction', in Karel Čapek, *Three Novels* (New Jersey: Catbird Press, 1990), p. 2.

<sup>181</sup> Lynn Badia, 'The Absolute Indeterminacy of Karel Čapek's Science Fiction', *Open Library of Humanities* Vol. 5:1 (2019), p. 59. Available online: <http://doi.org/10.16995/olh.130> retrieved on: 13/10/2020.

<sup>182</sup> B R Bradbrook, 'Karel Čapek's Contribution to Czech National Literature', *Essays on the Arts and Sciences* Boston: De Gruyter, 2019), p. 1003. Available online: <https://www.degruyter.com/view/book/9783111562575/10.1515/9783111562575-011.xml> retrieved on: 19/02/2021.

<sup>183</sup> Amy Tikkanen, 'Karel Čapek', *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Karel-%C4%8Capek/20131> retrieved on: 12/10/2020

<sup>184</sup> Robert Pynsent, p. 332.

<sup>185</sup> Jan Čulík, 'Karel Čapek (1890-1938): A Writer For Our Times', *Russian Literature* Vol. 77:1 (Jan 2015), p. 2. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ruslit.2015.01.002> retrieved on: 19/01/2021

<sup>186</sup> Robert Pynsent, p. 335-6.

annexation of the Czechoslovak territory of Sudetenland.<sup>187</sup> Masaryk's life work had been bringing about Czechoslovakian unity, this tore it apart.<sup>188</sup>

Unwin's relationship with the Czechoslovak book industry was clearly important to him: there are more numerous references to this country than most others in *Publisher*. It troubled him how Czechoslovakia was dealt with by the British media, and furthermore how he foresaw the Munich Agreement would play out, describing that the newspapers emphasized that it was a 'small country a long way away, and not our concern, and that our Government would do nothing'.<sup>189</sup> Munich, and its implicit 'sacrifice' of Czechoslovakia, demonstrated the veracity of this insight. During the occupation, the firm published new editions of various Masaryk and Čapek texts, as well as acquiring translation rights on many more, both with the intention of their being available to Czech exiles and for their readiness when the war finished. Their intentions were to some degree successful – however, by the time of publication of the 1960 edition of *The Truth About a Publisher*, the money for those books sent to Czech remained blocked in Prague.<sup>190</sup> Unwin writes fondly of his prior relationship with Czech booksellers in *The Truth About Publishing*, describing them as 'almost uniformly reliable', and how, on his first visit to the country he was 'forgiven' for speaking German to a bookseller only because he was English: an interesting glimpse into the relationship between European countries and languages prior to the world wars.<sup>191</sup> He later observes that, despite the country's small population, book trade between England and Czechoslovakia was more important and lucrative than many other European countries because of the Czechoslovak 'hunger for books'.<sup>192</sup>

Čapek was intrigued by the English, and wrote almost affectionately about their odd and incongruous ways; even showing kindness when describing such attributes as their 'insularity'.<sup>193</sup> However, when Sudetenland was passed over to Germany in the Munich Agreement in 1938, he felt betrayed. His death has been related to this event by more than one commentator. McLachlan describes how 'many believed he died of a broken heart'.<sup>194</sup> He had

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<sup>187</sup> For further information, see 'Munich Agreement', *Britannica Academic*. Available online:

<https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Munich-Agreement/54283> retrieved on: 19/01/2021.

<sup>188</sup> For more information about Masaryk's political work, see 'Tomas Masaryk', *Britannica Academic*.

Available online: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Tom%C3%A1%C5%A1-Masaryk/51243> retrieved on: 19/01/2021.

<sup>189</sup> *Publisher*, p. 410

<sup>190</sup> *Publisher*, p. 263.

<sup>191</sup> Stanley Unwin, *Publishing*, p. 214.

<sup>192</sup> *Publishing*, p. 284.

<sup>193</sup> Karel Čapek, 'England from the Outside' for *The Spectator*, 5/12/1934. Reprinted in *Believe in People* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), pp. 120-3.

<sup>194</sup> John McLachlan, 'Karel Čapek, Democrat and Humanist' in Karel Čapek, *The Cheat* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1941), p. 151.

believed very strongly in Masaryk's work in unifying the country, and the Munich Agreement passed over what should have been land protected by that unification. In allowing it to be taken by Germany, the UK and its allies had betrayed the very premise of Czechoslovakia's relatively new existence as a singular nation state, and, by extension, its people.

Unwin describes being Čapek's publisher as a 'pleasure and a privilege', and gives the high praise that 'there [were] few authors, living or dead, from whose works [he] ha[d] derived more enjoyment from publishing'. He asserts that Čapek's works had 'thus far not enjoyed anything like the sale they deserve', elaborating that 'like the race to which he was so proud to belong, his work ha[d] a future before it'.<sup>195</sup> The former assertion remains true: Čapek is acknowledged, but rarely studied, in English-speaking countries.<sup>196</sup> The now-ubiquitous term 'robot' was first used in *Rossum's Universal Robots* (taken from the Czech word *robota*, meaning forced labour; and actually his brother Josef's idea<sup>197</sup>).<sup>198</sup> Despite this fact, and that, because of this and other works (such as *Absolute* and *The War with the Newts*) Čapek has been described as 'crucial to the development' of science fiction, the author remains relatively obscure outside of the Czech Republic.<sup>199</sup> Allen and Unwin did not publish the English edition of *R.U.R* – this was translated by Selver for New York-based Garden City in 1920, and published in England using Selver's translation in 1923 by H Milford.

Unwin's hopes for the country's future success were deferred: Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and Slovakia) remained part of the USSR until the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, and struggled, like many countries, for the decades preceding this. Čapek is certainly globally lesser-known today in the UK than his Bohemian (almost) contemporary, Franz Kafka. His work's breadth and scope, however, maintain a timeless resonance and power. It has been suggested that Čapek was 'extremely popular' in the interwar period in Britain, but largely forgotten afterwards: this might simply be due to the popularity of *R.U.R.* (1923) and *The Gardener's Year* (1931).<sup>200</sup> Selver's 1923 article 'Czech Literature During and After the

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<sup>195</sup> Stanley Unwin, 'Tribute' in Karel Čapek, *The Cheat* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1941), pp. 171-2.

<sup>196</sup> In the UK, this is in part because all examined texts in the UK are originally written in English, and the National Curriculum specifies that post-1919 works must be 'from the British Isles'. See Gov.uk's 'Subject Content and Assessment Objectives' document, p. 4. Available online: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/254498/GCSE\\_English\\_literature.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254498/GCSE_English_literature.pdf) retrieved on: 02/11/2020

<sup>197</sup> See Robert Pynsent, p. 336.

<sup>198</sup> 'Karel Čapek' *Britannica Academic* (04/09/2008) available online: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Karel-%C4%8Capek/20131> retrieved on 04/09/2020

<sup>199</sup> Robert M. Philmus, 'Matters of Translation: Čapek and Selver' *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 28:1 (Mar 2001), p. 7. Available online: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4240948> retrieved on: 03/09/2020.

<sup>200</sup> Jan Čulík, 'Karel Čapek (1890-1938): A Writer For Our Times' *Russian Literature* Vol. 77:1 (Jan 2015), p. 1. available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ruslit.2015.01.002> retrieved on: 04/09/2020.

War' supports this, as does Rene Wellek's 1939 article 'Twenty Years of Czech Literature'.<sup>201</sup> Roman Dyboski's endlessly complimentary 1923 review of the London stage productions of *R.U.R* and *The Insect Play* further demonstrates Čapek's positive reception in England at this time.<sup>202</sup> A highly positive review of *The Gardener's Year* by E. E. Mavrogordato (1931) and a rather unfavourable review of *The Absolute at Large* – by Selver, commenting that the English reader would 'miss the point of various local allusions' – perhaps go towards illustrating the narrowness of his appeal in inter-war Britain.<sup>203</sup>

In 1941, Allen and Unwin published the first English-language edition of Čapek's final, unfinished novel, *The Cheat*.<sup>204</sup> Unwin wrote a heartfelt tribute to the author that was appended to the text, in part due to its shortness: he had hoped to bulk out the book with tributes to the author, but despite purported interest, no texts were forthcoming in time from Czech contributors.<sup>205</sup> Unwin's tribute describes the most impressive aspects of Čapek's character to be his 'simplicity, his vitality, his uncanny intuition, and psychological insight'.<sup>206</sup> One might apply all of these descriptors to any one of Čapek's works; from his essays and journalism to his novels and plays. Other tributes were made by British admirers, along with an addition to the end of the story by Čapek's widow.<sup>207</sup> A reproduction of a piece from 'P.E.N' was included. In it, two particularly apposite assertions were made about the values implicit in Čapek's works. 'Miss Jameson' (Storm Jameson) describes how, as the voice of Czechoslovakia, Čapek demonstrated a 'faith in the power of reason' and a 'belief in the value of the individual human being'.<sup>208</sup> Desmond MacCarthy is described as having:

dwelt on Čapek's love of freedom, particularly that dangerous thing freedom of thought which was so much more precious than anything that it could destroy.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>201</sup> Paul Selver and Arne Novak, 'Czech Literature During and After the War', *The Slavonic Review* Vol. 24 (June 1923), p. 129. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4201691> retrieved on: 19/01/2021. Rene Wellek, 'Karel Čapek', *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 15:43 (July 1936). Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4203208> retrieved on: 19/01/2021.

<sup>202</sup> Roman Dyboski, 'The Two Czech Plays on the London Stage' *The Slavonic Review* Vol 2:4 (June 1923). Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4201715> retrieved on: 19/01/2021.

<sup>203</sup> E. E. Mavrogordato, 'The Gardener's Year' (review), *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26/02/1931. Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200236337/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=bb7f078f](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200236337/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=bb7f078f) retrieved on: 19/01/2021. P. Selver, 'The Absolute at Large' (review), *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26/05/1927. Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200220736/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=c80c53ab](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200220736/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=c80c53ab) retrieved on: 19/01/2021.

<sup>204</sup> *Zivor A Dilo Skladatele Foltyna* in Czech, or 'The Life and Work of the Composer Foltyn'.

<sup>205</sup> AUC 102/4 letter SU to MW, dated 17/12/1940.

<sup>206</sup> Stanley Unwin's 'Tribute', *The Cheat*, p. 172.

<sup>207</sup> These were taken from her own conversations with him and from a small number of notes.

<sup>208</sup> 'Karel Čapek: Reprinted by permission from the P.E.N. News of January 1940' in *The Cheat*, p. 162. 'Miss Jameson' is given no further name in the piece.

<sup>209</sup> *The Cheat*, p. 163. Punctuation as in original.

Such words are, of course, also illustrative of the anxiety created by the Second World War; however, both descriptions demonstrate something of the relevance of Čapek's work to this study: he had a deep, powerful love for humanity and a desire for people to be understood (as far as possible) and valued by one another – in difference and similarity – and he seems to have believed this to be achievable.

Čapek's relationship with England is also engaged with in a transcribed broadcast appended to *The Cheat*, although this was not the only cultural commentary Čapek published on the English.<sup>210</sup> His surprisingly perceptive description of the national character might be applied today, though somewhat tainted by recent years' events:

I treat at some length the peculiarities of the British Islanders in order to emphasize the insularity of the English character. [...] England is a world for itself.<sup>211</sup>

He goes on to describe how:

England is a land of antimony, a land of paradox. It is the most beautiful and at the same time the ugliest of all the countries that I have seen [...] It is the most democratic land in the world, and yet holds the most ancient survivals of aristocracy in honour. [...] It has the most tolerance and yet the most prejudices. [...] English life is woven of sober common sense and the irrationalism of Alice's Wonderland.<sup>212</sup>

This broadcast is interesting: Čapek made certain to put a positive 'spin' on the description of his perception of 'Englishness' for his English audience, yet he is simultaneously damning. Unwin's inclusion of this address might suggest his own agreement: Unwin was strongly pro-internationalism, but came up against difficulties in promoting greater exchange between countries – perhaps in part because of the 'insularity' described here. Unwin, too, found the prejudices retained towards Germany following the First World War irritating and problematic. In the period following his death, the country's domination by the Soviets led to a number of his works being banned from publication; and, in fact, many writers were either banned or chose not to attempt to publish or re-publish in the years following 1942. Nothing written by Čapek was published in Czechoslovakia between 1949 and 1952.<sup>213</sup> Today Čapek is one of the Czech Republic's best-known authors, and his books are taught in schools in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

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<sup>210</sup> Karel Čapek, *Believe in People*, selected and translated by Sarka Tobrmanova-Kuhnova (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), devotes a whole chapter to 'England', pp. 113-129.

<sup>211</sup> Karel Čapek, 'Karel Čapek's Broadcast, 19 February, 1934' in *The Cheat*, p. 146.

<sup>212</sup> *The Cheat*, p. 149.

<sup>213</sup> Robert B. Pynsent, 'Tolerance and the Karel Čapek Myth' *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 78:2 (April 2000), p. 332.



Čapek's interest in philosophy is clear in his *Three Novels*. It has been suggested that Čapek's particular quest for truth instead threw up numerous iterations of the 'relativity of truth', and this is certainly true of this trilogy.<sup>214</sup> What ties the two books (or four stories) chosen for this chapter together could be summarised thus: Čapek understood, and illustrated, that everything is a matter of perspective. No one 'truth' is more 'real' or more valuable than another, it is simply more resonant, or makes more sense, from the point of view of its origin (this, of course, applies to ways of viewing the world, as opposed to believing or disbelieving objective facts). Furthermore, most people will operate in a way that is at its essence 'good' – motives, as logic would dictate, are usually moral from the perspective that created them. In Čapek's universe, humans are, generally, trying to exist without deliberately hurting one another.

Čapek's philosophical style and love of humanity has been interpreted as an incapacity to comprehend the existence of evil, and blamed for his post-WW2 unpopularity. Culík argues that he was 'fully aware of the dark aspects of the human personality', that Čapek 'feared catastrophe', and that he was, in fact, more pessimistic than idealistic. Čapek watched from Czechoslovakia as Fascism rose to prominence, having already witnessed the atrocities of the First World War. He may not have lived through the Second World War, but he was certainly capable of conceiving of humanity's collective darkness. I am in agreement with Culík that it is clear in his writing that these things troubled him deeply. Rather than being incapable of comprehending man's capacity for evil, instead he was able to see that the ordinary man is far from evil: that, rather, he is vulnerable to temptation and manipulation – like the temptation of convenience offered by Rossum's humanoid slaves in *R.U.R.* Čapek's human sympathy, his ability to even portray that with which he disagreed (for example, organised religion, in both *Absolute* and *War with the Newts*) in a gentle – but mocking – way, is emblematic of that same mentality I have perceived in the portrayal of Unwin: an understanding of the power of perspective, an ability to look beyond it and see our shared humanity; and a belief that, through education, or exposure to a broad enough perspective, there is hope for humanity.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Robert Pynsent, quoting Bradbrook's work on Čapek, p. 332.

<sup>215</sup> Jan Čulík, 'Karel Čapek (1890-1938): A Writer For Our Times', *Russian Literature* Vol. 77:1 (Jan 2015). Discusses Robert Porter and Robert Pynsent's descriptions of Čapek's reception, pp. 1-3. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ruslit.2015.01.002> retrieved on: 04/09/2020.



### 2.3.2 Čapek's Science Fiction and *The Absolute at Large*

*It is a foible of our human nature that when we have an extremely unpleasant experience, it gives us a peculiar satisfaction if it is "the biggest" of its disagreeable kind that has happened since the world began.*<sup>216</sup>

Čapek's science fiction novels communicate an anxiety for humanity and its future path, but this is always achieved with humour and sympathy: Čapek liked humans, and this is commemorated in the title (and content) of a contemporary collection of previously untranslated journalism and essays, *Believe in People*. He could identify and play with the inherent dangers in humankind's behaviour and thinking patterns, and seems to have had a prescient concern for humanity's domination over the natural world. *Absolute* and *War with the Newts* follow the same semi-apocalyptic pattern as *R.U.R.*, in that a great discovery is made for the convenience of mankind that, for a time, makes the world an easier and more comfortable place for humans. This seemingly positive motivation is similar in all three: in *R.U.R.*, robots take on all man's labour, so men no longer need to work. However, seemingly consequently, humans begin to cease reproducing, and finally, the robots rise up and slaughter all of humanity – except one man, Alquist, chosen for his involvement in the creation of the robots, since they are programmed to live only for a short time. *R.U.R.* presents a future in which humans are extinct: this does not appear to fit the 'gentleness' Porter describes.<sup>217</sup> In *War*, a race of intelligent newts is discovered by a pearl merchant. At first, he uses them to procure pearls, and in return provides them with knives for opening oysters and protects them from sharks. Later, the relationship becomes more akin to humanity's usual relationship with natural resources and animals: no longer reciprocal, simply in the interest of profit and convenience. They are adopted, internationally, as a slave-like resource. They finally learn to speak and think like humans, but have no concept of empathy for humans, and revolt against humanity in a great and bloody war. In both, man's original intentions are positive, but human greed leads to terrible outcomes. *Absolute* follows a similar trajectory. Because *Absolute* was acquired from H. Milton, there is no reader's report for it in the archives, nor any letters regarding it. This section will therefore focus on the text's central ideas and its reception.

In *Absolute*, a scientist discovers a way of creating vast amounts of energy from barely any matter, 'do[ing] away with poverty and hunger': so far, so well-intended.<sup>218</sup> However, a

<sup>216</sup> Karel Čapek, *The Absolute at Large* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1944), p. 141.

<sup>217</sup> Čulík, p. 2.

<sup>218</sup> Bondy, in *The Absolute at Large*, p. 26.

by-product of the extraction of this energy is the uncontrollable release of the fundamental force of life, ‘the Absolute’, which, despite its apparent benignity, transpires to be humanity’s undoing. Despite only running to 168 pages, the story covers several continents and numerous characters’ stories. The firm ran two impressions of the book, in 1927 and 1944.

*The Absolute at Large* is an interesting story to consider in terms of the current global environmental predicament and human over-consumption. While Philmus describes the story as being connected with the traditional alchemist’s quest for the Philosopher’s Stone, the discovery of the fundamental principle governing all matter, read today it feels prescient of the ongoing quest for the ultimate renewable energy source.<sup>219</sup> The tale’s cautionary element speaks to humanity’s present understanding of the damage that has been done in attempting to harness nature for human benefit, although there is perhaps an additional pessimistic edge to the outcome – that is to say, inescapable doom (likely precipitated by human selfishness), whether or not an answer can be found – when read in this way. Governments’ ongoing incapacities to meet the goals set at various climate summits despite the availability of the necessary technologies adds to this pessimistic contemporary interpretation.

In its time, *The Absolute at Large*<sup>220</sup> was described as an indictment of materialism and consumerism, and this interpretation retains power today. Interestingly, although Unwin does not refer to this in the archives or his books, this interpretation might have been attractive to him: in *Publisher*, he describes his excitement about and absorption in a Fabian Society text, written by R H Tawney, entitled *The Sickness of an Acquisitive Society* (1920), and his relationship with the Fabians and other socialist organisations more generally could also contribute to such an interpretation of his (personal) world-view.<sup>221</sup> While the aforementioned pamphlet’s nominal focus is materialism, it is more broadly the system of capitalism it criticises; and this is a sentiment that could be read into *Absolute*.<sup>222</sup>

The power of the ‘Absolute’ is unstoppable – it can create commodities without raw materials, will continue to produce endlessly; and will do so until and beyond the time when whatever is being manufactured has lost all monetary or commoditory value. Interestingly, this aspect of the novel and its relationship with the tale’s conclusion might be paralleled with Nick

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<sup>219</sup> Philmus, p. 7.

<sup>220</sup> *Továrna na absolutno* in Czech, or ‘Factory’ of the Absolute.

<sup>221</sup> *Publisher*, p. 169. Unwin published texts and pamphlets for various labour and socialist unions, as well as being the primary publisher for the Fabian Society. He was reportedly so engrossed by the ideas in this book that he forgot he had been walking his baby.

<sup>222</sup> R H Tawney, *The Sickness of an Acquisitive Society* (London: Fabian Society and Allen and Unwin, 1920).

Bostrom's artificial intelligence 'paperclip apocalypse'.<sup>223</sup> Badia describes the story as being, in part, emblematic of the Czech concern at the time about the exhaustion of the small country's own resources (and, indeed, Bondy's first words are "The Coal Crisis!"), but its challenge to, and awareness of, man's endless consumption also connects with today's understanding that humanity's model of continuous economic growth and overconsumption is damaging other species' ecosystems and the world's climate.<sup>224</sup> While the climatic impact of man's behaviour would not necessarily have been clear or widely understood in Čapek's time, the burgeoning size of the world's population and its ever-increasing need for ever-greater amounts to sustain it was already clear.<sup>225</sup>

Read from this perspective, the imagined source of endless power has simultaneously different and similar connotations. With the world's environment in serious crisis, innovations in renewable technology have been at the forefront of science for some time. Writing nearly a century ago, Čapek almost 'designed' the premise for nuclear fission generation twenty years before its inception.<sup>226</sup> One could read into Čapek's creation the danger of the unknowns of atomic science. Badia suggests that one might interpret the undesirable quality of this power – the 'Absolute', the godlike aspect of the power source – as being either a comment on the power of energy infrastructures over society, or a critique of organised religion, and argues that it might instead be read as a 'critique of free energy scenarios'; but there need not be any single interpretation or reading.<sup>227</sup> Čapek's science fiction, as with his realism, is not singularly interpretable. It might be interpreted also as a more general comment on the malleability and vulnerability of humanity itself. In reference to Bradbrook's notion of Čapek's illustration of the relativity of truth, it might be argued that one will find in Čapek's fiction a 'central moral' or idea that fits most closely with one's own 'truth'; one's own, unique, worldview.

<sup>223</sup> For a brief outline, see Joshua Gans, 'AI and the Paperclip Problem', *CEPR Vox EU* 10/06/2018. Available from <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/ai-and-paperclip-problem> retrieved on: 15/06/2023.

<sup>224</sup> Lynn Badia, 'The Absolute Indeterminacy of Karel Čapek's Science Fiction', *Open Library of Humanities* Vol. 5:1 (2019), p. 59. Available online: <http://doi.org/10.16995/olh.130> retrieved on: 13/10/2020. Quote: *The Absolute at Large* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1944), p. 7.

<sup>225</sup> In fact, the 'Population Problem' was something often discussed and written upon in the 1920's. For example, see, for example: Hugh Dalton 'A New Contribution to the Population Problem', *Economica* Vol. 8 (June 1923), pp. 122-132. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2548480> retrieved on: 20/01/2021. World population is estimated at around 1.9 billion in 1920, see <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/international-programs/historical-est-worldpop.html> (retrieved on: 20/01/2021) and is approaching 8 billion now, see <https://www.census.gov/popclock/> (retrieved on: 20/01/2021).

<sup>226</sup> Badia in fact asserts that the book is 'premised on mounting fears [...] the exhaustion of coalmines', 'anticipated the historical development of nuclear fission generators'. Badia, p. 59. Available online: <http://doi.org/10.16995/olh.130> retrieved on: 03/09/2020.

<sup>227</sup> Badia, p. 59.

Culik points out that some have interpreted Čapek as ‘conservative’, ‘idealistic’ and ‘reactionary’; that he is criticised for being disliked by both Catholics and Marxists; that he was ‘condescending’ in his treatment of subject matter and was ‘dull’ in his vigilance against the dangers within humanity.<sup>228</sup> It is limiting to restrict one’s own perspective because of another’s subjective valuation of an author’s perceived politics or moral standing, whether or not one takes a Barthesian view of the author.

Čapek’s playfulness and candour makes his cautionary fiction accessible. His flawed and un-heroic protagonists are plausible. In *Absolute*, we are introduced to G. H. Bondy in the first paragraph, and the friendly, observant nature of the narrator’s description of the character sets the tone. Bondy’s newspaper-reading is described using a ship-orientated metaphor, which is entertainingly unexpected in its placement in the context of an electrical company’s office (located in the land-locked, albeit large-rivered, Czechoslovakia) – but it also nicely introduces Bondy as a real, imperfect and believable human:

He skipped the news from the theatre of war rather disrespectfully [...] then crowded on sail (for the *People’s Journal*, which had grown long ago to five times its ancient size, now afforded enough canvas for an ocean voyage) for the Finance and Commerce section. Here he cruised about for quite a while, then furled his sails, and abandoned himself to his thoughts.<sup>229</sup>

Bondy’s ‘disrespectful’ skipping of the war news, going straight for the section most relevant to his work and least likely to cause emotional upset, is immediately suggestive of Čapek’s perceptiveness of people more generally as well as being demonstrative of the nature of this particular character. Bondy is no hero: the only adventures he is likely to go on are voyages through the enormity of his chosen newspaper, and even then, he will remain in the safest waters. The parenthesised ‘aside’ seems gently mocking, as though the *People’s Journal* had become a little too self-important. Through this, the underlying theme of man’s self-importance – in that, in his attempts to make human-benefiting progress, he will ignore even the indisputable presence of a Gaia-like higher power – is immediately founded.

Marek is another example of an unheroic but likeable character of a somewhat different sort. Marek disappoints Bondy’s expectations: it seems Bondy’s primary hope of his visit to the scientist is to be entertained by Marek’s eccentricity, and affirmed of his higher financial and social status. ‘Humph!’, he says to himself, observing that Marek and his home are ‘so

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<sup>228</sup> Kozeluhova and Pynsent, quoted in Čulík, p. 3.

<sup>229</sup> *Absolute*, p. 7.

utterly different from what [he] had imagined' that he struggles to come to terms with his 'disillusionment'.<sup>230</sup> Marek is driven by his work as a scientist and inventor, and seems uninterested in financial gain. It is clear that he understands his moral quandary from the very beginning – that he has discovered a game-changing source of power, but that it is almost certainly terribly dangerous, in a way he does not truly understand. His decision to 'wash his hands' of the invention and pass it onto a person he knows to be less ethically aware demonstrates an anti-heroism, a 'humanness' to him that is characteristic of Čapek's people: he has made it 'someone else's problem'. It is difficult not to empathise with him, despite his choice to exempt himself from responsibility. He has spent his entire career searching for a means of producing highly efficient power, only to find that it has inexplicable and worrying side-effects. This is balanced by his deviousness – 'I've been expecting you!' he exclaims twice, and it becomes clear that he had already planned that it would be Bondy who took on the invention and subsequent responsibility.<sup>231</sup>

Neither of these characters is either wonderfully 'good' or terribly 'bad', and so it is with real people. Both desire personal gain or safety over the benefit or safety of others, but both also wish to do good, to a greater or lesser degree. The little insights into their inner worlds – Marek's knowledge and utilisation (even manipulation) of Bondy's character, Bondy's embarrassment at himself for making sweeping assumptions about the direction Marek's life might have taken – are quietly and understatedly humorous, perhaps in part because it is possible to see oneself in them. It is in this candid observation of humanity that Čapek harnesses realism in his fantastical stories, and reels his audience in for the journey.

Culik points out that Čapek was deeply unimpressed by the choice of many intellectuals in the 1930s to support totalitarianism and fascism in the furtherance of their own interests.<sup>232</sup> In *Absolute*, it is not only Marek and Bondy, but international state and religious leaders and ordinary people alike who are often driven both by the possibilities of the improved wellbeing of humanity and by their own selfishness. The wonderful paradox here is that, once the Absolute had consumed an area and its inhabitants, they were rendered incapable of acting selfishly – but it is this incapacity for selfishness leads them to ruin – like the bank who 'burned bundles of banknotes' or the bank manager who advocated and undertook 'voluntary poverty'.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> *Absolute*, p. 11.

<sup>231</sup> *Absolute*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>232</sup> Čulik, p. 6.

<sup>233</sup> *Absolute*, p. 43, 42.

Are we to take from this that Čapek advocated a healthy level of selfishness? *The Absolute at Large* answers no questions about the ‘correct’ moral path. Instead, it seems to ask us to question how we interpret ‘good’ and ‘bad’, to question idealism, but also to question humanity’s trajectory – and how we might seek to achieve any sort of social, cultural and ecological equilibrium.

### 2.3.3 *Three Novels*

*If the characters and events in the trilogy are tragic, the vision of a democratic society based on man’s perception of his own plurality is not.*<sup>234</sup>

The Weatherall translation of *Three Novels* (1948) is still used today.<sup>235</sup> They were published together twelve years after the final novel (*An Ordinary Life*) had been released. Mrs Weatherall felt, towards the end of the war, that ‘the Czech cause would be helped’ through such an endeavour.<sup>236</sup> The Czech Republic had suffered numerous social and financial blows since the Munich Agreement, and was by this time divided between Soviet and German control: the Prague uprising took place only three months later, and following the end of the war the country had many battles to come. Unwin responded saying it would be put ‘high up on the list of hundreds of titles which [they were] pining to reprint’. The problem, as ever, was paper.<sup>237</sup>

#### 2.3.3.1 *Hordubal*

*The heart of Juraj Hordubal was lost somewhere, and was never buried*<sup>238</sup>

Čapek deals with selfishness, among other human flaws, in the first of the *Three Novels*, *Hordubal*. The eponymous protagonist can see that his wife’s selfish behaviour is harmful to him, but because of his love for her, he forgives her. Most likely because of his own need to preserve a sense of who he is, and what he has made of his life. We cannot be certain how much Hordubal knows of Polana’s infidelity – he deliberately avoids engaging with the evidence – but he tries to protect her from harm, despite her obvious betrayal. His kindness –

<sup>234</sup> William Harkins, ‘Introduction’, *Three Novels* p. 7.

<sup>235</sup> The edition used for this chapter, published by Catbird in 1990, uses the Weatherall translation. A second imprint of this edition, published in 1995, is the most recent edition of this text.

<sup>236</sup> AUC 243/6, letter 10/02/1945, MW to SU.

<sup>237</sup> AUC 243/6, letter 14/02/1945, SU to MW.

<sup>238</sup> Karel Čapek, *Hordubal*, in *Three Novels* (New Jersey: Catbird Press, 1990), p. 149.

or rejection of reality – leads to his death. As with Marek, we are simultaneously led to empathise with this character and feel uncomfortable with his choices.

No reader's report for *Hordubal* remains in the archives, though reference is made to it in reports on the other texts in the trilogy: Robert Weatherall describes it as being 'in a more serious vein than is desirable if the work is to be popular'.<sup>239</sup> This might have been in reference to real-life tensions and the (fiction) book's social importance as an artefact of escapism, as Fascism began to gain popularity and antagonism in England as well as abroad, and the Great Depression took its toll. It could equally be interpreted as patronising. Weatherall's correct prediction of its lack of popularity and the general trend of preference might be interpreted in the context of the anxiety of the 1930s, but it might also be interpreted in a more timeless sense: bestsellers are not necessarily known for their complexity.

Morrow's review indirectly suggests further reasons for Weatherall's uncertainty about its likely popularity. The review is overwhelmingly positive, describing a 'quality of universality which raises th[e] novel to a very high level of achievement', and Čapek's 'brilliant insight', but Morrow's discussion also alludes to possible problems with the novel. His reading of *Hordubal* as the archetypal peasant, 'mankind in the rough' whose characteristics of 'idealism and selflessness' seem out-of-place in the context of so lowly a person, is perhaps illustrative of a broader cultural snobbishness and classism – another possible reason for its unattractiveness. Morrow goes on to assert that *Hordubal*'s character is unbelievable, but despite this, somehow finds him to be a 'man of flesh and blood', and the novel a success. Perhaps in support of the idea that the novel would suffer for its geographical and linguistic origin is his reference to the 'fatalism so deeply ingrained in the Slav temperament'. Morrow's review suggests Weatherall's fears to be founded in both the novel's content and its context.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, Čapek's 'Slavic' name might have played a role.<sup>241</sup> While Britain was not at war with Eastern Europe, the 'Communist Experiment' did polarise the populace. It is quite plausible that Čapek's more Russian-sounding name might have been off-putting to some.<sup>242</sup>

The story deals with uncomfortable themes and human attributes which can be difficult to engage with, and perhaps pushes the limits of 'entertaining' or 'pleasurable' reading. The

<sup>239</sup> AURR 5/5/21, reader's report for *Povetron*, or *The Meteor*. Dated 13/01/1934.

<sup>240</sup> Ian Fitzherbert Despard Morrow, review of 'Hordubal', *The Times Literary Supplement* No. 1693 (12/07/1934), p. 490. Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200247272/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=662b9c3e](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200247272/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=662b9c3e) retrieved on: 26/01/2021.

<sup>241</sup> Similarly to German-sounding names, as in Part One.

<sup>242</sup> According to the introduction to Warwick's archival collection 'The Russian Revolution and Britain', 'Revolutionary Russia polarised British opinion [...]'. Available online: [https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/archives\\_online/digital/russia](https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/archives_online/digital/russia) retrieved on: 26/01/2021. See also Part One's discussion of problematic names in the First World War.

narrative is based on a true story that appeared in a newspaper Čapek often contributed to, and the names and facts are only slightly altered to suit his creative requirements.<sup>243</sup> It follows the tragic final month in the life of Juraj Hordubal, following his return from eight years working in America and sending money home to his wife in Czechoslovakia. She does not welcome him warmly, and it soon becomes clear to the reader that things are not as he left them or expected them to be. His wife has been unfaithful and will not share a bed with him; his daughter barely knows him and prefers the company of the farmhand with whom his wife has been conducting an affair.

Hordubal's behaviour feels reminiscent of 'cognitive dissonance', the term for the psychological discomfort created by holding contradictory beliefs.<sup>244</sup> Hordubal loves his wife and wants to believe that she loves him: he has spent the past eight years investing his entire life in her wellbeing and security. The moment in which Polana recognises him is not a joyous one: she 'stopped dead' and 'breathed quickly and in gasps'.<sup>245</sup> Despite this, all he can think of is how much he would 'like to put [his] hands on [her] shoulders'.<sup>246</sup> He does not express this to her, as if he knows, subconsciously, that he cannot. Instead, he later tells his brandy of his affection: 'for eight years I have been thinking of you [...] let her see: her man is coming back'.<sup>247</sup> When he returns from the drinking-house she is waiting, but not with affectionate intentions: she insists that the farmhand, Manya, must stay, and tells him that she will sleep separately from him. For a moment he thinks she might have been being coy, but again she rejects him – 'Go, go away' she repeatedly cries – from her sleeping-place in the loft, where, it is implied, Manya is with her.<sup>248</sup>

Things become more uncomfortable between them. Polana continues to avoid and ignore Hordubal. Hordubal loses credibility among his kinsmen as people talk about Polana's infidelity and his apparent ignorance. Despite this, Hordubal continues to find excuses for her and yearn desperately for her affection. He makes every effort to avoid confronting the issue: even when he asks Manya to leave, he alludes only to shutting 'people's mouths', to stop the 'vile rumours' which he 'know[s] are lies'.<sup>249</sup> It is as though he cannot engage with the

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<sup>243</sup> William E Harkins, 'Imagery in Karel Čapek's *Hordubal*', *PMLA* Vol. 75:5 (Dec 1960), p. 616. Harkins outlines the original story and goes on to explain Čapek's choices of name-changes as being related to stereotypes associated with place in Czech culture. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/460674> retrieved on: 02/11/2020.

<sup>244</sup> See 'Introduction' and Appendix.

<sup>245</sup> Karel Čapek, *Hordubal*, in *Three Novels* (New Jersey: Catbird Press, 1990), p. 19.

<sup>246</sup> *Hordubal*, p. 20.

<sup>247</sup> *Hordubal*, p. 37

<sup>248</sup> *Hordubal*, p. 41.

<sup>249</sup> *Hordubal*, p. 72.



possibility of the gossip's truth, even when confronting Manya. He even goes so far as to betroth Manya to his daughter in his attempt to undermine the evidence that fixes itself against him. Perhaps the most powerful moment, in which we, the observers, come to know that some part of him acknowledges her infidelity is when he visits Misa, the night of his death: 'tell them, they've got faith in you, you're a knowing one, they say – that she was a good and faithful wife' he implores the wise old shepherd.<sup>250</sup> Moments later he asks:

“can a man take his own life?”

“What?” [...]

“To get away from his thoughts [...] how can I get rid of them?”

This exchange leads Misa to tell Hordubal that he will not live much longer, and after this Hordubal leaves. It is here that we learn of the torment Hordubal has put himself through, desperately trying to believe in his wife's love and fidelity despite the evidence. There is perhaps also a hint of the inevitability of tragedy in one's rejection of reality: Hordubal states that he is considering suicide, but he is sick – Misa knows that his illness will kill him, soon; and even without his desire for peace or the terminal nature of his illness, Polana and Manya plan to murder him. We later find that, while the pair intended to kill him and believed they had, it was likely that his illness had killed him already. Hordubal's death was inevitable, but the means by which he died were, ironically, neither the fault of his intended murderers nor himself. The parallel between his desire to die because of his internal pain and his death due to internal illness is interesting, and in it might even be read an allusion to the relationship between physical and mental trauma.

There is little English-language criticism that engages with Čapek, particularly concerning his 'realism'. Perhaps his greatest critic in the English-speaking world was William Harkins, who is, tellingly, credited with being 'one of the first American scholars to do serious work in Czech literature' and who authored a monograph on Čapek.<sup>251</sup> Harkins asserts, of *Hordubal*, that the novel 'maintains [Čapek's earlier] relativist attitude towards truth...the truth of Hordubal's life and thoughts can never be discovered'.<sup>252</sup> Like the other novels in the trilogy, the concept of 'truth' is constantly played with, and the roles of legal and moral 'truth' are considered beside the exploration of personal 'truth'.<sup>253</sup> Ultimately, as Harkins observes, the

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<sup>250</sup> *Hordubal*, p. 100.

<sup>251</sup> 'William E Harkins, 1921-2014' Columbia University Harriman Institute. Available online: <https://harriman.columbia.edu/news/william-e-harkins-1921-2014> retrieved on: 21/01/2021

<sup>252</sup> 'Introduction', by William Harkins, in Karel Čapek, *Three Novels* (New Jersey: Catbird Press, 1990), p. iii.

<sup>253</sup> This is particularly true in the final chapters, when in court the question of what Polana was being judged for – adultery or murder – is considered, and the motivations of the prosecution questioned. *Hordubal*, pp. 130-149.

outcome is inconclusive: no-one can know or understand Hordubal. Because he is dead, he cannot try to explain himself. Since all humans are ‘distinct and unknowable’, there is no single ‘truth’ we can truly comprehend outside our own minds.<sup>254</sup>

In a later article, Harkins asserts that *Hordubal* ‘constitutes the thesis’ of the entire trilogy: that all men are ‘distinct and unknowable’, that their experience is ‘incommunicable’. His rather pessimistic interpretation of this is that man is, as a result, doomed to ultimate isolation.<sup>255</sup> This might have been Čapek’s intended interpretation, but the novel could instead be read in more neutral, or even optimistic terms. Rather than the inescapable unknowability of an individual’s unique perspective and experience inducing a hopeless acknowledgement of eternal loneliness, could it instead be translated into a message of caution and an expression of the need for more universal openness to one another’s ‘truths’? Surely, if Čapek wished the reader to understand, through Hordubal’s story, that we cannot fully understand one another, we might instead take it as an opportunity to find greater objectivity when attempting to understand (to whatever degree we are able) our fellow man. It might be impossible to fully comprehend his experience, but by acknowledging this, we make it easier to broaden our perspective, and to try and conceive of how another has come to hold their personal beliefs and opinions. Kelly’s theory of personal constructs illustrates a similar idea: we are all unique products of our unique collections of experiences; recognising and using this in our interactions with one another might lead to greater tolerance.<sup>256</sup> Furthermore, Hordubal is derided for his apparent inability to see what he did not wish to – that which brought him, at least mentally, to his untimely end – and yet this is something that humans do constantly: wherever a truth is unpalatable, there will be those who ignore it, and those who refuse to accept it. Broadly speaking, this could apply to an acknowledgement of the inescapability of poverty by those who have privilege, or the (non)observation of blatant corruption by a political party. Hordubal, at least, had the decency to be troubled by his dissonance.

Of Hordubal, Čapek himself describes the possibility that all our interpretations and possible understandings might be equally ‘true’ and valid.<sup>257</sup> Perhaps, more often than we choose to see, there is ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ in differing perspectives. This, perhaps, is *Hordubal*’s greatest insight, and one that is timeless in its resonance and relevance.

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<sup>254</sup> ‘Introduction’, Harkins, p. iv.

<sup>255</sup> William Harkins, ‘Imagery in Karel Čapek’s *Hordubal*’, *PMLA* Vol. 75:5 (Dec 1960), p. 616. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/460674> retrieved on: 13/10/2020

<sup>256</sup> For example, see George Kelly, *A Theory of Personality* (W W Norton, 1963). See also, ‘Introduction’, for further explanation.

<sup>257</sup> Karel Čapek, ‘Afterword’, *Three Novels*, p. 465-6.

### 2.3.3.2 *Meteor*

*We invent stories which you can't undo, against which you can do nothing, they are as irreparable and unchangeable as history.*<sup>258</sup>

There are two reader's reports for the second book, *Meteor* – originally named *Povetron*, meaning 'air'.<sup>259</sup> The title refers to the nameless man's descent to Earth. *Meteor*, like *Hordubal*, forces the reader to reconsider their conception of 'truth', but whereas in the previous tale we are given some insight into Hordubal's life, the nameless traveller gives nothing away of his internal life or past. Instead, it is created for him by those who observe and are intrigued by his characterless, dying body.

Crankshaw's report makes clear his interpretation of the work as a philosophical experiment; describing the characters who create Case X's story for him as 'exponents of an idea, a mode of thinking or feeling, a state of mind', whereas the man about whom the reader knows with certainty almost nothing 'IS the book'.<sup>260</sup> That an almost-dead and silent man makes up the whole of the story is itself unusual, perhaps even confusing, and is emblematic, perhaps, of the complexity of what Čapek might have been attempting to achieve. The report's closing words demonstrate Crankshaw's admiration for the book – but also illustrate the confusion one is left with after reading it:

I can only say that the whole thing is impressive and beautiful and extraordinarily allusive – it is one long subtle ellipsis. It throws little darts of light on innumerable aspects of life, and draws sustenance from them in turn [...] I am quite sure that it makes a definitely worthwhile book, which, alas, will be read by all too few people.<sup>261</sup>

Again, the book's unlikely popularity is alluded to. *Meteor*'s deliberately unsatisfying structure might not have helped its popularity – the non-standard style that lacks conclusion and catharsis might have been too unusual or controversial for many. Charques's review in *The Times Literary Supplement* is not overwhelmingly positive, and makes clear the vagueness and experimental nature of the novel, itself asking four questions in the first lines:

How [...] should a novelist set his imagination to work upon a fragment of real life?  
And for that matter, what precisely is imagination in these circumstances? [...] Who is

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<sup>258</sup> *Meteor*, in *Three Novels*, p. 233

<sup>259</sup> This is now considered a Slovak, rather than Czech, word.

<sup>260</sup> AURR 5/2/01, reader's report for *Meteor* by Edward Crankshaw. Dated 29/03/1934. Caps in original.

<sup>261</sup> Reader's report for *Meteor* by Edward Crankshaw, AURR 5/2/01.

Case X? What is the history of the man, what is the sequence of possibilities leading up to this last achieved possibility?

This review calls to mind critics' references to the philosophical nature of Čapek's fiction. Charques makes clear the fact that these questions remain unanswered, that the premise of the novel is the very fact that no questions are satisfactorily answered. This, perhaps combined once again with its setting in a 'small' country that was 'a long way away', might have impacted its potential popularity.<sup>262</sup> Crankshaw's assertion that it would 'be read by all too few people' was probably, unfortunately, correct. Because its narrative is vague, its trajectory unclear and its central thesis difficult to ascertain, it is not an 'easy' book – but this might in fact have worked in its favour, as many modernist works of fiction could be considered 'difficult'. The absence of criticism of Čapek's realist work further demonstrates Crankshaw's insight: *Meteor*, along with both other works in this collection, has been neglected by academics in English-speaking countries.

*Meteor* has no denouement, the reader is not left with the feeling of completion or catharsis they might ordinarily expect. As Crankshaw describes it, the whole piece is an 'ellipsis'. The reader is, instead, left frustrated. If we are to interpret this through Harkins' assertion of its relativist translation of 'truth', Čapek's intention seems to be to frustrate: we all-too-readily seek, and accept, 'absolute truths'. Too often, the world must be understood in black-and-white terms. While objective fact can be seen as an aspect of reality with little room for reinterpretation, human experience is too complex, every meaning a product of the combination of every other experience and understanding within each unique individual.<sup>263</sup> That said, Harkins' belief that the 'common core' found in all their stories demonstrates the common humanity shared between the storytellers and the dying man (and, by extension, us all) might indicate that this story, as with *Hordubal*, need not be interpreted entirely pessimistically. Harkins finds in *Meteor* the 'antithesis' of the trilogy's thesis – the universal experience that we inescapably share because of our 'human essence'. This supports my own interpretation: Čapek's trilogy asks us to consider ourselves as both separate and, simultaneously, together in our experience, to understand one another at a deep, human level, whether or not our perspective is radically different from our interlocutor's. We, as a species, are – if Čapek's *Three Novels* are read together and conceived of in this way – at once entirely

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<sup>262</sup> R. D. Charques, review of 'Meteor', *The Times Literary Supplement* (No 1726, 28/02/1935), p. 121. Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200048492/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=60f70dc4](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200048492/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=60f70dc4) retrieved on: 26/01/2021. 'Small country a long way away', as before: *Publisher*, p. 410.

<sup>263</sup> Related to 'what fires together, wires together' (see introduction) and Kelly's theory of personal constructs.

different and completely unique individual entities, and simultaneously innately similar, collaborating in a collective journey.

This appetite for ‘truth’ – or answers – is noted in neuroscience. Burnett describes the brain’s desire to find patterns and relationships between unrelated things – ‘apophenia’ – as an idiosyncrasy of our neural makeup: something we might perceive in the ways in which the respective narrators find and tell Case X’s story.<sup>264</sup> The very desire to create a tragic history for an unnamed man – that he must have had a tragic life to have died in such circumstances – seems emblematic of this trait. The sister’s story of lost love gives an insight into her own psychology, while also seeming to require his aloneness in death to have some relationship with an aloneness and a loneliness in his lifetime – for there to be a discernible pattern leading to the circumstances of his death.<sup>265</sup> The clairvoyant believes that the man’s loneliness began with the absence of a mother, which led him to seek solitude because of his difference, to ‘melt his inner destitution like a piece of ice in the immense solitude of the open sea, or of foreign countries’.<sup>266</sup> He uses the presence of foreign currency on the body here as ‘evidence’. The writer is the most self-aware, acknowledging that his story exists almost entirely as a result of his desire to create it. His letter seems to express the desire they all felt to create connections and coherence in an impossibly impenetrable history:

It is a bad habit to look at people and things for possible stories. As soon as you open your mind to a possibility, you open, as they say, the door of your phantasy; nothing prevents you from inventing anything [...] we have to struggle with our own phantasy, nursing it so that it does not forsake that mysterious and proper path that is called truth. [...]

If you think that all we have to do is to manufacture illusions, you are mistaken [...] we attempt to achieve reality itself.<sup>267</sup>

The writer’s personal relationship with storytelling is obviously one that has received more introspective attention than most: he acknowledges immediately the ‘phantasy’ of his version of Case X’s life. He also demonstrates an awareness of that desire to find connections, create plausible ‘truths’ and ‘realities’, while simultaneously referring directly to their fictional

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<sup>264</sup> Dean Burnett, *The Idiot Brain* (London: Faber and Faber, 2016), pp. 77-84.

<sup>265</sup> The sister’s story comes from a dream, in which the dead man relays a story he feels he must share – the story of his betrayal of a young girl, and the guilt this left him with; *Meteor*, pp. 174-181.

<sup>266</sup> *Meteor*, p. 210.

<sup>267</sup> *Meteor*, pp. 228-9.

nature. He, too, finds loneliness in Case X's story. Perhaps his own loneliness played some role, as evidenced by his distracting attraction to the young nurse.<sup>268</sup>

Čapek's observation of the human desire for simplicity – for everything to have two, separable sides, for there to be narrative rather than chaos – is mentioned in Weatherall's report. She describes how, although the different accounts vary in their specifics, they all describe 'a lonely man who was always torn between two extremes'.<sup>269</sup> This shared quality seems emblematic of the creators' own desires for binaries, for extremes; a seemingly timeless human trait: good and evil, individualist and socialist, happy and sad.

Čapek acknowledges ego-bias and the tendency to anchor meaning in our own understanding when discussing *Meteor*. He describes how each character who attempts to tell the fallen man's story 'includes himself, his experiences, his trade, his methods, his inclinations'.<sup>270</sup> One might interpret the nun's desire for human closeness (something the writer has assumed she does not have, as he has already created his own narrative of her life<sup>271</sup>) in her story. The superstitions of religion, too, she alludes to. The man describes how, after he deserted the girl, 'a curse had been lying on [him]', that he lived the life of 'a man who [was] unforgiven'.<sup>272</sup> The clairvoyant explicitly refers to the inextricability of the self from a person's interpretation of another's experience:

We must listen to ourselves; we must perfect our own inner being so as to discern that silent and multiple message that some other person is sending out. There is no other second sight but to watch oneself; what is called telepathy is not reception from a distance, but [...] from one's self.<sup>273</sup>

While the clairvoyant's actual telepathic skill is questionable (even he observes, 'Telepathy is nonsense [...] I decline it, I reject it'<sup>274</sup>) his assertion about truth – its relative nature, in that one person's truth, or their version of another's, can only be found within them – suggests that perhaps he is asserting that there is no need for telepathy, that 'truth' need only be sought and found within oneself. 'Listening to ourselves' might indeed be considered 'metacognitive practice'. Sadly, his confidence in his own ability and intelligence seems to contradict the implication of self-awareness he gives above:

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<sup>268</sup> *Meteor*, pp. 154-5 particularly.

<sup>269</sup> AURR 5/5/21, reader's report by M Weatherall, 13/01/1934.

<sup>270</sup> Karel Čapek, 'Afterword', *Three Novels*, p. 467.

<sup>271</sup> When considering her attractiveness, he comes to the conclusion that she is in a relationship with the doctor. *Meteor*, p. 154.

<sup>272</sup> *Meteor*, p. 184.

<sup>273</sup> *Meteor*, p. 206.

<sup>274</sup> *Meteor*, p. 202.

I am analytic; full reality does not disclose itself to us; it must be won with arduous labour, by means of analysis and concentration.<sup>275</sup>

After its clear introduction as a fiction, the writer's story maintains its writerly character: it is the most complex and detailed of the three, has more boldly drawn characters, and includes dialogue. It is, undoubtedly, a product of his trade.

As Kelly describes, and neuroscientific understanding agrees, this is an inescapable aspect of being human: it is impossible to extract oneself from one's life history, 'meaning-making' is founded in personal experience. Everything, every interpretation, must be anchored in something that is close enough to the individual's experience to provide a recognisable shape. Interestingly, Kelly has also been associated with pragmatism.<sup>276</sup> Inside each of their histories of the nameless man, the characters, with varying degrees of self-awareness, put something of themselves. This is equally applicable to those who have not fallen from the sky: every person is multi-faceted (an idea explored in the final novel, *An Ordinary Life*), in ways that bring them closer to, and take them farther away from, those around them. Their stories have contributed overwhelmingly to their opinions, feelings and priorities, and those particulars affect their interpretation of the fallen man – and everyone else.

Čapek describes this, rather than as chaos, as 'distinct plurality', 'polyphony'.<sup>277</sup> Were populations better able to conceive of the utility in accepting humanity's inherent plurality, we might reach a more positive state of reality. With the globalisation of communication, this is more possible than ever before, and perhaps more important. Čapek's insightful illustration of how we colour our understandings of others through ourselves is deeply important; but his conveyance of this idea, in stories that leave the reader feeling unsatisfied, perhaps leaves this moral wanting, obscures it: But how else could the fact of our overzealous need for absolutes be tested, except by avoiding its indulgence?

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<sup>275</sup> *Meteor*, p. 202.

<sup>276</sup> Kristian Weihs, 'Locating Personal Construct Theory', *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* Vol. 24:1 (2011), pp. 78-85. Discussing Trevor Butt's *George Kelly: Theory of Personal Constructs (Mind Shapers)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10720537.2011.530496> retrieved on: 27/01/2021.

<sup>277</sup> 'Afterword', *Three Novels*, p. 469.

### 2.3.3.3 *An Ordinary Life*

*Just look at yourself, man, you are nearly the whole of mankind!*<sup>278</sup>

The final novel is no less complex. It is the story of an ‘ordinary’ man, written as he awaits death. The beginning is uneventful: he takes us through his childhood, his quiet life as a young adult, and then as a husband and station-master. Čapek’s descriptions of the man’s childhood have been associated with his own youth, and they are truly evocative: it is difficult to read Čapek’s description of the incongruousness of seeing the ‘the baker, the barber and sometimes the gendarme, fat, with his coat unbuttoned and his gun leaning against the wall’ in the local inn, all away from their roles but wearing their uniforms, without acknowledging the craft of a man who never truly left his childish perplexity at the overwhelming complexity of the world behind.<sup>279</sup> This particular observation of the simplicity of childhood goes further, however – here Čapek acknowledges, as he does throughout the trilogy, our difficulty with truly conceiving of others’ lived experience and internal worlds. Those characters, to the young man, do not fit outside their places and roles; they are two-dimensional; just as everyone outside our immediate world is – just as Lippmann observed. This might also be associated with *Meteor*, in that any ‘depth’ achieved by the narrators of the fallen man’s stories is actually a product of their own lives.

The second part of the novel is where Čapek’s thought experiment occurs. Towards the end of his story, the unassuming station-master finds himself confronted by a multitude of ‘selves’. He is torn between different perceptions and interpretations of his own actions and behaviour, different shapes of his own personality and morality. The man is unnamed throughout, perhaps allowing this epiphany broader interpretation, greater ‘universality’. As Weatherall’s report observes, ‘the outwardly single-minded station-master becomes legion. And through the multitudinousness [sic] of his own self he becomes aware of his community with the whole of mankind’.<sup>280</sup> The report goes on to beautifully summarise the complex construct Čapek attempts to create of the face of humanity:

In the third book, however, which should be the keystone of the whole, the plurality of the man’s life does not come from outside but from hi[mself]. Here a man discovers that his life cannot be interpreted in a single and straightforward manner, but that the most simple life is made up of an infinite number of variations and permutations [...]

<sup>278</sup> *An Ordinary Life*, p. 460.

<sup>279</sup> Karel Čapek, *An Ordinary Life*, in *Three Novels* (New Jersey: Catbird, 1990), p. 329.

<sup>280</sup> AURR 6/1/47, reader’s report by R Weatherall, 11/01/1935.



And that is why poets can ‘create’ characters, and why ordinary people to a certain extent can understand each other. The vastness of life exists as much in one man as in the whole of mankind.<sup>281</sup>

Weatherall’s lyrical report is testament to the novel’s thought-provoking quality. Despite the inconclusiveness it shares with *Meteor* (and, indeed, *Hordubal*), there is no mention of its unsaleability; instead, he describes it as ‘the keystone of the whole’, avoiding engagement with the market entirely. Interestingly, this more poetic approach less fits the standard conception of a reader’s report, in that, as opposed to providing an assessment of the book’s ‘commercial or aesthetic’ value, it engages almost entirely with its intellectual and philosophical value.<sup>282</sup> This is likely to be in part because the report is associated with an already-planned reprint, however its divergence into Weatherall’s own philosophical interpretation is demonstrative of the power the novel had for him. It is perhaps unsurprising that this novel was better received than *Hordubal* and *Meteor*: in its contemplation of death, told in the first person, it almost automatically achieves a more universal quality than the first two. Unfortunately, Weatherall’s enthusiasm was not shared by its *TLS* reviewer, Maurice Richardson. Richardson makes only fleeting mention of *An Ordinary Life*, and concludes with another racial stereotype:

Čapek’s Central European penchant for mixing story-telling with whimsical philosophizing may irritate some readers, but these three short novels provide a virtuoso’s display of talent.<sup>283</sup>

Richardson’s belief that this is a ‘Central European’ trope is of its time. His introduction is similarly unencouraging, describing how Čapek ‘cannot leave his characters and their actions alone and is always commenting on their significance’.<sup>284</sup> This comment suggests that Richardson is not familiar with Čapek’s other works, since his science fiction does very little of this, and is far more action- than character-orientated. From Richardson’s simultaneously impressed and underwhelmed words it might be posited that the British reading public expected a predictable style: a simpler, more traditional manner of storytelling and characterisation. This is of course an over-generalisation, and it seems that both reader and reviewer were, in this time as in others, prescribing for the public their own tastes: selection, curation, amplification. From a business perspective this is necessary – it would not, of course, have been possible to

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<sup>281</sup> AURR 6/1/47.

<sup>282</sup> David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *Introduction to Book History* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 95.

<sup>283</sup> Maurice Richardson, ‘Belgium to Bohemia’ in *The Times Literary Supplement* (No 2455, 19/02/1949) Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200080031/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=2a64b9d9](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/EX1200080031/TLSH?u=rdg&sid=TLSH&xid=2a64b9d9) retrieved on: 28/01/2021.

<sup>284</sup> Maurice Richardson, ‘Belgium to Bohemia’.

publish every single book of every style and type – the assumptions made both by readers and reviewers have had a lasting impact on the world of literature that is arguably comparable to (and in some cases greater than) the power of the publishers themselves.<sup>285</sup>

*An Ordinary Life*, when one is able to see beyond – or simply enjoy – its ‘whimsical philosophizing’, is wonderfully strange and powerful. Throughout the first section it feels as though one is simply reading a Čapek-esque, gently satirical piece. When the narrator is faced with his own overwhelming and terrifying lived and un-lived plurality it comes as a shock, to the reader and to the man. The narrative’s prior softness gives greater power to the latter section; and this incongruence is perhaps effective in encouraging the reader to consider their own inherent plurality.

Interestingly, Harkins’ exploration of the story considers the human experience of the tension between order and chaos described previously. He considers the ‘order’ the hero ‘imposes’ on his world, how order is simultaneously seemingly ordinary but in fact quite extraordinary; since order itself is, in truth, a rarity we imagine for ourselves.<sup>286</sup> For Harkins, the story is riddled with dualities, and in this we might find the oppositions of the apparently ordered and linear direction of the protagonist’s life with the chaotic discovery that he was never truly one, singular and definite thing, but all his many selves.<sup>287</sup>

The final section is reflective, and perhaps this is where Richardson finds Čapek’s ‘philosophizing’ overt. For the reader who enjoys this aspect of the novel, however, it is effective and interesting. Chapters thirty-one through thirty-four largely deal with the narrator’s somewhat unnerving experience of himself as plural. Chapter thirty-two is perhaps the most intense, in that it is almost entirely composed of the dialogue between his past and possible selves and the self who is encountering them all. The entire population of selves address him, drawing attention to the parallel and convergence between individual and collective, ‘So look here, our whole race’.<sup>288</sup> The unnamed ‘everyman’ whose story is almost over has come to realise that, while his own story has had an apparent narrative, it has in fact simply been an addition – to those potential lives of his unborn siblings, to those lives already lived:

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<sup>285</sup> See Finkelstein and McCleery for a discussion of this in ‘Printers, Booksellers, Publishers, Agents’, *Book History*, pp. 86-100.

<sup>286</sup> This tendency can be associated with ‘apophenia’, mentioned previously.

<sup>287</sup> William Harkins, ‘Karel Čapek and the “Ordinary Life”’, *Books Abroad* Vol. 36:3 (Summer 1962), pp. 273-276.

<sup>288</sup> *An Ordinary Life*, p. 451.

Perhaps what I took to be simply MY life was OURS [...] God, it's a dreadful thought, dreadful and beautiful; that ordinary course of life [...] looks to me quite different, it seems immensely big and mysterious.<sup>289</sup>

The man dies not long after this final 'meeting' with his 'race' of selves and/or humanity. What was Čapek's aim? The translation presents a question in itself – did the word 'race' have the same meaning in the original? We can be fairly sure of the deliberateness of the Weatheralls' choice of language: they interpreted Čapek's intention to be to illustrate the simultaneous similarity and chaotic difference in each of our lives, both from within and without. The word 'race' also calls to mind Harkins' assertion about the trilogy's aims: he is 'nearly the whole of mankind', as, if we interpret the trilogy holistically, Čapek might be asserting, are we all.<sup>290</sup>

### 2.3.4 Conclusion

Čapek's 'Afterword' to the trilogy provides insight. Particularly, he demonstrates a deep understanding of the importance of acknowledging individual difference in perspective and understanding. He states that 'our knowledge of people is generally restricted to allotting them a place in *our* life systems',<sup>291</sup> and later expands:

Whatever we look at is that thing and, at the same time, something of us, something of ours, something personal; our knowledge of the world and of men is like a confession [...] we apprehend the world through what we are ourselves, and in apprehending the world we discover ourselves.<sup>292</sup>

Again, Kelly's theory of personal constructs is invoked; and perhaps also Berger and Luckmann's *Social Construction of Reality*. Čapek expresses the idea that we apprehend reality through our own specific and unique lens; Kelly describes how that lens is created as a result of all of our experiences combined – and is, therefore, unique. Berger and Luckmann demonstrate that this is related to our social existence: our subjective lens is a product of the influence of our experiences of socialisation; a person's interpretation of the world is the product of their previous interactions with it. This is different for each individual, while at the same time inextricable from the experience and influence of others. Thus, when considered together, the three demonstrate very clearly that the individual's singular perspective is, by its

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<sup>289</sup> *An Ordinary Life*, p. 451.

<sup>290</sup> *An Ordinary Life*, p. 460.

<sup>291</sup> Karel Čapek (Weatherall translation, revised by Robert Weschler) 'Afterword', in *Three Novels* (New Jersey, Catbird Press, 1990), p. 466.

<sup>292</sup> Afterword, pp. 468-9.

nature, inescapably different from every other – while also being inescapably influenced by others, and to some degree shared in its innate humanity.

Hordubal's tragic tale demonstrates the impossibility of understanding another person completely. *Meteor* shows us that, although this is the case, we share so much in our mutual humanity that we can, to a degree, 'find' and understand one another – even if the person we are trying to reach is not quite there, or we are reaching one another through something external – like the various storytellers find one another through the fallen man. The unnamed ordinary man's end-of-life experience illustrates the complexity and unreliability of our personal narratives, and the plural nature of the individual within the plurality of society.

These ideas might also be associated with Lippmann's stereotypes, demonstrating an acceptance of the reasons why we create them – because we desire an understanding of others in order to communicate and share the world with them – but also offering a clue as to how to avoid falling into the habit of creating over-generalisations and 'othering': we perceive everything through our own, personal lens; because of this, we 'design' our understanding of others through ideas and perceptions that are based in our prior experience or assumptions. Similarly to Dewey, however; Čapek tells us that this need not be the whole truth: it is possible to perceive the world in a (necessarily) limited way while simultaneously being aware of, acknowledging and accepting those limitations, and constantly seeking to broaden perspective. By seeking to apprehend the world more fully, people might not only improve their relationship with the world and other humans, but also better understand themselves. It therefore seems a less energy-wasteful task than the misanthropic Lippmann might have believed to attempt to apprehend the world more fully.

Čapek found cause for celebration in our inherent plurality. The final paragraph of his 'Afterword' expresses the most apposite expression of the trilogy's importance, particularly in our age of division and burgeoning, unnecessary intolerance:

It is no longer I, but we people; we can come to an understanding through the many tongues that are in us. Now we can respect a man because he is different from us and understand him because we are his equals. Fraternity and diversity!<sup>293</sup>

In a 'global society' such as we might strive to create, there could not be a truer or more useful insight. In difference there is strength. Understanding, accepting and utilising our plurality might lend humanity a power that would be inaccessible individually. Čapek's stories' implicit engagement with cognitive dissonance, and his message that in difference there is strength,

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<sup>293</sup> 'Afterword', p. 469.

both align with the thesis and its approach to critical thinking: by fostering tolerance and a recognition of human irrationality, it might be possible to break down the barriers between people and foster more effective communication.

## **2.4 Dewey**

### **British Education, Dewey's Educational Philosophy, and the Problem of Democracy**

John Dewey's work on reflective thought has been repeatedly associated with the modern conception of 'critical thinking', and his career was notable for its deep engagement with education as a crucial factor in the maintenance of democracy. His dialogue with Lippmann is often misunderstood as a conflict: in fact, Dewey agreed with Lippmann's observations but maintained that the *ideal* of 'democracy' (an idea that is to be striven for, and which is fragile and requires maintenance), enacted properly through high-quality education of its participants, could overcome any need for the manipulation of publics. Dewey's *Education Today* provides powerful insights both into the parallels between educational concerns over a century ago and today, and into the utility of an awareness of social conditioning in a functioning society. My proposals, described in the introduction and explored more deeply in Part Three, do not precisely match Dewey's: his radical suggestions are certainly powerful but lack design, and so do not easily translate into real-world action; and are somewhat vague and lacking in substance. However, his ideas certainly parallel my own, and his understanding of child development was ahead of its time. What distinguishes this chapter from the earlier three is its engagement with how things might be improved – in a constructive and realistic way, unlike Belloc's desire to move backwards to autocracy, or Lippmann's difficult and problematic technocracy. These final two chapters of the central portion of the thesis constitute the 'solutions' aspect of the historical portion of the thesis.

Unwin mentions Dewey only once in *Publisher*, in reference to his 'natural' desire to publish for him. Dewey's work never enjoyed great sales in the UK, but for the purpose of the firm's character, as well as in acknowledgement of Dewey's 'importance', the relationship was maintained until Dewey's death. Dewey is therefore of interest to the study for his insights, and for his general importance despite his works' lack of financial utility to Unwin.

### 2.4.1 Educational Books

Educational publishing, particularly non-fiction books of educational value (as opposed to primarily school textbooks) was an important aspect of the Allen and Unwin's output, and its reliability as an avenue contributed to their broad range of interests: in the prologue to the 1960 edition of *Publishing*, Unwin states that 'if the term be used in its widest sense, 70 per cent of book paper consumption is for educational books',<sup>294</sup> in *The Status of Books* he asserts that 'the vast majority of books manufactured consists of reprints of educational books, technical books [...] and classic writings'.<sup>295</sup> He later describes how, despite the publisher's margin being narrower for this type of book, they were a 'profitable line' because orders 'tend[ed] to be for quantities' and the 'turnover [was] often more substantial than for ordinary publications'. When a book was adopted by many schools, 'very little further effort' was required to sell it: 'happy [was] the publisher who ha[d] many such books', he wrote.<sup>296</sup> He even suggested that a good stock of educational titles would keep an otherwise less conscientious publisher in profit, since such books 'w[ould] continue to sell almost regardless of how the business is run'.<sup>297</sup>

Unwin felt that educational publishing was not prioritised sufficiently during the war, and he believed others felt the same:

more and more groups of important people became agitated about the acute shortage of books [...] Teachers drew attention to the foolishness of raising the school-leaving age without making any provision for the additional text-books [...] The Ministry of Education alone were complacent. They never lifted a finger to help the campaign for more paper.<sup>298</sup>

His agitation is evidenced in the numerous applications made for paper throughout the war – most often for 'educational' (in the broader sense) books – that were rejected, despite Unwin's explicit reference in correspondence with Paper Control to the 'present severe shortage of textbooks [...] resulting from the raising of the school leaving age'.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> *Publishing*, p. 18.

<sup>295</sup> 'what is consistently overlooked is that the vast bulk of books manufactured consists of reprints of educational books, technical books (using the word technical in its broadest sense), and the classic writings of all ages', *The Status of Books* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1941), p. 2.

<sup>296</sup> *Publishing*, p. 176.

<sup>297</sup> *Publishing*, p. 328.

<sup>298</sup> *Publisher*, p. 267.

<sup>299</sup> Letter 07/08/1947, SU to Paper Control, AUC 315/12/2.

### 2.4.1.1 Publishing and the Education System (1940-)

The National Curriculum, which today prescribes a great deal of the content and text-books used in schools, was introduced in 1989. Before this, schools and educational authorities were largely reliant on publishers' catalogues, independent enquiry and 'traveling salesmen' to source textbooks and resources. The English edition of *Education Today* was published in 1941, and so the focus will largely be on education during and following the Second World War.

The Butler Education Act (1944) was the second major change to the British education system in Unwin's career.<sup>300</sup> In 1918, the school-leaving age had been increased from 12 to 14, and the Butler Act increased it to 15. Its aims were to ensure better quality and sufficiency of education for all, regardless of socioeconomic circumstance, although whether this aim was achieved is arguable. The Act also introduced the tripartite system for free secondary education.<sup>301</sup> The Act drove some of the content taught in particular types of school – for example, Latin was a Grammar school subject. Beyond this, the specific materials used and content taught was largely overseen by local authorities and teachers. Churchill advocated greater state power over content and resources (specifically requesting that a 'note of patriotism' be introduced), however Butler rejected this.<sup>302</sup>

The idea of a prescribed curriculum has been the subject of divergent views. In *The Book World Today* (1957), A. W. Ready discusses teacher autonomy in his article 'Educational Publishing'.<sup>303</sup> He asserts that:

Britain is one of the few countries in the world of today in which teachers are completely free to choose for themselves [...] we should therefore value more highly the complete freedom of our teachers and publishers from state control. It is a great safeguard of democracy and has contributed much to the high standard of education in Britain.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> The Act applied to England and Wales.

<sup>301</sup> This was again changed with the 1976 Education Act, introducing today's system. Susan Wallace (editor), 'Tripartite System', *A Dictionary of Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Available online: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199212064.001.0001/acref-9780199212064-e-1044> retrieved on: 06/05/2021.

<sup>302</sup> Michael Barber, 'Rab Butler's 1944 Act Brings Free Education for All', *BBC Teacher Resources* 17/01/2014. Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/25751787> retrieved on 21/05/2021.

<sup>303</sup> Ready was managing director of the publisher George Bell and Sons and twice chairman of the Educational Group of the Publishers' Association.

<sup>304</sup> A W Ready, 'Educational Publishing' in *The Book World Today* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), p. 85.



This freedom had been increased in 1942, when the Committee on Curriculum and Examinations had proposed the cessation of school-leaving exams for those not attending university in order to ‘give greater freedom to the schools in framing their curricula’.<sup>305</sup> In the context of a world ravaged by an ideologically charged war, this was regarded, and framed, as an important aspect of British democracy.

Ready asserted that education’s greatest problem at his time of writing was funding. While schools were free to choose textbooks, not all local authorities received equal funding to disseminate among them. This undermined the Act’s intentions: areas that were already economically challenged received less money to invest in the futures of their communities, further entrenching the social divide. According to Ready, many authorities were only able to invest ‘less than 4/- per child per annum’, comparable to the ‘price of fifty cigarettes’ (roughly five pounds at today’s value).<sup>306</sup> Sixteen years earlier, in 1941, Unwin had acknowledged a similarly troubling under-allocation of funding by the Board of Education for school books, in contrast with other government departments who were ‘clamour[ing] for them’.<sup>307</sup> Unwin felt that this under-valuing of books carried into adulthood and saw it as a cultural problem:

An overwhelming majority of our population never enter a bookshop [...] a large section of that majority would be scared to do so. This is a sad reflection on our educational methods and a problem of no little importance.<sup>308</sup>

#### 2.4.1.2 The Educational Conversation

The raising of the school-leaving age, and attempts at creating a system that catered sufficiently for everyone, were great steps towards improvement of the education system. Many, however, felt that it was not only the institutional frameworks that needed to be addressed, but the processes of teaching and learning. Allen and Unwin were not alone in dealing with this broad and diverse conversation. Hogarth, for example, published numerous books and pamphlets dealing with various aspects of education, such as Mark Starr’s *Lies and Hate in Education* (1929), which explored the idea of education producing ‘mental dictatorships’, and argued that more interest be taken in the education of the working classes; and W.H. Auden’s *Education*

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<sup>305</sup> National Archives, Folder CSC 5334, Ministry of Education 1942. Letter for the Committee on Curriculum and Examinations, 04/08/1942.

<sup>306</sup> Ready, p. 86. 4/- is equivalent to approximately £5.13 today, according to the ‘Measuring Worth’ calculator. Available from: <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare/relativevalue.php> retrieved on 12/12/2023.

<sup>307</sup> *The Status of Books*, p. 5. See also Part One.

<sup>308</sup> *The Status of Books*, p. 8.

*Today – and Tomorrow* (1939), which considered ‘the place of education in the social system’.<sup>309</sup> The subject of how best to prepare future generations for the rapidly changing world was a popular subject. Perhaps the best-known of Unwin’s educational commentators were two men whose interests particularly lay in the processes of thinking and forming conclusions: Bertrand Russell and John Dewey.

Dewey’s contribution to education – particularly philosophy of education – is widely acknowledged. As Morgan Williams writes, Dewey’s various roles as ‘pragmatist, philosopher, educator and social reformer’ ‘greatly impacted education’, and she asserts that he was ‘perhaps one of the most influential educational philosophers known to date’.<sup>310</sup> For Dewey, the ‘only sure method of social reconstruction’ is education, it is ‘the fundamental method of social progress and reform’.<sup>311</sup> Dewey’s ‘cultural naturalism’ involved itself with the observation and improvement of social conditions, and he ‘sought to reconnect philosophy with the mission of education-for-living’.<sup>312</sup> Dewey’s various roles were deeply interconnected – and at their root sat education.<sup>313</sup> Rodgers describes reflective thinking as being ‘essential’ to the modern goals of education, and finds Dewey’s conception of it at its foundation.<sup>314</sup> Williams finds Dewey’s work to be central to the aims and ethos of ‘P4C’, a modern movement to teach philosophy and ethics to younger children.<sup>315</sup> Dewey’s ongoing impact, therefore, is clear.

Bertrand Russell and John Dewey were both involved in ‘experimental’ schools. Despite their philosophical disagreements (Russell was an outspoken critic of pragmatism and

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<sup>309</sup> For a more complete list of Hogarth’s education-orientated publications, see <https://modernistarchives.com/search/node/education> retrieved on: 07/05/2021. Details regarding the Auden in Edward Callan, ‘An Annotated Checklist of the Works of W H Auden’, *Twentieth Century Literature* Vol. 4:1 (April – July 1958), p. 35. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/440624> retrieved on: 07/05/2021.

<sup>310</sup> Morgan K Williams, ‘John Dewey in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education* Vol. 9:1 (2017), p. 91. Available online: <https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1147&context=jiae> retrieved on: 19/05/2021.

<sup>311</sup> *Education Today*, p. 15.

<sup>312</sup> Dewey preferred the term ‘cultural naturalism’ over ‘pragmatism’ to describe his philosophy. David Hildebrand, ‘John Dewey’ in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dewey/> retrieved on: 14/06/2022

<sup>313</sup> ‘John Dewey’ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dewey/> retrieved on: 19/05/2021.

<sup>314</sup> Carol Rodgers, ‘Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking’ *Teachers College Record* (June 2002), p. 1 (abstract). Available online: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240645823\\_Defining\\_Reflection\\_Another\\_Look\\_at\\_John\\_Dewey\\_and\\_Reflective\\_Thinking](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240645823_Defining_Reflection_Another_Look_at_John_Dewey_and_Reflective_Thinking) retrieved on: 19/05/2021.

<sup>315</sup> Morgan K Williams, ‘John Dewey in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, p. 99.

its 'rejec[tion] of dichotomies'; Dewey, apparently, actively disliked Russell<sup>316</sup>) the contemporaries undertook very similar projects. Neither approved of the 'learning by rote' model. Dewey decried its separation of theory and practice, likening learning in this way to 'providing thorough training in a science and then neglecting to provide a laboratory for faculty and students to work in', and found this disconnect between principles and practice to be a 'farce'.<sup>317</sup> He believed that learning and thinking should be active processes in which the learner/thinker is engaged and 'finding out', rather than passively receiving information. Russell criticised the 'worship of mechanism' and 'frequent repetition' that were characteristic of the standard learning environment.<sup>318</sup> He would later assert that he 'wish[ed] to see a world in which education aimed at mental freedom', a hope that would be difficult to fulfil using the 'passive' learning approach, since mental 'freedom' implies some level of mental flexibility, a skill not nurtured by this method.<sup>319</sup> Hearteningly, in the decades since, the educational model in both countries has moved towards something closer to their approaches, largely following Bloom's (1956) work on the learning process.<sup>320</sup> However, as will later be discussed, there are still major defects in the current approach's preparation of students for the modern world.

Dewey's 'reflective thinking' finds parallels in Russell's ideas regarding thinking and engaging with information. Russell's work has also been associated with 'critical thinking'.<sup>321</sup> Central to a great deal of his work is a belief in and advocacy of independence of thought and having an awareness of (and therefore greater control over) personal biases, as well as an aversion to dogma. He was disturbed by what he perceived as a lack of impartiality in British education – politically, religiously, and relating to class.<sup>322</sup> Both agreed that the most important and least acknowledged aspects of the educational process were the nurturing of independence of mind, and the prioritisation of impartial evidence over faith. To them, these characteristics

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<sup>316</sup> Tim Madigan, 'Russell and Dewey on Education: Similarities and Differences' *Current Issues in Education* Vol. 10:1 (Spring 1993), pp. 3-4. Available online: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/43783010> retrieved on: 28/08/20.

<sup>317</sup> 'John Dewey and the Laboratory School' in B P Hendley, G K Plochman and R B Brumbaugh, *Dewey, Russell, Whitehead: Philosophers as Educators* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), pp. 14-16. Available online: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/reading/reader.action?docID=1354435&ppg=37> retrieved on: 23/02/2021.

<sup>318</sup> 'Bertrand Russell and the Beacon Hill School' in *Philosophers as Educators*, p. 43.

<sup>319</sup> 'Preface', *Christian*, p. 10.

<sup>320</sup> Bloom's Taxonomy is now a standard aspect of most teacher training programmes. It emphasises the importance of engagement, synthesis and application in the learning process. Benjamin Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals* (New York: Longman, 1956). See also: <https://www.bloomstaxonomy.net/> retrieved on: 07/05/2021.

<sup>321</sup> Discussed in Russell chapter.

<sup>322</sup> William Hare, 'Bertrand Russell and Critical Thinking', *Journal of Thought* Vol. 36:1 (Spring 2001), pp. 7-16. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42589643> retrieved on: 30/09/2020.

were essential to education's efficacy and usefulness as a 'process of' – not, as Dewey regularly asserted, a 'preparation for future' – living.<sup>323</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Russell's Beacon School and Dewey's 'Laboratory' School

Russell founded the Beacon Hill School with his wife Dora in 1927. The school was small, with a maximum capacity of only around twenty students. Russell left the project when their marriage broke down, in 1932. Dora sustained the experiment for a further eleven years, despite financial difficulties.<sup>324</sup> She felt that 'ordinary' schools 'prepare[d] people for a world that [was] past, giving them the beliefs, and to a large extent, the skill that belonged to that world'.<sup>325</sup> Beacon Hill operated in such a way as the Russells felt was necessary to develop an enquiring and active mind: children were taught to 'think and work for themselves, [to prepare] them for meeting the problems of the changing world'.<sup>326</sup>

Russell's school promoted self-sufficiency and critical engagement, by encouraging independent research and promoting argument.<sup>327</sup> His experiment was, perhaps, a little too progressive for its time – certainly in terms of the school's attitude regarding the normalisation of talking about sex<sup>328</sup> – and, for some, served to reinforce his reputation as a figure of questionable morality.<sup>329</sup> The next chapter will consider his work from a different perspective: through his atheism/agnosticism and activism.

Dewey's 'Laboratory School' operated from 1896 until 1904, and taught 140 students at its peak.<sup>330</sup> Dewey's method and mentality was in many ways similar to the Russells': he advocated a learning environment in which children were encouraged to learn through doing and finding out, and to think for themselves. It was Dewey's lifelong belief, about which he wrote extensively, that the mind would operate better, better conclusions would be reached, and broader and more useful understanding achieved, if a curious and active mode of thought

<sup>323</sup> For example, *Education Today*, p. 6.

<sup>324</sup> Tim Madigan, p. 4. Financial difficulties: *Philosophers as Educators*, p. 46.

<sup>325</sup> Joe Park, *Bertrand Russell on Education* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012), p. 111. [accessed online] available from: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/reading/reader.action?docID=1104805&ppg=16> retrieved on: 01/09/2020

<sup>326</sup> Park, p. 114.

<sup>327</sup> Park, pp. 61-81. *Philosophers as Educators*, p. 45.

<sup>328</sup> See Carla Hustak, 'Love, Sex and Happiness in Education: The Russells, Beacon Hill School, and Teaching "Sex-Love" in England, 1927-1943', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* Vol. 22:3 (Sep 2013), pp. 446-473. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24616544> retrieved on: 13/01/2021.

<sup>329</sup> Many disliked Russell already for his prior conscientious objection and his anti-religion essays and talks (see chapter 5). According to some sources, rumours of orgies taking place at the school were also propagated. *Philosophers as Educators*, p. 43.

<sup>330</sup> Tim Madigan, p. 4.

was fostered. The name alluded to its *modus operandi*. Dewey hoped that it would function like a laboratory in its ‘two main purposes’, ‘to exhibit, test, verify and criticise theoretical statements and principles’, and to ‘add to the sum of facts and principles’ through its existence.<sup>331</sup> He intended for the classroom environment to operate in such a way as to simultaneously encourage questioning, criticism and testing of ideas, while itself being a test of his ideas regarding the educational process. His purported aims were to ‘supply the intellectual methods of good workmanship’, rather than ‘produce efficient workmen’.<sup>332</sup> Dewey also experienced financial difficulty. The school’s initial funding was accidental: a thousand-dollar allocation was made to Dewey’s university for a laboratory of psychology, but there was not sufficient staffing or space for the money to be used in this way. The money was grudgingly passed over to Dewey’s project, however after this, it relied solely on donations. It eventually failed.<sup>333</sup>

### 2.4.3 *Education Today*

*Education [...] is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.*<sup>334</sup>

Allen and Unwin were Dewey’s main publisher in England. Because he was based in America, most of the texts were received from Pearn, Pollinger and Higham, the literary agency. Books were generally in the process of production, or already published, in the USA by the time they arrived at Ruskin House. Very little correspondence regarding Dewey’s works remains in the archives besides letters between the firm and agents, and a few reader’s reports.

The firm’s 1941 edition of *Education Today* was significantly shorter than the American edition. The decision to do this was in part a result of paper shortages. The only remaining archival material for this book is a reader’s report by Malcolm Barnes that illustrates the principal justification for this choice:

the bulk of this book cannot be published here, because it deals primarily with American education and American conditions. Of nearly 50 essays only about 10 are directly applicable to British conditions and only 6 could be read exclusively so [...] Reduced

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<sup>331</sup> *Philosophers as Educators*, p. 15.

<sup>332</sup> *Philosophers as Educators*, p. 16.

<sup>333</sup> *Philosophers as Educators*, pp. 17-19.

<sup>334</sup> *Education Today*, p. 6.

to this very small scale, the book would not give a fair impression of Dewey's educational philosophy [...] Not at all promising.<sup>335</sup>

Despite its being '[n]ot at all promising', Allen and Unwin published a reduced edition. It is very likely because, as Unwin expressed in a letter to Pollinger regarding *Freedom and Culture*, he wished to 'maintain continuity', having 'published most of' Dewey's works in England.<sup>336</sup> Furthermore, in *Publisher*, Unwin states that, although Dewey's books 'never enjoyed a large sale', they 'were never left with stock on [their] hands', since they could always use leftover stock to supply American booksellers in need.<sup>337</sup> Despite Barnes' assertion to the contrary, the book succinctly outlines a useful segment of Dewey's educational philosophy, particularly in the first essay, appropriately entitled 'My Pedagogic Creed'.

The British edition of *Education Today* contains six essays.<sup>338</sup> It focuses primarily on the American education system, but the chosen essays translate well for both its contemporary audience and the modern British reader. It is testament to Dewey's insight (and to the ongoing need for meaningful change) that the essays included in the 1941 edition were all written before 1910 – the latest being 'Religion and Our Schools' (1908). The remaining five were originally published between 1897 and 1903. Unwin's choice to publish this book despite paper shortages perhaps suggests a perceived temporal importance in his mind: were it simply a matter of continuing to act as Dewey's publisher, he might have waited. Although the articles contained in the text were many decades old, the timeliness of the publication in 1941 was important: the world was at war, and dangerously limiting ideologies were gathering strength. This book argued that the next generation required better tools with which to deal with and understand the changing, fear-filled world. Withers' assertion about the utility of a discernible 'political purpose' could potentially be read into this decision.<sup>339</sup>

The British edition's Foreword is written by Joseph Ratner, a close friend and long-term colleague of Dewey's.<sup>340</sup> It opens with a sentence that seems relevant today, but that of course refers to the war:

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<sup>335</sup> University of Reading Special Collections Allen and Unwin Collection, AURR 9/1/74, 'Reader's report by Malcolm Barnes on John Dewey's *Education Today*'.

<sup>336</sup> Letter 27/10/39, SU to LP (Pollinger of Pearn, Pollinger and Higham), discussing *Freedom and Culture*, AUC 68/11.

<sup>337</sup> *Publisher*, p. 214.

<sup>338</sup> Presumably those recommended by Barnes as relevant for the British reader.

<sup>339</sup> D M Withers, *Virago Reprints and Modern Classics* (Cambridge: University Press, 2021), p. 5. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108884440> retrieved on: 11/07/2022.

<sup>340</sup> Entry for Ratner, Joseph at the Southern Illinois University Special Collections Research Centre. Available from: <https://archives.lib.siu.edu/?p=creators/creator&id=377> retrieved on: 01/09/2020

Dewey is not one of those who required a world crisis to make them realize that the maintenance and development of a democratic society and way of life is not an easy but a difficult thing.<sup>341</sup>

Ratner outlines Dewey's belief that, in order for his ideals for democratic and free society to be achieved, education must be prioritised: a person's school career is intended to be the time and place in which their 'intellectual and moral characte[r]' is fostered.<sup>342</sup> To Ratner's understanding, Dewey's concept of true 'democracy' required continuous 'social progress and reform'.<sup>343</sup> Ratner observes the timeliness of Dewey's desire for a reconsideration of the education system because of the rise of totalitarianism. Education can, as he described it, be utilised as a route to positive change, but it can also be used as a tool with which to restrict freedom. In the decade preceding the Second World War, the Nazis did this in Germany: education of the younger generation was used to strengthen their grip on the populace.<sup>344</sup> As early as 1935, Kandel described the purpose of Nazi education as 'the ultimate subordination of all individuals'.<sup>345</sup> The 'social consciousness of [a] race' to which Dewey refers (below) was, therefore, contextually relevant at the time of publication.

#### 2.4.3.1 'My Pedagogic Creed' and *The Social Construction of Reality*

*All education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social  
consciousness of the race.*<sup>346</sup>

*The school is primarily a social institution.*<sup>347</sup>

Dewey's thoughts in this collection – particularly in its first, argument-defining chapter – are interesting when read in dialogue with Berger and Luckmann's *Social Construction of Reality*. Dewey's arguments are largely supported through such a reading, and the two works complement one another in their understandings of the sociological component of human development. Current neuroscientific, as well as psychological and sociological understanding, supports much of Berger and Luckmann's thesis, particularly in terms of child development,

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<sup>341</sup> Joseph Ratner in *Education Today*, p. v.

<sup>342</sup> Ratner, *Education Today*, p. v.

<sup>343</sup> Ratner, *Education Today*, p. v.

<sup>344</sup> Robert Soucy, 'Fascism', in *Britannica Academic*. Available online:

<https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/fascism/117286> retrieved on: 01/09/2020

<sup>345</sup> I. L. Kandel, 'Education in Nazi Germany', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 182 (Nov 1935), p. 153. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1020438> retrieved on: 01/09/2020.

<sup>346</sup> *Education Today*, p. 3.

<sup>347</sup> *Education Today*, p. 6.



and it is generally accommodated in current theory, although there are some issues with some of their ideas and examples considered in a modern context.<sup>348</sup> As with *Public Opinion*, it appears to be an oft-referenced but rarely closely studied work.<sup>349</sup> Despite some minor issues, the book's central tenets – that an individual's early socialisation is deeply entrenched and difficult to alter, and that interactions within the 'institutions' of the social world serve to reinforce or complicate an individual's subjective 'reality' – maintain contemporary validity and academic acceptance.<sup>350</sup> Dewey's work's focus on humanity's social character provides an interesting dialogue with their postulations surrounding how this sociality contributes to a person's overall lived 'reality'. What must be acknowledged is the dissonance between the two: for Berger and Luckmann, knowledge is context-driven and culturally defined; for Dewey, knowledge is environmentally-driven, ideas 'exist primarily as instruments for the solution of problems encountered in the environment'.<sup>351</sup> This does not necessarily signify a disparity in their understandings, but is rather demonstrative of the difference in their disciplinary perspectives.

Berger and Luckmann hypothesised that an individual's experience is informed by their participation in and interaction with the social world. They described two stages in the formation and maintenance of a person's 'reality': the 'primary', and ongoing 'secondary' phases of socialisation. Berger and Luckmann defined the primary phase as ending 'when the concept of generalised other [...] has been established [...] [when] he is an effective member of society and in subjective possession of a self and a world'.<sup>352</sup> This description is slightly at odds with their assertions that an individual's existence in the institution of the school is part of their secondary socialisation, since modern research might argue that the development of the 'self' occurs in more complex and longer-term gradations: social cognition, for example, could be considered in terms of the development of theory of mind, which in some aspects (such as the interpretation of sarcasm) does not reach maturity in some neurotypical children

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<sup>348</sup> Largely the problems are to do with certain phrases, individual passages and generalisations, rather than with the central concept. See Alan Sica, 'Social Construction as Fantasy: Reconsidering Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *Social Construction of Reality* after 50 Years' *Cultural Sociology* Vol. 10:1 (2016), pp. 37-52. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1749975515614869> retrieved on: 12/05/2021.

<sup>349</sup> Sica, 'Social Construction [...]', p. 39.

<sup>350</sup> For clarity, Berger and Luckmann's definition of an 'institution' encapsulates everything from parenthood to more concrete, occupational institutions (such as education, or marketing). For them, a relationship between two people is institutionally paradigmatic in that habits of behaviour can be formed and maintained. When a further actor enters the interaction and adopts behaviours peculiar to it, it can be described as 'institutional', since it has been 'passed on'. Berger and Luckmann, pp. 75-77.

<sup>351</sup> Jacqueline L. Longe, 'John Dewey' *Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology* Vol. 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Available online: [link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3631000219/GVRL?u=rdg&sid=GVRL&xid=31c9a1f5](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3631000219/GVRL?u=rdg&sid=GVRL&xid=31c9a1f5) retrieved on: 18/05/2021.

<sup>352</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 157. The 'world' referred to here is the individual's own, unique 'world', also referred to later as their 'universe'.



until after the age of eight, suggesting the ‘social self’ is not yet fully developed by this time.<sup>353</sup> They do not explicitly state that the two ‘phases’ take place simultaneously in early education, however their description of the primary socialisers or ‘significant others’ could easily be aligned with the role of early-years teachers, since they to some degree act as care-givers, and spend a good deal of a child’s waking life with them. Their definition is further problematised by their discussion of secondary socialisation largely from the perspective of older children and adults, while neglecting to interrogate the earlier stages of education. Their description of the totality of the primary ‘universe’ serves to some degree to address this discrepancy, since participation in the classroom ‘world’ serves to expand an individual’s conception of reality. However, the child’s ‘reality’ at this point is still largely restricted to the ‘worlds’ of the classroom and home. For this reason, the discussion will assume an intermediate, more powerful beginning stage of secondary socialisation/expanded stage of primary socialisation in early-years education, in which the child’s ‘world’ is increasing in scope, but their social world remains minimal. This feels more in keeping with current understanding of social development. The institutionalisation of early-years schooling is more total than at later stages of development: since the world of the school becomes the only additional ‘world’,<sup>354</sup> since what occurs during school-time is still ‘posited as objective reality’ in addition to (and presumably in support of, although this will be discussed) the reality experienced and internalised at home, and since the ‘other[s]’ experienced in early schooling are also ‘imposed’ on the individual, and ‘modify’, ‘mediate’ and ‘filter’ reality for them.<sup>355</sup> Berger and Luckmann’s assertions appear to support such an interpretation despite their neglect of this period. With this in mind, Dewey’s postulations about the importance of this stage of educational input are particularly meaningful.

Dewey writes that ‘the school, as an institution, should simplify existing social life; should reduce it [...] to an embryonic form’, and that ‘school life should grow gradually out [of] home life’.<sup>356</sup> It might be argued that for Dewey the early part of the educational process

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<sup>353</sup> Candida C Peterson, Henry M Wellman and Virginia Slaughter, ‘The Mind Behind the Message: Advancing Theory of Mind Scales for Typically Developing Children, and Those with Deafness, Autism and Asperger’s’ *Child Development* Vol. 83:2 (March 2012). Available online: <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01728.x> retrieved on: 10/05/2021.

<sup>354</sup> By additional ‘world’, I refer to the assertion regarding primary socialisation that ‘The child does not internalise the world of his significant others as one of many possible worlds. He internalised it as *the* world, the only existent and conceivable world’. Berger and Luckmann, p. 154.

<sup>355</sup> ‘Their definitions of his situation are posited as objective reality [...] modify in the course of mediating [...] The social world is ‘filtered’ to the individual’ Berger and Luckmann, p. 151.

<sup>356</sup> *Education Today*, p. 7.

is of particular importance, and, alongside the care-giver's input, comparatively socially formative. This is supported in reference to his assertion that:

Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race<sup>357</sup>

Berger and Luckmann's postulations about how a person's primary socialisation can be transformed support Dewey's beliefs about the importance of the educational process. Post-primary socialisation can be 'transformative' if the reality-creators adopt a similar 'place' to primary care-givers. This is neglected by Berger and Luckmann, and so is an extrapolation: if the classroom is defined as part of secondary socialisation and the teacher adopts a care-giver-like role, their definitions of 'reality' can presumably serve to challenge, or reinforce, those provided at home. Definitions and conceptions of social reality that Dewey might find problematic, such as suppression of curiosity and excessive authority (which do not lend themselves to 'free[dom of] intelligence for individual effectiveness'<sup>358</sup>) could therefore be adjusted in the process of schooling in order to provide the individual with a broader and more malleable definition of reality than is available at home. This 'asymmetry' would also better prepare the individual for the 'pluralistic' nature of modern societies, their multiple 'partial universes', and the 'tolerance and cooperation' this progression necessitates.<sup>359</sup>

In 'My Pedagogic Creed' Dewey describes how education should allow the individual, through intellectual stimulation, to 'emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling'.<sup>360</sup> This 'narrowness' might, for Berger and Luckmann, describe the singular character of a young child's conception of the world as they have thus far experienced it, '*the* world, the only existent and conceivable world' that has been conveyed to them by their care-givers.<sup>361</sup> For Berger and Luckmann, this 'narrowness' is necessary, since the child must have 'confidence' in the care-givers' definitions of reality to allow for their development, in order for them to believe that 'everything is alright'.<sup>362</sup> However, in order to function in society, the specificity of the closed-off home-world must be broadened to allow for the conception of 'generalised other'. Dewey's description of the process of education allowing the child to 'act as a member of a unity' echoes Berger and Luckmann's description of the child's

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<sup>357</sup> *Education Today*, p. 6.

<sup>358</sup> *Education Today*, p. 62.

<sup>359</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 142.

<sup>360</sup> *Education Today*, p. 3.

<sup>361</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 154 (italics in original).

<sup>362</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 155-6.

‘identification with [...] a society’, the triad of ‘society, identity *and* reality [...] subjectively crystalli[zing] in the same process of internalisation’.<sup>363</sup> Thus, Dewey’s argument that education is a fundamental aspect of an individual’s growth into a member of society is supported by Berger and Luckmann’s assertions regarding the process of early socialisation.

Dewey’s work argues for change, whereas Berger and Luckmann’s is observational. The ‘narrowness’ of which he speaks must by necessity be moved away from so that the child can ‘emerge’ and conceive of themselves as a contributor to the ‘welfare of [their] group’.<sup>364</sup> Thus, if primary education does not provide adequate ‘broadening’, the child’s ability to contribute positively to their society is restricted. This ‘narrowness’, if maintained, can generate difficulties later in life: if a person’s ‘reality’ is kept too narrow through under-exposure to different ‘sub-worlds’, if their processes of socialisation generate problematic conceptions of alternative or concurrent realities and extra-societal ‘other’, their ability to reflect on their own thinking will be compromised as a result of a consequential incapacity for objectivity. Research has shown that people with extreme views (i.e. those holding strong and entrenched beliefs about the nature of the world and society) have limited capacity for metacognition.<sup>365</sup> Research has also shown that an individual’s beliefs will ‘narrow’ if they are surrounded by or in an ‘ingroup’ composed of those with narrower, or more extreme, beliefs than their own.<sup>366</sup> Therefore, the processes of socialisation must allow for an individual’s ability to comprehend the ‘pluralistic’ nature of modern societies in order for them to become tolerant and cooperative social beings, and for Dewey this broadening is a vital and necessary aspect of education in its ideal form.

At the foundation of ‘My Pedagogic Creed’ is a deep-seated belief that humans are ‘social’ beings and that the educational process must treat equally the ‘psychological and [...] sociological’ ‘sides’ in order to be effective.<sup>367</sup> Dewey’s repeated assertions regarding the importance of the social aspect of education support the sociologists’ observations about the nature of socialisation and the ‘institutional’ role of the school. A particularly interesting synthesis, however, can be found if Dewey’s thoughts in ‘Article V’ of this chapter are considered alongside the sociologists’ observations about traditionalism versus pluralism.

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<sup>363</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 153 (italics in original).

<sup>364</sup> *Education Today*, p. 3.

<sup>365</sup> Max Rollwage, Raymond J. Dolan and Stephen M. Fleming, ‘Metacognitive Failure as a Feature of Those Holding Radical Beliefs’ *Current Biology* Vol. 28:24 (Dec 2018). Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com.dbilibweb.rdg.ac.uk/science/article/pii/S0960982218314209> retrieved on: 01/09/2020.

<sup>366</sup> Cass Sunstein, *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide* (Oxford: University Press, 2009).

<sup>367</sup> *Education Today*, p. 4.

Dewey asserts that ‘education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform’.<sup>368</sup> Berger and Luckmann describe how the ‘pluralistic situation’ characteristic of tolerant ‘modern’ societies, is ‘an accelerating factor’ in ‘social change’ because pluralism ‘helps to undermine the change-resistant efficacy of traditional definitions of reality’. For them, pluralism is positive, since it ‘encourages both scepticism and innovation and is thus inherently subversive of the taken-for-granted reality of the *status quo*’. The existence of pluralism also affects the way in which ‘traditional definitions of reality’ are ‘held in the consciousness of individuals’.<sup>369</sup> Unfortunately they do not elaborate, but one might infer that it allows for greater malleability in one’s conception in reality, because of the genesis of ‘innovation’ mentioned. They believe that ‘traditional definitions of reality inhibit social change’.<sup>370</sup> Therefore, education must encourage a tolerance for plurality in order for social progress to occur. For Dewey, this pluralism is not only an externally-driven, societal characteristic, but must also become an internalised behaviour of mind: education must provide ‘intellectual freedom’, and without exposure to the world as a pluralistic entity and regard for the complexity of the individual as a psychological entity, this is unachievable. His assertion that the purely sociological definition of education (that disregards the psychological, and frames the world in explicit, socially pre-defined terms) ‘results in subordinating the freedom of the individual to a preconceived social and political status’ supports the sociologists’ view of the importance of pluralism in social progress.<sup>371</sup>

Dewey writes that ‘education [...] is a process of living and not a preparation for future living’.<sup>372</sup> Since Berger and Luckmann describe socialisation as a continuous process – secondary socialisation is never ‘finished’, but is an ongoing reinforcer of the individual’s conception of reality, and ‘transformation’ or ‘re-socialisation’ re-enacts primary socialisation and reinterprets the past to conform with the present reality and is followed by a newly formatted secondary process – perhaps it is possible to conceive of the two processes as symbiotic.<sup>373</sup> Since each additional institution introduces further sets of expectations, behaviours and interpretations which must be learnt and assimilated, Berger and Luckmann’s secondary socialisation ‘version’ of education as a ‘process of living’ is somewhat passive and non-dynamic. Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann’s work describes itself as concerning the

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<sup>368</sup> *Education Today*, p. 15.

<sup>369</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 142.

<sup>370</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 140.

<sup>371</sup> *Education Today*, p. 5.

<sup>372</sup> *Education Today*, p. 6.

<sup>373</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 182.

‘sociology of knowledge’. For them, ‘knowledge’ refers to the ‘certainty’ that the ‘phenomena that we recognise as having a being independent of our own volition [...] are real and that they possess certain characteristics’.<sup>374</sup> Education, for Dewey, must encourage one to seek and find ‘knowledge’ through active engagement, and the acquisition of ‘certainties’ must be undertaken in such a way as to promote curiosity, which, perhaps, implies as broad as possible exposure to alternative or ‘sub’ realities. This interpretation is supported by his assertion that ‘education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience’.<sup>375</sup> Concerning social knowledge, Dewey finds agreement with Berger and Luckmann’s understanding of ‘successful’ or functionally useful socialisation:

I believe that knowledge of social conditions, of the present state of civilization, is necessary in order properly to determine the child’s powers. The child has its own instincts and tendencies, but we do not know what these mean until we can translate them into their social equivalents.<sup>376</sup>

For Dewey, education has a sociological function, and in order to serve the individual and their society effectively, its goal must be to ascertain the child’s qualities in order that they become a productive, but also – importantly – a satisfied and fulfilled, citizen.

Both texts agree that language acquisition is at the foundation of integration into the social world. Dewey writes:

[...] through the response which is made to the child’s instinctive babblings the child comes to know what those babblings mean [...] the child is introduced into the consolidated wealth of ideas and emotions which are now summed up in language.<sup>377</sup>

Of this phase of language acquisition Berger and Luckmann observe that, to the ‘babbling’ child, these terms and definitions are ‘inherent in the nature of things’, that a ‘thing *is* what it is called’.<sup>378</sup> Dewey asserts:

language is [...] fundamentally and primarily a social instrument. Language is the device for communication; it is the tool through which one individual comes to share the ideas and feelings of others. When treated simply as a way of getting individual information [...] it loses its social motive and end.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 13.

<sup>375</sup> *Education Today*, p. 12.

<sup>376</sup> *Education Today*, p. 4.

<sup>377</sup> *Education Today*, p. 4.

<sup>378</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 77.

<sup>379</sup> *Education Today*, p. 11.

For the sociologists, language is limited by, and limits, reality: 'The common language available to me for the objectification of my experiences is grounded in everyday life and keeps pointing back to it'.<sup>380</sup> They agree about its social primacy, calling it 'the most important sign system of human society', and that 'everyday life' itself exists 'with and by means of' language, that it is 'essential for any understanding of [...] everyday life'.<sup>381</sup> Dewey's description of language acquisition seems to perceive it as more liberating than limiting. In the context of a social 'world' that is broadened and enriched through exposure and curiosity, the two can find agreement.

Dewey's feelings about education's function and its effective delivery are in many ways supported by Berger and Luckmann. Read in tandem like this, it is possible to see how Dewey's ideas might be utilised in order to make more effective and wide-reaching a person's socialisation, and therefore their interpretation of 'reality'. Berger and Luckmann assert that an individual is to some degree limited by their specific selection of sub-realities, and that social progress and greater tolerance and cooperation are facilitated by exposure to numerous and disparate sub-realities. Dewey offers the possibility of a process of education that seeks to capitalise on an individual's skills by allowing them to be curious and exposing them to different aspects of reality, thereby creating a wider 'base' reality from which they might operate as they grow. Berger and Luckmann recognise the impact of early reality-formation on later interaction with the world; Dewey argues that this phase is of such importance that the process through which it is affected and internalised must take into account the changing nature of the social world. Since both education and socialisation are lifelong, progressive processes, it might be argued that, within the worlds that both texts were created – and perhaps more so today – the most powerful tool that can be given to individuals (and by extension their societies) is that of as broad a perspective as possible.

For Dewey, an individual whose home-life is limiting because of its socioeconomic or ideological context can have this deficit addressed through effective education. If the educational system is outdated, if it does not sufficiently mirror the 'real' social world of modernity, the child's social and intellectual capacities will not be given ample chance to prosper. Since, as he asserts, 'it is impossible to foretell definitely just what civilization will be' in proceeding decades, it is therefore 'impossible to prepare a child for any precise set of

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<sup>380</sup> Berger and Luckmann, pp. 39-40. 'Finite province of meaning' here refers to experiences that take a person away from 'true reality', such as plays or films.

<sup>381</sup> Berger and Luckmann, pp. 51-52.

conditions’.<sup>382</sup> This context, as argued by Dewey and observed by Berger and Luckmann, necessitates an educational experience that fosters a wide-ranging and adaptable interpretation of reality.

Dewey’s observation of the world’s constant state of flux was not something he addressed solely in the context of childhood education. Anderson relates Dewey’s ‘tragic’ conception of the world.<sup>383</sup> He describes Dewey’s understanding that the theory of evolution demonstrates that the world is never completely knowable, that nature, as everything else (including humanity), is in a constant state of flux; impossible to fully ‘understand’ due to its ever-changing state as a ‘number of diverse objects in space and time’.<sup>384</sup> Dewey’s answer is ‘critical intelligence’: the ability to adapt and to ‘seek independent, penetrating understanding’ by interrogating ideas.<sup>385</sup> Anderson also quotes Dewey’s assertion that ‘man is a creature of habit, not of reason nor yet of instinct’,<sup>386</sup> arguing that this belief goes against traditional philosophy’s attempts to make ‘absolute’ assertions about humanity – that Dewey’s acceptance of the changeability of the world is more realistic. This seems to be what makes Dewey’s thinking so attractive: he does not seek to understand reality in absolute terms, because there is little in the universe that is permanent or absolute. Instead, Dewey’s (educational) philosophy seeks a way to manage this inescapable impermanence. Rationality scholars such as Cushman might contest Dewey’s assertion about the dominance of habit, but his observation has utility in its rejection of reason’s primacy.<sup>387</sup> Neuroscience supports his assertion to some degree: the human brain is a habit-orientated machine. It is ‘programmed’ to simplify, as Lippmann understood; it seeks patterns and repetition, it creates ‘habits’ in order to function efficiently. Dewey’s belief that humans are not entirely governed by reason also holds true: the emotional response is much faster than, and affects, our ability to reason,<sup>388</sup> and it has been argued that what we conceive as our ‘reason’ or ‘rationality’ is often more a product of our drive to maintain internal consonance.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> *Education Today*, p. 5.

<sup>383</sup> Specifically relating to Dewey’s *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (1909).

<sup>384</sup> *Education Today*, p. 9.

<sup>385</sup> Josh Anderson, ‘The Imperative of Critical Thinking in John Dewey’s World View’ *Schools: Studies in Education* Vol. 1:1 (March 2004), p. 67, 68.

<sup>386</sup> John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2002), p. 125. Also published by Allen and Unwin, 1921.

<sup>387</sup> Fiery Cushman, ‘Rationalization is rational’, *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* Vol. 43:28 (2019). Available online: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/behavioral-and-brain-sciences/article/rationalization-is-rational/2A13B99ED09BD802C0924D3681FEC55B> retrieved on: 12/07/2022.

<sup>388</sup> See for example Dan Hill, *Emotionomics: Leveraging Emotions for Business Success* (London: Kogan Page, 2010), pp. 18-19, or Cohen’s ‘The Vulcanization of the Human Brain’.

<sup>389</sup> Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, ‘Why do humans reason? Arguments for an argumentative theory’, *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* Vol. 34 (2011), pp. 57-111. Available online: <http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp->

### 2.4.3.2 Beyond Dewey's Creed

The following essays largely serve to support the arguments made in the first chapter, exploring them in different educational contexts. 'The Primary Education Fetich' is of interest because of Dewey's discussion of the changed nature of a person's early introduction to the world. He found that the movement towards urbanisation, the removal of industry (such as clothes-making) from the home and 'the division of labour' had had a negative effect on the 'wholeness' of a person's world-education. The focus on intellectual learning, rather than 'manual and industrial discipline' and the perceived removal of the latter from the home, or 'extra-school life', to him, meant that the 'facility in acquiring information [was] gained' but 'the power of using it [was] lost'.<sup>390</sup> Later Dewey argues that such learning is essential not only to the depth of a person's understanding of the world, but is also 'a training of attention, constructive and reproductive imagination, and power of judgement'.<sup>391</sup>

Berger and Luckmann found industrialisation and the 'division of labour' to be central to the expansion of individuals' realities, since its occurrence necessitates the creation of different institutions or 'sub-universes' for which there are sets of expectations, linguistic symbols and behaviours.<sup>392</sup> The potential 'economic surplus' created through the successful division of labour facilitates engagement in 'specialised activities not directly concerned with subsistence' – the study of philosophy or sociology, perhaps, being examples of such activities.<sup>393</sup> While Dewey's argument is sound in relation to the individual's wealth of experience, he might have benefited from considering the 'pluralism' enabled through mechanisation and greater division of labour. Their assertions do not detract from Dewey's argument that this deficit might be addressed in the school system, and in fact such action might further increase the availability of 'sub-universes'. For Dewey, this is a symptom of the 'subordinat[ion] of meaning' to deciphering symbols, the 'divorce between the substance and the form of expression' that, to him, creates a deficiency in the usefulness of education.<sup>394</sup> For Dewey, an education system that does not provide ample opportunity for the child to learn both manually and intellectually is outdated and damaging: its 'justification' is 'psychologically

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[content/uploads/2011\\_mercier\\_why-do-humans-reason.pdf](content/uploads/2011_mercier_why-do-humans-reason.pdf) retrieved on: 01/10/2020. Sperber has done a great deal of work in this field more generally.

<sup>390</sup> *Education Today*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>391</sup> 'The Place of Manual Training', *Education Today*, p. 55.

<sup>392</sup> 'The chance of sub-universes appearing [...] increases steadily with progressive division of labour', Berger and Luckmann, p. 102.

<sup>393</sup> Berger and Luckmann, pp. 98-99.

<sup>394</sup> *Education Today*, p. 27.



impossible'. Education that dryly presents information only in written form, and imposes facts rather than encouraging curiosity – that 'deaden[s]' childish inquisitiveness and playfulness – Dewey calls 'the grave of the mind'.<sup>395</sup> For him, '[the focus of education on abstracts] is a 'remnant of an outgrown period in history'.<sup>396</sup> Dewey concludes this piece by re-stating his belief that education must provide for the present, rather than retain the traditions of its past – a sentiment later echoed by Dora Russell:

The Education Problem is ultimately that society shall see clearly its own conditions and needs, and set resolutely about meeting them. [...] Let the community once realise that it is educating upon the basis of a life which it has left behind, and it will turn, with adequate and intellectual and material resources, to meet the needs of the present hour.<sup>397</sup>

The third chapter deals with the relationship between public opinion and education, calling to mind Lipmann's work. Dewey's prior assertion in 'Creed' that 'existing life is so complex that the child cannot be brought into it without confusion or distraction' echoes Lippmann's central argument regarding the 'great, booming, buzzing confusion' that constituted the world of the twentieth century.<sup>398</sup> Whereas Dewey argued that such a world was too complicated for a child to comprehend, Lippmann asserted that it was even too complex for any adult. What is intriguing about the third chapter is that, to some degree, it agrees with Lippmann's advocacy of manipulation, in contrast with his response to *Public Opinion*. Dewey asks whether 'schools are doing what the people want done', and concludes that it:

depends upon the conception of what the people want [...] we see that they want very diverse things – things so diverse as to be contradictory. The school cannot really do what the people want until there is unity [...] in the needs of the people.<sup>399</sup>

He elaborates by using the example of the invention of the sewing machine, which agents had 'almost to break into people's houses in order to get it into use':

There are many things in education of which a similar thing must be said. The people may need these things very badly, but they have not awakened to a lively consciousness of the fact.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> *Education Today*, p. 26. Dewey is quoting Jowett.

<sup>396</sup> *Education Today*, p. 31.

<sup>397</sup> *Education Today*, p. 35.

<sup>398</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 81.

<sup>399</sup> 'The People and the Schools' *Education Today*, p. 36.

<sup>400</sup> *Education Today*, p. 36.

Dewey again echoes Berger and Luckmann in his acknowledgement of what people might ‘think’ they want – what schools ‘want[ed]’ was a product of ‘the experiences and customs and expectations of the past’, rather than catering for the ‘underlying wants’ arising from the ‘movement of modern society’.<sup>401</sup> To address this, he suggests that the school must ‘forward’ for the public the ‘conception’ of its true needs – it must, he implies, make it realise what is best for itself, much as Lippmann had described of society at large.<sup>402</sup> This chapter was written in 1901, so bears no allusion to *Public Opinion*, however the assertion that the ‘public’ might require some level of coercion in order to ascertain their own needs is an interesting one for Dewey.<sup>403</sup> However, this explicitly refers to education – and, for Dewey, education is the gateway – the precursor – to a society that would eventually not require coercion. The implied contradiction might be resolved through this interpretation, although Lippmann would consider it contradictory.

#### 2.4.3.3 Democracy in Education

*Modern life means democracy, democracy means freeing intelligence for independent effectiveness – the emancipation of mind as an individual organ to do its own work.*

*We naturally associate democracy with freedom of action, but freedom of action without freed capacity of thought behind it is only chaos.*<sup>404</sup>

‘Democracy in Education’ (1903) is echoed in the title of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* (1916). ‘Democracy’ and ‘education’, for Dewey, are inextricable – one cannot be effective or useful without the other. Dewey’s beliefs about education have thus far centred around the promotion of independent thought, self-reflection, and capitalising on an individual’s ‘innate skills’ and ‘talents’. For Ploeg, these are easily aligned with Dewey’s feelings about democracy – in order to best serve the individual and society both must, as Ploeg summarises, ‘involve *and* foster self-determination, self-development and participating in the common good, enlightened by intelligent understanding and scientific spirit’. Ploeg argues that Dewey is commonly misinterpreted, in that approaches to teaching and learning about democratic

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<sup>401</sup> *Education Today*, p. 37.

<sup>402</sup> *Education Today*, p. 37.

<sup>403</sup> Which, considering his feelings about reformers and idealists’ need for coercion, would have pleased Lippmann (see Chapter 2)

<sup>404</sup> *Education Today*, p. 62.

existence are designated as separate from, and additional to, ‘learning subject matter’.<sup>405</sup> It is not necessary to study many of Dewey’s works to find agreement, and this article supports his claim: as indicated above, Dewey believed that education must align itself with, and reflect, the democratic ideology. Ploeg’s argument centres around the sociality of both democracy and education – for Dewey, one cannot consider the individual without placing them in the social context.

Dewey believes school education should mirror the democratic character of a society, as Harðarson feels *Democracy and Education* asserts. Harðarson argues that, although the book rarely addresses democracy as a political term, it maintains a Deweyan concept of democracy, and – since education allows populations the freedom to become informed and participatory citizens – is inextricable from his overwhelming concept of democracy.<sup>406</sup> ‘Democracy in Education’ does much the same thing. While not directly engaging with politics, it holds up the basic meaning of the word ‘democracy’ (‘rule by the people’<sup>407</sup>) and applies it to the machinery of the school. Since, as both Ploeg and Harðarson argue and I maintain, for Dewey, a political democracy must be maintained through adequate and well-designed education of its people, it seems odd to question the ‘Deweyan’ relationship between the two. Dewey asks that the school ‘exhibit [the] trait [of internal ‘authority of truth’, or freedom of thought] of democracy as a spiritual force’, that it both inspires in its students the desire for and the means to participate in democracy, and that it represents the democratic character in its activities.

For Dewey, democracy means more than universal suffrage: it is the empowerment of citizens to understand and make choices wisely. Democracy is closely associated with freedom: ‘the emancipation of mind’.<sup>408</sup> A society that equally weighted every citizen’s interests, choices and needs – as Dewey’s ideal democracy might – would offer the greatest opportunity for freedom. For Dewey, freedom begins in the mind, and is enabled through education. As Harðarson and Ploeg mention, many have interpreted Dewey’s democratic goal as idealistic, and this is reflected in the Dewey-Lippmann dialogue.<sup>409</sup> Just as Dewey describes in ‘Creed’

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<sup>405</sup> Piet van der Ploeg, ‘Dewey Versus ‘Dewey’ on Democracy and Education’ *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* Vol. 11:2 (2016), p. 145. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1746197916648283> retrieved on: 13/05/2021.

<sup>406</sup> Atli Harðarson, ‘The School as a Democratic Workplace: The Political Dimension of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*’ *Education and Culture* Vol. 34:1 (2018), pp. 3-18. Available online: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/697394/pdf> retrieved on: 25/05/2021.

<sup>407</sup> While it is probably obvious, the two parts are: ‘demos’, the people, and thus can be applied to any specified population, such as a school; and ‘cracy’, which can be interpreted as either government or rule – an important distinction.

<sup>408</sup> *Education Today*, p. 62.

<sup>409</sup> See Lippmann chapter.

the need for the school to ‘represent current life’, and to ‘grow gradually out of the home life’, so too must it mirror the democratic ideal.<sup>410</sup> It must seek to ‘buil[d] up the machinery of a democracy of mind, housing and equipping intelligence’.<sup>411</sup>

It is in this chapter that Dewey most closely refers to reflective thinking, although his arguments for ‘active’ as opposed to ‘passive’ engagement in learning in order to promote skills associated with reaching evidence-based conclusions, and his stress of the importance of ‘freed’ intelligence are in clear allegiance with its aims. He also uses the words ‘reflective’ and ‘reflection’ in a sense denoting metacognitive activity in other chapters.<sup>412</sup> All of the articles included were written before 1904, and his explicit description of ‘reflective thinking’ is, as far as can be told, first notable in *How We Think* (1910). Dewey introduces this book by stating his conviction that wholly adopting and promoting ‘the scientific attitude of mind’ is central to the improvement of education generally.<sup>413</sup> Through the essay it becomes clear that this ‘scientific attitude’ is close, if not synonymous with, his conception of reflective thought:

*Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusion to which it tends constitutes reflective thought.*<sup>414</sup>

This definition is very similar to the *OED*’s entry for ‘critical thinking’, described as ‘the objective, systematic, and rational analysis and evaluation of factual evidence in order to form a judgement on a subject, issue, etc’, and many have argued that Dewey’s framing led to the modern conception of ‘critical thinking’.<sup>415</sup> The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* sees the two phrases as interchangeable, and uses Dewey’s ideas as the basis for its definition.<sup>416</sup> In the essay, Dewey refers more to ‘scientific’ modes of thinking and engaging than reflectiveness, but his meaning is related. The ‘scientific’ mode of thought Dewey sees as necessary in the promotion of the ‘freed expression of intelligence’ and in the securing of the ‘full operation of intelligence’. He writes:

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<sup>410</sup> *Education Today*, p. 6 and 7.

<sup>411</sup> *Education Today*, p. 62.

<sup>412</sup> For example, in the final chapter he writes ‘those who approach religion and education from the side of unconstrained reflection [...]’ (p. 76), referring to reflecting upon the consequences of scientific discovery on religious dogma. See ‘Religion and Our Schools’.

<sup>413</sup> ‘Preface’ *How We Think* (New York: DC Heath and Co., 1910).

<sup>414</sup> John Dewey, *How We Think* (New York, D C Heath and Co., 1910), p. 6 (italics in original). Available online: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/37423/37423-h/37423-h.htm#> retrieved on: 19/05/2021.

<sup>415</sup> ‘Critical Thinking’ *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available online: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44592?redirectedFrom=critical+thinking#eid1244228750> retrieved on: 19/05/2021.

<sup>416</sup> David Hitchcock, ‘Critical Thinking’ *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Autumn 2020 edition). Available online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-thinking/> retrieved on: 19/05/2021.

the methods pursued by the scientific inquirer give us an exact and concrete exhibition of the path which intelligence takes when working most efficiently, under most favourable conditions.<sup>417</sup>

He elaborates that this method must focus on direct experience – in order, it might be inferred, to come to ‘justified true belief’, finding justification in experience.<sup>418</sup> He writes that the ‘activity of mind we term “science”’ involves the ‘collecting of facts’, the ‘use of observation’, and the pulling together of understandings and ideas to come to conclusions.<sup>419</sup> He objects to what he observes in schools, which, he asserts, is ‘no counterpart to this’, and instead ‘reduce[s] the activity of mind to a docile or passive taking in’ of information.<sup>420</sup> For Dewey, this does not exercise or promote intelligence, since it does not exercise the mind except in its use of memory. In this chapter Dewey aligns the school and education with the ideal of democracy, and education and democracy with ‘critical’, or ‘reflective’, thinking. Since, for Dewey, education is the birthplace of social reform, and ‘true’ democracy the ideal for society, his argument agrees with my own: that in order to make positive social progress, it is necessary to nurture the critical faculties of populations.

#### **2.4.3.4 Religion and Our Schools (1908)**

Dewey argues in this essay that, in the interest of avoiding ‘special[ised] dogmas’ and ‘false bias’, the world is not yet ‘prepared’ to explicitly teach religion in schools. He describes the problem encountered by anyone who considers the world from the viewpoint of ‘unconstrained reflection’ rather than ‘tradition’ in acceptance of the supernatural, and feels that both the ‘church and the school’ must be ‘thoroughly reconstructed’ if they are to exist concurrently.

This supports his general argument that education must encourage an active approach to thinking and knowledge. Because religions disagree, and each has its own definitions of the world and God, because religion sometimes finds disagreement with science, and because religion asks a follower to believe on a basis of faith rather than evidence, its part in education would undermine the nurturing of such ways of thinking. On teaching religion, he writes:

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<sup>417</sup> *Education Today*, p. 69.

<sup>418</sup> Plato’s ‘formula’ for knowledge.

<sup>419</sup> *Education Today*, p. 70.

<sup>420</sup> *Education Today*, p. 70.

Nothing can be gained by moves which will increase confusion and obscurity, which tend to an emotional hypocrisy and to a phrasemongering or formulae which seem to mean one thing and really import the opposite.<sup>421</sup>

This essay is particularly interesting because it seems to allude to the cognitive dissonance necessary in accepting faith in the face of scientific progress. His feeling that religion should not be taught because it will ‘confus[e]’ seems particularly to support this.

In order to understand Dewey’s stance, it is necessary to understand his own religiosity. He implies something of his feeling in his reference to a ‘positive creed of life implicit in democracy and science’ that can find ‘harmony’ with the ‘instrumentalities of education’.<sup>422</sup> Knight describes Dewey’s religious journey in six stages. In his ‘final stage’, ‘God’ was not ‘an antecedently existing supernatural being’, but rather a term with which to describe ‘ideal ends’, or the ‘natural piety’ necessary in the achievement of ‘natural and moral ends, community goals, and individual aspirations’. Knight argues that Dewey’s belief was that the ‘religious dimension of experience is potentially available in every human experience’, and that his use of the word ‘god’ came from his feeling that ‘people would feel bereft if they could no longer speak of God’.<sup>423</sup> Religion in schools, for Dewey, defeated the object of a ‘state consciousness in a whole nation of diverse peoples’.<sup>424</sup>

Dewey’s collection therefore can be tied together by his deep investment in community, his belief that the achievement and maintenance of democratic communities must begin with the promotion of ‘democracy of mind’, and that democracy – or freedom – of mind and thought is only achievable with an ability to think for oneself. Although each of the essays in the collection was written in and concerning America before 1910, the arguments he makes were applicable in the Britain of 1941 and remain so today. His engagement with the importance of the social and the psychological, their inherent connectedness, and his discomfort with dogma or bias have great resonance with the aims of this thesis.

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<sup>421</sup> *Education Today*, p. 77.

<sup>422</sup> *Education Today*, p. 77.

<sup>423</sup> Philip Knight, ‘John Dewey’s ‘Religion and Our Schools’ Ninety Years On’ *British Journal of Religious Education* Vol. 20:2 (July 2006), p. 74. Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0141620980200202?needAccess=true> retrieved on: 25/05/2021.

<sup>424</sup> Knight, ‘John Dewey’s ‘Religion and Our Schools’ [...], p. 70.

#### 2.4.4 *Freedom and Culture* (1940)

Dewey's 1940 text is interesting for its very different reception by Unwin's reader, and its usefulness in conversation with the thesis's broader arguments. For these reasons, it will be briefly discussed.

J.E. Turner's report was positive:

I can unhesitatingly recommend the publication of this book at the earliest possible moment [...] It is an unusually able and valuable discussion of many of the crucially important topics of the day [...] this unquestionably seems to me the best book of his that has been offered to you.<sup>425</sup>

Turner's assertion that the book's subject matter involved itself with the 'crucially important topics of the day' is interesting: topics – such as the fragility of democracy and the manipulability of publics – that are timeless, and which will find further voice in Part Three.

Turner highlighted a number of quotes he felt illustrated the book's relevance. His first connects itself with Dewey's central ideas about the role of the social in democracy and individual experience. Turner quotes, 'the views about human nature at any time are usually derived from contemporary social currents'.<sup>426</sup> This passage follows Dewey's exploration of the idea that 'human nature' is not stable and unchangeable, but something that alters in form and consequence according to the changing states of social arenas – 'science, morals, religion, art, industry, legal rules'.<sup>427</sup> Dewey describes how 'human nature' can be manipulated into a rationale for behaviour, such as support for going to war: it would not be disingenuous to connect this idea – this time in more characteristic opposition – with Lippmann's 'manufacture of consent'.

Such assertions about the changing idea of how 'human nature' might be used against populations in certain contexts certainly had resonance at the time: the desire to protect the ingroup had been translated into a pandemic of political extremism; the plea to protect individual freedom used in gathering power against it. Appeals to emotion can be found across the political spectrum at this time: populism was rife. Even the utilitarian aesthetic of

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<sup>425</sup> Report for *Freedom and Culture* by John Dewey, AURR 7/1/10.

<sup>426</sup> John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1940), p. 113.

<sup>427</sup> *Freedom and Culture*, p. 112.

Communism was underpinned by the invocation of, and purported empathy with, the historical struggles of the labourers, while Fascism utilised an anti-intellectualist Volk-populism.<sup>428</sup>

Theories concerning the evolution and composition of the brain acknowledge emotion's precedence in decision-making processes. It has been argued that ego and emotion play a much more dominant role in the rational aspect of decision-making than we might assume: 'emotion modulates virtually every aspect of cognition', and influences our decisions in ways that, without their emotional function, can often be perceived as irrational.<sup>429</sup> Rationalising has an argumentative, ego-protective function: we rationalise what we already believe to be correct or true.<sup>430</sup> It might be argued that it is not our ability to rationalise, but our ability to rationalise from the context of ourselves that truly makes us human – and is therefore at the base of 'human nature'.

Dewey uses racial intolerance in America as a parallel between American 'democracy' and Nazi Germany.<sup>431</sup> He believes that racism must ultimately come from a perception of the 'other' as being less than human. In 1909, Dewey spoke at the 'National Negro Conference' (a meeting to discuss the problems of civil and political inequality<sup>432</sup>), stating his sympathy with the cause. His argument hinged again on the scientific attitude and the importance of evidence in reaching conclusions – this time in reference to the fallacy that African-Americans were biologically 'inferior' to white Americans.<sup>433</sup> This interpretation of Dewey's ethnological outlook is supported by Fallace, who defends Dewey's lack of more direct engagement with race, arguing that instead he located it among all social issues affected by his culture's lack of reflective habits of mind.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> *Britannica Academic's* article, 'Fascism', acknowledges the Fascist tendency towards anti-intellectualist populism (Robert Soucy, 'Fascism' *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/fascism/117286> retrieved on: 19/05/2021).

<sup>429</sup> See Chai M Tyng, Hafeez U Amin et al, 'The Influences of Emotion on Learning and Memory' *Frontiers in Psychology* Vol. 8 (24/08/2017), pp. 1-22 (p. 1). Available online: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01454/full> retrieved on: 22/06/2021. See also, Jonathan D Cohen, 'The Vulcanization of the Human Brain: A Neural Perspective on Interactions Between Cognition and Emotion' *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 19:4 (Autumn 2005), pp. 3-24 (p. 3). Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4134952> retrieved on: 22/06/2021.

<sup>430</sup> For example, see Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, 'Why Do Humans Reason? Arguments for an Argumentative Theory' *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* Vol. 34 (2011), pp. 57-111. Available online: <https://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/MercierSperberWhydohumansreason.pdf> retrieved on: 22/06/2021.

<sup>431</sup> *Freedom and Culture*, p. 127-8.

<sup>432</sup> 'Proceedings of the National Negro Conference 1909', Preface, p. 5. Facsimile available online: <http://moses.law.umn.edu/darrow/documents/Proceedings%20of%20the%20National%20Negro%20Conference%201909%20New%20York%20May%2031%20and%20June%201.pdf> retrieved on: 19/05/2021.

<sup>433</sup> Dewey's speech can be found on pages 71-73 of 'Proceedings...'.  
<sup>434</sup> Thomas D Fallace, 'What John Dewey Ethnocentric? Reevaluating the Philosopher's Early Views on Culture and Race' *Educational Researcher* Vol. 39:6 (Sep 2010), pp. 471-477. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X10379047> retrieved on: 19/05/2021.



Another contemporarily apposite quote Turner highlights is that '[we must] get rid of the ideas that democratic conditions automatically maintain themselves'.<sup>435</sup> Democracy was not only Dewey's obsession, but it is a concept that has continuously played an enormous role in the USA's national identity. Democracy's failings were Lippmann's concern; the Civil Rights movement played on the desire for true democracy in its rhetoric. Dewey asserts that 'beliefs of this sort merely divert attention from what is going on' – and, again, the relevance of this comment is maintained today.<sup>436</sup>

### 2.4.5 Conclusion

Dewey's main interests throughout his career were the ideal of 'democracy', and the utility of education in creating social landscapes that serve, maintain and progress democracies effectively. His pragmatism was the lens through which he saw these issues and addressed them, and its focus on finding 'truths' and utilising evidence and reflection is central to his action-orientated approach to social progress. There has been a deliberate avoidance of explicit engagement with his more general philosophy, since the discussion has sought primarily to view *Education Today* specifically from an educational viewpoint.

For Dewey, an important aspect of education was its capacity to improve social conditions and progress society towards greater fairness and equality – towards a more ideal 'democracy'. The British education system, while far better provided-for than many other countries, did not allocate sufficiently nor fairly across the Union, nor was there a great deal of interest taken in standards of teaching or content. Dewey argues that education must give the individual greater access to freedom of thought and help them contribute to their society, however without sufficient financial input, such aspirations are not achievable. The question of the National Curriculum is interesting: Ready believed its absence promoted a kind of 'freedom' that he associated with democracy, however it might be said that a country-wide curriculum that involved a discipline specifically aimed at promoting thinking skills would better promote its citizens' abilities to think independently, and therefore facilitate greater 'freedom', truer 'democracy'. Unwin's beliefs about the relationship between the under-prioritisation of educational books and British culture's broader, somewhat fearful relationship with education and the intellectual world, self-education and reading were subjects he regularly

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<sup>435</sup> *Freedom and Culture*, p. 34.

<sup>436</sup> *Freedom and Culture*, pp. 34-5.

discussed. How these opinions, and Dewey's ideas regarding socially-orientated education, might productively relate to the contemporary world will be discussed in Part Three. For Dewey, democracy and freedom are inextricable, democracy begins with education, and education must enhance an individual's ability to think: independently, rationally, and critically.

## 2.5 Bertrand Russell

### **Atheism and Activism**

Although he was overwhelmingly well-regarded, Russell was also a controversial figure, who spent two periods in prison for speaking out against what he felt was wrong. Unwin wrote that ‘when Russell goes to prison, he is apt to be right’, and although this was not a position Unwin was prepared to put himself in – choosing not to publish *Ishmaelites* and distancing himself from the publication of the *Kama Sutra* later in his career, he clearly felt admiration for Russell’s political choices.<sup>437</sup>

*Why I am Not a Christian* does not necessarily seek to change others’ minds, although there is a level on which Russell’s arguments appeal to others to change their minds, to think more deeply – for the good of mankind. *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* sought to highlight the dangers of misunderstanding the nuclear threat.

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<sup>437</sup> Appended to a letter dated 13/11/1961, SU to Barry Sullivan. AUC 898/2/2. *Kama Sutra* is discussed in *Remembrancer*, p. 224.

### 2.5.1 An Introduction to Russell

*Love is wise, hatred is foolish. In this world, which is getting more and more closely interconnected, we have to learn to tolerate each other [...] we must learn a kind of charity and a kind of tolerance, which is absolutely vital to the continuation of human life on this planet.*

*Either a thing is true or it isn't. If it is true, you should believe it; if it isn't true, you shouldn't.*<sup>438</sup>

Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell was both idolised and maligned in his lifetime. Fifty years after his death, his name remains familiar. His career was long-spanning, varied, and often controversial. His outspokenness appealed to Unwin – alongside, and doubtlessly helped by, his intellectual integrity and aristocratic lineage. The firm published almost all of Russell's books in the period between 1916 and 1968. Unwin considered Russell one of his 'most important'<sup>439</sup> authors, and purportedly never sent his books to a reader or an editor.<sup>440</sup> Besides Philosophy and Mathematics, Russell's interests spanned the full spectrum of human experience, he wrote 'about virtually every topic under the sun'.<sup>441</sup> His insight, particularly into human psychology, was profound.

According to Pierre Guerlain, Russell believed in the 'possibility of searching for objective truth, and the existence of an objective reality outside the observer'.<sup>442</sup> Alan Ryan finds in Russell's mindset and philosophy a sense of the 'uselessness of truth and its unrelatedness to human affairs'.<sup>443</sup> Guerlain perhaps might better have described Russell's belief in an objective reality composed of 'true' facts outside the human observer, since 'truth' is too easily muddled by human complicatedness. Russell's grounded view of reality and subjectivity makes him an important writer to this study. His promotion of logical thought, and

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<sup>438</sup> Bertrand Russell, in an interview for 'Face to Face', BBC, 1959. Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihaB8AF0hZo> retrieved on: 12/01/2024.

<sup>439</sup> *The Publishing Unwins*, p. 69.

<sup>440</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. 42.

<sup>441</sup> Peter Stone, 'Russell, Mathematics and the Popular Mind' in Alan Schwerin (editor) *Russell Revisited: Critical Reflections on the Thought of Bertrand Russell* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), p. 46.

<sup>442</sup> Guerlain (<https://journals.openedition.org/lisa/7915>) asserts that Foucault's argument that 'truth depended on regimes of power' directly opposes this, and quotes Rosat's assertion that, for postmodernists, 'there is no truth any longer'. Pierre Guerlain, 'Foreign words, Gramophones and Truth in "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell (1946)', *Les mots étrangers [The Words of Others]* Vol. 13:1 (2015). Available from: <https://journals.openedition.org/lisa/7915> retrieved on: 15/12/2023.

<sup>443</sup> Alan Ryan, 'Dewey and Russell' *The Wilson Quarterly* Vol. 14:1 (1990), p. 141. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40259500> retrieved on: 21/10/2021.

his consistent defence of evidence-based knowledge allowed him the freedom of intellectual flexibility – that powerful and important ability to change his mind, to challenge his own confirmation bias – that is necessary in order to achieve a critical mindset.

Russell was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1950, ‘in recognition of his varied and significant writings in which he champion[ed] humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought’.<sup>444</sup> It is this humanitarian focus, and Russell’s deep-seated belief in the importance of ‘freedom of thought’, that find him in agreement with Dewey, Čapek, and Unwin.<sup>445</sup> Russell was a teacher to Ludwig Wittgenstein, and greatly influenced Karl Popper, who described him as ‘the greatest philosopher since Kant’.<sup>446</sup> He was concerned that the positive possibility in human progress would be undermined by technology’s use by those seeking power, an anxiety he outlined in *Icarus, or the Future of Science* (1924).<sup>447</sup> It is likely he would have found ‘surveillance capitalism’ deeply unsettling.

Russell’s interests were many and varied. He is best known for his philosophy and mathematics, however some of his most interesting work outside of or expanding from these disciplines can perhaps be more broadly described as social commentary. The two texts discussed in this chapter fall into this bracket in different ways. *Why I am not a Christian* (1957) is notable for its notoriety, and its opposition to Unwin’s personal beliefs. The second, *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* (1959), is a product of Russell’s anti-nuclear era and proposes a somewhat idealistic solution to the nuclear problem. Both contain numerous observations of the pervasiveness of ‘dissonant’ thinking. Both will be read similarly to the preceding case studies, considering Russell’s engagement with or allusion to aspects of cognition and social interaction that negatively affect people’s ability to interact effectively and positively with the world and one another.

It is interesting to note that another of Russell’s books, *Conquest for Happiness* (1930), continues to garner praise from professional psychiatry for its insight.<sup>448</sup> Russell’s argument in *Conquest* is predominantly sociological: he suggests that a great deal of the problems he perceived in people’s ability to achieve happiness were a product of dissatisfaction in their

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<sup>444</sup> ‘The Nobel Prize for Literature 1950’. Available online:

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1950/summary/> retrieved on: 21/10/2021.

<sup>445</sup> This is not in conflict with the acknowledgement (presently) or Dewey and Russell’s philosophical differences.

<sup>446</sup> Carl Mitcham and Volker Friedrich, ‘Bertrand Russell’ in *Ethics, Science, Technology, Engineering: A Global Resource* Vol. 3:2 (2015). Available online:

<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=GVRL&u=rdg&id=GALE|CX3727600662&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon>

<sup>447</sup> London: Kegan Paul. This was one of very few of Russell’s books not published by Allen and Unwin.

<sup>448</sup> See David S Goldman, ‘A Psychiatrist Looks at Russell’s *Conquest of Happiness*’, *The Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly* Vol. 136 (2007), pp. 88-99.

social lives. Its primary argument might be compared with Berger and Luckmann's ideas concerning the power of primary socialisation. *Conquest* asserts that parents who are unhappy and unfulfilled provide insufficiently caring or wholesome primary socialisation to their children, laying foundations for their own unfulfilling experience of adulthood. He suggests that in order to counter unhappiness in oneself it is necessary to engage in 'dispassionate self-analysis', to find a 'rational approach', and to seek out inconsistencies in one's personal, internal logic.<sup>449</sup> This might be associated with observing, and reconfiguring, one's own cognitive dissonances. Festinger's argument that cognitive consistency is highly important to an individual's wellbeing is supported by Russell's advocacy for self-interrogation and his personal discomfort with the pervasive and problematic cognitive inconsistencies that he finds to be at the root of dissatisfaction in *Conquest*.<sup>450</sup>

According to Hare, 'the ideal of critical thinking is [central to] Russell's philosophy'. Hare points to Russell's criticism of education's failure to develop a 'critical habit of mind', and outlines his primary arguments for Russell's advocacy for the concept<sup>451</sup> as being his concern about 'the threat of indoctrination [...] and the prevalence of fanatical opinions', and his belief in the 'importance of individual judgement'.<sup>452</sup> Russell gave testament to Hare's argument in an interview for the BBC in 1959:

When you are studying any matter [...] ask yourself only: what are the facts [...] Never let yourself be diverted, either by what you wish to believe, or, by what you think would have beneficent social effects if it were believed.<sup>453</sup>

This quote has striking similarities with the *OED*'s definition of 'critical thinking', which prescribes the 'objective [...] evaluation of factual evidence'.<sup>454</sup> In the same interview, he also advocates tolerance of the sort that is discussed in the Čapek chapter: 'we have to learn to put up with the fact that some people say things that we don't like [...] we must learn [...] a kind of tolerance'.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Goldman, p. 92.

<sup>450</sup> Bertram Gawronski, 'Back to the Future of Dissonance Theory: Cognitive Consistency as a Core Motive', *Social Cognition* Vol. 30:6 (2012), p. 652. Available online: <https://guilfordjournals.com/doi/pdf/10.1521/soco.2012.30.6.652> retrieved on: 13/01/2024.

<sup>451</sup> The phrase 'critical thinking' was only coined in the 1940s and only popularised more recently.

<sup>452</sup> William Hare, 'Bertrand Russell on Critical Thinking' *Journal of Thought* Vol. 36:1 (Spring 2001), p. 7.

<sup>453</sup> Face to Face Interview, 1959.

<sup>454</sup> 'Critical thinking', *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available from: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44592?redirectedFrom=critical+thinking#eid1244228750> retrieved on: 20/08/2021.

<sup>455</sup> Face to Face Interview, 1959.

Hare refers to Russell's regular use of the word 'critical' when discussing interaction with the world, and cites Russell's belief in the importance of impartial evidence, the use of balanced consideration, and the questioning of assumptions in the prevention of prejudice.<sup>456</sup> The word 'critical' is also used to describe Russell's thinking style in John Slater's *Polymath*, in reference to the 'critical skills' he developed in his time at university 'without which his subsequent work would have been impossible'.<sup>457</sup> This is important, as Part Three will argue that the British education system leaves the nurturing of such skills too late.

Russell was concerned about the 'cultural lag' he observed: the problem that human knowledge was expanding more quickly than an ability to utilize it wisely could develop.<sup>458</sup> This is a problem that has only increased with time and the exponential rate of technological progress that has characterised the past century. Dewey's remarks on the need for alterations to the education system and the anxiety of Čapek's science fiction demonstrate similar concerns. Lippmann's feelings regarding the complexity of the modern world are also related. Russell was intensely aware of the problems inherent in human psychology and cognition that exacerbated the danger of such a 'lag'. His Nobel acceptance speech highlighted the problem of under-evaluation of the importance of human psychology in politics and international affairs, asserting that:

Most discussions of politics and political theory take insufficient account of psychology [...] If politics is to become scientific [...] it is imperative that our political thinking should penetrate more deeply into the springs of human action.<sup>459</sup>

Russell's alignment of psychology with the 'scientific' is characteristic of his perspective on, and understanding of, human cognition. He goes on to observe that 'all human activity is prompted by desire', from which it can be extrapolated that he was stating an un-judgmental awareness of the self- and ego-bias that, it can be argued, is at the root of most of human action. Russell argues that, even when a person is compelled to act in ways that they do not wish to in response to forces outside themselves, their motivation is usually rooted in a desire to survive. Festinger supports this in his assertion that an individual will act against their own beliefs, creating a state of dissonance, when their safety is threatened.<sup>460</sup> The Nobel speech goes on to

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<sup>456</sup> Hare, p. 8, 9.

<sup>457</sup> John G Slater, *Bertrand Russell: Polymath* (Toronto: Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library), p. 2.

<sup>458</sup> J Britt Holbrook, 'Russell, Bertrand' in *Ethics, Science, Technology and Engineering: A Global Resource* Vol. 3:2 (2015). Available online:

<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=GVRL&u=rdg&id=GALE|CX3727600662&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon> retrieved on: 20/08/2021.

<sup>459</sup> Bertrand Russell, 'What Desires are Politically Important?' Nobel Lecture, 11/12/1950. Available online:

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1950/russell/lecture/> retrieved on: 20/08/2021.

<sup>460</sup> See Festinger on 'Forced Compliance', pp. 84-97.

consider the various motivations by which humans are driven, beyond the necessities of survival: ‘acquisitiveness, rivalry, vanity, and love of power’. Fear, a pervasive human ‘passion’ that he discusses in both case studies in this chapter, he associates with survival,<sup>461</sup> and connects it directly with group mentality:

It is normal to hate what we fear [...] primitive men [...] fear and hate whatever is unfamiliar. They have their own herd, originally a very small one. [w]ithin one herd, all are friends [...] Other herds are potential or actual enemies [...] this primitive mechanism still controls our instinctive reaction to foreign nations.<sup>462</sup>

Russell uses the word ‘primitive’ not to express any perceived superiority in ‘civilised’ men, but in acknowledgement that human psychology is no more ‘civilised’ than in any other period of human history: *all* men are ‘primitive’ in their motivations and behaviours. By this time, for Russell, the distinction was simply one associated with *how* these motivations were enacted in the world. Perhaps his most apposite point as regards the two books this chapter will consider is his discussion of fear:

Fear is in itself degrading; it easily becomes an obsession; it produces hate of that which is feared, and it leads headlong to excesses of cruelty. Nothing has so beneficent an effect on humans as security.<sup>463</sup>

Both books analysed in this chapter expand on these observations, from different perspectives. *Christian*, for the most part, considers religion in terms of its deliberate restriction on thought, and discusses fear – both imposed upon followers, and resulting from subjective psychology – as an important force in the maintenance and pervasiveness of dogma. *Common Sense* considers the threat of nuclear holocaust from a psychological perspective, with a constant acknowledgement of the role of fear both in the complexity of the issue as it was, and in the process of addressing it.

### **2.5.2 *Why I am Not a Christian*: International Publication**

This book, unsurprisingly, caused controversy. The reaction to the book in several countries is demonstrative of the very things Russell disliked about religion: the authoritarian imposition of dogmatic thinking, an unwillingness to engage with alternative ideas.

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<sup>461</sup> In that fear is an emotion developed for the purpose of survival.

<sup>462</sup> Bertrand Russell Nobel Lecture.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.



Some publishers, such as Companhia Editora Nacional in Brazil, were at first enthusiastic to take it on. Following the book's rejection by the Brazilian Catholic Church, and owing to the company's majority production of school text-books, the church's control of 'about 60%' of all secondary schools in the country, and the guaranteed 'immediat[e] boycott' of the firm should they have published it, *Christian* was passed on to another publisher. The Brazilian publisher did not wish to submit, feeling that such intervention amounted to 'indirect censorship, and should be as such firmly fought', however owing to the financial affliction such a battle would entail, the board of directors chose 'to avoid serious conflict' despite the correspondent Enio Silveira's 'strong dissent'.<sup>464</sup> Unwin clearly appreciated his strength of feeling: he sent Silveira an autographed copy of *The Truth About a Publisher* a few months later. Silveira appears to have been an admirer, and his letter of thanks described Unwin's 'dignified, devoted, influential, socially useful, internationally important career'.<sup>465</sup>

*Christian* was immediately banned in South Africa. The response to this act of censorship was impressive. Fanny Klenerman, of Vanguard Booksellers in Johannesburg, wrote to Unwin in April 1959:

Perhaps you have noticed an announcement in the South African press advising the public that *Why I am Not a Christian* by Bertrand Russell has been banned [...] May I ask you please to give publicity to the banning of this book. The reaction in the South African press is hardly likely to stir the conscience of the bigots who rule South Africa.<sup>466</sup>

She requested that Russell be made aware, so as to give him the 'opportunity of airing his opinions on the so-called Christian stare of South Africa'.<sup>467</sup> Her use of the phrase 'so-called Christian' suggests not necessarily that she aligns with either Unwin's or Russell's religious stance, but that the choice to censor such, or any, works of intellectual interest undermines the premise of how a 'good Christian' might behave – an idea Russell covers in the book. Her use of the word 'bigots' is also telling. The letter goes on to demonstrate broader concerns:

The censorship from which we are all suffering is unendurable. Bookshops do not know what they can order and what is likely to be banned [...] This country is becoming more and more oppressive – not only is freedom of speech controlled, but even freedom of reading.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Letter 23/05/1960, Enio Silveira to A Dadlez (Allen and Unwin Foreign Rights Department), AUC 864/18.

<sup>465</sup> Letter 20/08/1960, ES to SU AUC 864/18.

<sup>466</sup> Letter 21/04/1959, FK to SU, AUC 854/6.

<sup>467</sup> Letter 21/04/1959, FK to SU, AUC 854/6.

<sup>468</sup> Letter 21/04/1959, FK to SU, AUC 854/6.

Howard Timmins, Unwin's South African publisher, is less critical of the government. He writes sarcastically of the 'enlightened government in their wisdom – or lack of it', and recommends international coverage.<sup>469</sup> He is less ambiguous in his next letter, in which he describes how 'even under this government there are people who are not afraid to state their mind'.<sup>470</sup> Whereas Timmins' correspondence, as a publisher, is more invested in the book itself and his ability (or lack thereof) to sell it, Klenerman took the banning as an ideological misdemeanour, and sought to challenge it publicly.

Klenerman requested Unwin's permission to translate the eponymous essay into Afrikaans, in order to distribute it around Johannesburg in protest. Unwin consented. She noted that a number of letters had appeared in the press criticising the government's 'arbitrary' decision. As a result of the combined work of herself and her colleague from the Rationalist Association, Doctor Eddie Roux, a 'Public Meeting' was held on the 29th April at which speeches were made against the censorship by a Bishop, a Women's Rights activist, and academics; largely in specific connection with Russell's book.<sup>471</sup> Despite these protestations, PW Botha, then Minister for the Interior (who later served as Prime Minister and President) stated on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1959 that rescindment of the ban 'could not be considered'.<sup>472</sup>

Unwin communicated with Russell about the situation. Russell found the Verwoerd government's actions quite ridiculous. He wrote that he was 'particularly delighted by the official statement that my book was banned because it "violated the principles of Christianity upheld in South Africa." I wish the[y] would mention which texts in the gospels justify their policy'. He went on to suggest that it was not his place to protest the banning of his own book, and that perhaps Father Coplestone, a priest whose debate with Russell appears in the book, ought instead to contribute.<sup>473</sup> Unwin also found the situation darkly entertaining, stating in a letter to Timmins that the discomfort with the text seemed to demonstrate 'an astonishing lack of confidence' in the Christian faith held by the South African government themselves.<sup>474</sup>

Klenerman's efforts were unsuccessful. She wrote to Unwin expressing regret that the matter had fallen out of public consciousness and there was therefore 'insufficient pressure' on

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<sup>469</sup> Letter, 15/04/1959, HT to SU, AUC 853/3.

<sup>470</sup> Letter 17/04/1959, HT to SU, AUC 853/3.

<sup>471</sup> Letters 24/04/59 and 06/05/59, FK to SU, AUC 854/6. Details of meeting appended to letter of 24/04/1959.

<sup>472</sup> Letter 08/05/1959, SU to FK, AUC 854/6. Referring to an article in *The Times*; also, the book remained banned eight years later. M Rose (export dept) wrote to Howard Timmins to inform him the paperback edition was banned (26/06/1967); Timmins responded saying the original had been banned some time ago and he did not send orders for this book (08/08/1967). AUC 1185/10.

<sup>473</sup> Letter 30/04/1959, BR quoted in SU to FK, AUC 854/6.

<sup>474</sup> Letter 22/04/1959, SU to HT, AUC 853/3.

the government. She notes that a letter appeared on the subject in the *Manchester Guardian*, stating that ‘there is more propaganda overseas about [*Christian*] than in South Africa’.<sup>475</sup>

This aspect of the book’s reception history is partly of interest because Klenerman was of Afrikaans descent and both she and Timmins were white (Timmins’ family were British, but he was born in South Africa<sup>476</sup>). Verwoerd, the Prime Minister, was in the process of developing the policies of apartheid at this time. The Bantu Self-Government Act was passed in 1959, which displaced and dispossessed those of African descent throughout the country (allocating a very small portion of the country to the majority of its population) and ultimately led to the Sharpeville Massacre, among the ‘first and most violent protests against apartheid’.<sup>477</sup> There was an attempted assassination of Verwoerd by a white farmer a year later. Klenerman’s pleas are evidence of political dissidence among whites in the country in Verwoerd’s time. Although she does not make reference to the racial policies under development, her fear of and dissatisfaction with the regime are clear, and her reference to its ‘oppressive[ness]’ and protest against restriction of thought perhaps indicate her personal aversion to such policies. History is testament to the fact that this dissidence was not powerful enough to overturn the government or its oppressive policies. Unfortunately, in correspondence concerning Russell’s autobiography some eight years later, Timmins, while decrying the general situation in the country, appears to advocate – or perhaps sympathise with – the policies of apartheid:

People don’t seem to understand that ‘apartheid’ [sic] – a word that should never have been coined – is NOT against colour, but ability, still one can go on forever about this unhappy subject.<sup>478</sup>

This quote might indicate that his previous, vaguer reference to the difficulties in the country comes from a perspective that supported apartheid, although it is impossible to say with certainty. Interestingly, Rayner makes no reference to this in his reply, simply stating that they ‘hope[d] to see an in improvement in [their] South African turnover’, and acknowledging that Rhodesia would not be a viable place to sell for ‘purely political’ reasons.<sup>479</sup> Whatever Rayner’s, or the firm’s, stance on apartheid, it was not deemed politically or financially useful to express it.

<sup>475</sup> Letter 18/05/1959, FK to SU, AUC 854/6.

<sup>476</sup> Kathy Munroe, ‘Review of Howard Timmins and his Proteges’, *The Heritage Portal*. Available from: <http://www.theheritageportal.co.za/review/review-howard-timmins-and-his-proteges> retrieved on: 05/10/2021.

<sup>477</sup> See ‘Hendrik Verwoerd’, *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic-eb-com.eul.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/Hendrik-Verwoerd/75164> retrieved on: 04/08/2021. See also articles on ‘The Sharpeville Massacre’, and ‘Bantustan’ in *Britannica Academic* for further reference.

<sup>478</sup> Letter 05/01/1967, HT to RU, AUC 1185/10.

<sup>479</sup> Letter 20/01/1967, RU to HT, AUC 1185/10. Rhodesia is now called Zimbabwe.

In the same series of letters, repeated reference was made to Russell's being disliked in South Africa. Timmins wrote:

We are, I'm afraid, NOT going to do terribly well with Bertrand Russell's autobiography out here, as feeling runs high against anybody that is anti-South African in such a publicly open manner. His diehard followers will buy but they do not amount to many here.<sup>480</sup>

This is perhaps indication that, by this time, the South African government was more supported than criticised by the white population. This apparently pervasive dislike of Russell was not referred to during the time of *Christian's* publication and subsequent banning – in fact, Timmins and others were overwhelmingly critical of its censorship. It is difficult to find any direct reference by Russell to South Africa in his published work. However, between the publication of *Christian* and his *Autobiography*, Russell did become more publicly anti-racist, and also founded the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. In *Political Ideals* (1963), he describes the 'exploitation of inferior races' as a 'crime', which could easily refer indirectly with South Africa's system of apartheid.<sup>481</sup> His language is representative of contemporary notions of 'superiority' and 'inferiority' associated with levels of 'civilisation', but should perhaps be interpreted in reference to those countries' treatment of 'inferiority' and 'superiority', i.e. that those races were *treated* as 'inferior'.<sup>482</sup> However, it is unclear enough to be problematic: such language must be understood as a product of its time, along with the apparent incongruity of feeling implied. Even Russell, who sought to promote objectivity and rationality, was himself prone to problematic and unobjective categorisations.

Russell refers to South Africa only in reference to Britain's supplying arms to the country (and his opposition to this) in his *Autobiography*.<sup>483</sup> Despite the absence of published evidence of his anti-South African feeling, there are a great many suggestions of his disapproval of the regime in The Bertrand Russell Archives, held at McMaster University. These include repeated reference to his signing letters criticising human rights violations and racial policy in South Africa, but not feeling well-informed enough to draw up the letters himself; and his participation in academic boycotts of South African institutions.<sup>484</sup>

<sup>480</sup> Letter 12/01/1967, HT to Leslie Berry (Foreign Publications Department), AUC 1185/10.

<sup>481</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Political Ideals* (Project Gutenberg, 2009 (1963)), Chapter V (no page number available). Available from: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4776/4776-h/4776-h.htm> retrieved on: 01/07/2023.

<sup>482</sup> Bertrand Russell, 'National Independence and Internationalism' in *Political Ideals*. Available through Project Gutenberg: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4776/4776-h/4776-h.htm> retrieved on: 30/07/2021.

<sup>483</sup> *Autobiography* Vol. 3, p. 206, 214.

<sup>484</sup> For example, letter BR to George Polanyi, 26/11/1957. Available from: <https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/70268> retrieved on: 20/08/2021. Also, he participated in the Boycott Movement in 1960, again, as a signatory. Letter

In America, *Christian's* reception was divided. Paul Edwards, the American academic who proposed creating the collection and edited it, wished to append an account of Russell's experience with New York College. Russell had been offered a teaching role by the Board of the college in 1940 after a unanimous vote in favour of his appointment. There followed a backlash by priests, then the press, and finally university staff, that led to his invitation being cancelled. Edwards felt the situation had been deeply unfair and that the tale ought to be retold from a pro-Russell perspective. In the lead-up to publication, however, it became clear that there were potentially libellous references in the account, and he had the piece examined and amended by legal professionals to protect himself and the publishers.<sup>485</sup>

The aforementioned debate between Russell and Coplestone also generated problems in the USA. Unwin approached Coplestone requesting use of the transcript of the debate, which was originally aired on the Third Programme by the BBC in 1948. Coplestone initially expressed anxiety that his words might be taken out of context or his arguments appear weak, and asked that, if Russell were to amend any of his contribution, he should be allowed to do the same because he was 'not satisfied with the positions [he] adopted, or with the precise way in which [he] defend[ed] his position'. He was assured that no amendments were to be made.<sup>486</sup> This was not the end of Coplestone's worries. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> June, Coplestone informed Unwin that he had received a letter:

The letter makes it quite clear that the relevant authorities in the States are not prepared to see anything by me appearing in a book by Lord Russell [...] there is no point in trying to reopen the question. [...] I cannot publish or give consent to publication of material by myself in the US without the approval of the relevant ecclesiastical authorities there.<sup>487</sup>

Since he explicitly states that it is because the book is 'by Lord Russell', rather than specifically because of the nature of his contribution, Edwards' account of the ecclesiastical revolt against Russell's teaching post appeared not to have lost relevance in the sixteen years between the event and the book's publication. Unwin found this disappointing. His response demonstrates his own interest in the book, in keeping with his belief in considering alternative arguments, in this case, one aligned with his own:

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BR to Boycott Movement Against South Africa, 02/06/1960. Available from: <https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/125684> retrieved on: 20/08/2021.

<sup>485</sup> Letters between PE and SU, CF, and PU, various (1956), AUC 755/6.

<sup>486</sup> Letters between SU and FC, various, April to May, AUC 710/22.

<sup>487</sup> Letter 22/06/1956, FC to SU, AUC 710/22.

I regret the decision of your ecclesiastical authorities [...] it seems to me such a unique opportunity of presenting the Christian point of view to an unconverted audience, many of whom have probably never given it adequate consideration.<sup>488</sup>

Unwin included the debate in the UK edition, arguing that it was ‘desirable to seize the opportunity of presenting the Christian point of view in such a volume as this’.<sup>489</sup> He reiterated this feeling when he sent Coplestone the typescript of his contribution to look over before printing, saying ‘may I take the opportunity of saying how pleased I personally am that the volume is to contain a pro-Christian point of view’.<sup>490</sup>

The archives’ insight into the publication of *Why I am not a Christian* is illustrative of Russell’s mixed reception internationally, and demonstrates the strength and dominance the church still held in so many countries. Despite the church’s disapproval, the American publishers were excited. Simon and Schuster sent their thanks and compliments via Unwin to Russell, saying:

We consider *Why I am not a Christian* a truly magnificent statement of your views on religion and independent thought [...] we are deeply proud to have the privilege of publishing it.<sup>491</sup>

The critic Abelson accuses Russell of hypocrisy in his alleged combination of ‘cultivatedness’ (which Abelson describes as tolerance in principle, the ‘capacity to find value in the things to which one is strongly opposed’) and the incompatible (and oft-criticised by Russell) quality of ‘moral fervor’. Abelson forgives this, in that Russell’s essays and career ‘span[ned] two centuries of radical change’. Interestingly, Abelson criticises a contradiction that is perhaps more deeply relevant to Russell’s intended arguments: the fact that he is ‘politically opposed to clerical institutions, and morally opposed to theological dogmas’ – which are restrictive in their imposed definitions of reality – while, somewhat unphilosophically, restricting the meanings of “religion” and “Christianity” to ‘just those connotations that he finds objectionable’ – therefore framing reality to suit his own arguments, as he might accuse organised religion of doing.<sup>492</sup> Abelson also finds hypocrisy in Russell’s discussion of (his own characterisations of) stereotypical ‘freethinkers’ who have grown up with protestant and catholic ideology. This presents an important question: to what degree do

<sup>488</sup> Letter 29/06/1956, SU to FC, AUC 710/22.

<sup>489</sup> Letter 29/06/1956, SU to FC AUC 710/22.

<sup>490</sup> Letter 19/11/1956, SU to FC AUC 710/22.

<sup>491</sup> Letter 22/09/1957, M Lincoln Schuster to SU with request to pass on to BR, AUC 776/15.

<sup>492</sup> Raziel Abelson, ‘Review: *Why I am Not a Christian*’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 19:1 (Sep 1958), pp. 112-114. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2104293> retrieved on: 29/07/2021.

Russell's implied hypocrisy and contradiction undermine his criticisms of those very things? Perhaps looked at in another way, this exemplifies his point – that both are traps that even the wariest, and most critical, might fall into.

### 2.5.2.1 *Why I am not a Christian: Its Content*

Russell's arguments in this book often appear to align with the cognitive mechanisms introduced in the introduction. Throughout, he proposes possible reasons why religious dogma remain(ed) pervasive (he also felt that the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been characterised by the rise of political dogmatism<sup>493</sup>), and questions the human craving for rigid and simple (but often illogical) rules for morality. For Russell, as he repeatedly expressed in various contexts throughout his career, dogmatic thinking – in systems of education, as well as in the wider social context – was at the root of a great many of the world's problems. Almost any form of orthodoxy is founded upon – to varying degrees – the disallowance of freedom of thought, the rejection of alternative perspectives, and restriction on the acknowledgement of evidence contrary to the ideology in question. Since Russell felt conclusions should be reached through the consideration of factual evidence – to ascertain 'the truth that the facts bear out'; since he felt one ought never to allow oneself to be 'diverted [...] by what [one] wish[es] to believe' – ideological systems that restricted a person's ability to reach their own conclusions were, in his opinion, dangerous and counter-productive.<sup>494</sup> His arguments often appear to evoke the cognitive biases discussed in this study. Furthermore, as Hare argues of his work more generally, he often asserts his own beliefs as being the product of thinking processes similar to what we would now refer to as critical thinking, and advocates that the reader attempt to affect similar processes in their own cognitions.<sup>495</sup>

Russell was acutely aware of, and fixated by, prejudices, biases and flawed thinking, and the negative effect these attributes have on individuals' (and humanity's) lived experience – from the perspective of his highly logical approaches to both philosophy and mathematics, to his later humanitarian work in aid of exploited peoples. It is therefore unsurprising that he should have written so extensively rejecting organised religion (which has precipitated a great many wars and 'justified' many exploitative regimes), and connected it with universal aspects

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<sup>493</sup> In the 'Preface' to *Unpopular Essays* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950) he writes of 'the growth of dogmatism, whether of the Right or Left, that has hitherto characterised our tragic century', p. 5.

<sup>494</sup> Face to Face Interview, 1959.

<sup>495</sup> William Hare, 'Bertrand Russell on Critical Thinking' *Journal of Thought* Vol. 36:1 (Spring 2001), pp. 65-74. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42590267> retrieved on: 15/12/2023.

of human cognition. What is interesting is Russell's intuitive understanding of these traits, his insight into their character and pervasiveness, despite their not yet having been codified in their respective sciences. Russell may have been aware of some of the theories explored in this thesis towards the end of his life – however, all but four of the fifteen essays included in *Christian* were written before 1940, and the latest, 'Can Religion Cure Our Troubles', was published in 1954. The earliest of the modern publications relevant to the cognitive and psychological concepts used in this study was Kelly's *Psychology of Personal Constructs* (the forerunner to *A Theory of Personality*), in 1955.

Russell's 'Preface' points out that the disagreement between the world's religions demonstrates that 'not more than one of them can be true'. Since none make evidence-based arguments, he deems none worthy of his support. He then asserts that, 'with very few exceptions, the religion which a man accepts is that of the community in which he lives', he is led to it through the 'influence of the environment'.<sup>496</sup> This might appear obvious to a casual observer, however most would take umbrage with being told that the foundations of their world-view are the product of conditioning. Through the lens of confirmation bias it might be posited that their own ingroup's beliefs happen, coincidentally, to be correct. From a sociological perspective, Russell's assertion is supported. Berger and Luckmann argued that the influence of primary care-givers, and later the broader 'institutions' (e.g., the church) in which a person participates, create a person's 'universe', the subjective 'reality' they inhabit. The primary phase, when the caregiver's beliefs are 'posited as objective reality' is the most deeply entrenched, and it therefore might be suggested that that which an individual assimilates in this phase is most difficult to access or consider metacognitively.<sup>497</sup> This assertion speaks also to Social Identity Theory in its suggestion that humans tend to maintain the beliefs that tie them to their ingroups, keeping them safe.

Russell then discusses the illogicality of the argument of design, particularly in the face of the theory of evolution, and questions the logic of believing in an 'omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent Deity' that 'consider[ed] himself adequately rewarded by the final emergence of Hitler and Stalin and the H-bomb'.<sup>498</sup> Here he appears to implicitly question how assessment of the available evidence, and belief in the existence of an all-loving deity, can occur simultaneously: effectively, Russell is observing cognitive dissonance. The oft-cited response

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<sup>496</sup> *Christian*, p. 9.

<sup>497</sup> Berger and Luckmann. Primary socialisation and the reasons for its being so deeply entrenched is dealt with specifically, pp. 149-157.

<sup>498</sup> *Christian*, p. 9.



to such an observation is the argument of free will: God did not create these evils, people did. God did not prevent these things because he allowed humanity free will. Festinger would define this response as one created in order to achieve greater ‘consonance’ between cognitions relating to the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent being, and those acknowledging the existence of evil and suffering.<sup>499</sup>

The eponymous essay is the first chapter. Russell begins by questioning what the term ‘Christian’ had come to mean, in contrast with how it should be semantically defined. As he asserts, ‘some people mean no more than a person who attempts to live a good life’, pointing out that this is illogical, since people of ‘all sects and creeds’ pursue such a life.<sup>500</sup> This observation points to a logical fallacy that might be associated with cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias. Of the former, Russell observes the implication that those who are ‘not Christians [...] are not trying to live a good life’, which either assumes that this is the belief held by ‘good Christians’, or that they ignore the dissonance between cognitions acknowledging the existence of ‘goodness’ in both Christians and non-Christians. Holding the former cognition (that only Christians are ‘good’) demonstrates a conceptualisation of the doctrine of that particular faith that defines ‘goodness’ as inextricable from it, and therefore is self-fulfilling in its own bias – ‘good’ attributes will be sought and confirmed in those who describe themselves as Christian, ‘not good’ traits will be sought, and imposed on, the behaviour of those who do not.

Russell’s arguments throughout this essay are logic-orientated. Often his opposition to one or another Christian belief or doctrine stems from its fragility in the face of reason. He observes that, historically, Freethinkers found various arguments that ‘mere reason might [have] urge[d] against the existence of God’, but that, despite these observations, they ‘knew as a matter of faith that God did exist’. To this, he writes, the Catholic Church responded with disapproval, and it was ‘laid down’ that ‘the existence of God can be proved by the unaided reason’, and a number of arguments were ‘set up’ to prove it.<sup>501</sup> His reference to the somewhat problematic phrase ‘the unaided reason’ is tinged with irony: ‘unaided’ reason suggests that proof or evidence are unnecessary, and this is contrary to his own feelings about knowledge. Where dogma cannot stand up to evidence and reason, it fails. For Russell, this is its central characteristic.

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<sup>499</sup> Festinger uses ‘consonance’ over ‘consistency’ because it is more neutral and has less association with logic, pp. 2-3. He describes this act of dissonance reduction as ‘adding [a] new cognitive elemen[t]’, achieving complete dissonance removal, pp. 21-23.

<sup>500</sup> *Christian*, p. 13.

<sup>501</sup> *Christian*, p. 15.

Russell undermines the ‘first cause’ argument by questioning the validity of the human desire for clearly defined ‘causes’ that are expressible in the language of an anthro-centric imagination and understanding of the universe. He points out that the argument undermines itself, since if everything must have a cause, then so too must God.<sup>502</sup> His reference to the ‘poverty of our imagination’ leading to such a desire for cause is itself interesting, since it alludes to the more modern scientific perspective on the universe’s origin: Georges Lemaître first proposed the ‘Big Bang Theory’ in 1927, the same year as this essay was originally written.<sup>503</sup> This theory of course opposes the idea that a deity created the universe, and is not anthro-centric – which would be a necessary aspect of a first cause argument that assumed the existence of a deity ‘that shares our tastes and prejudices’, that makes human existence central to its universe.<sup>504</sup> While the Big Bang Theory proposes a ‘first cause’ of sorts, it is not anthro-centric.

Russell refers to the power of primary socialisation in this essay. When discussing Kant, he describes to the philosopher’s otherwise sceptical and intellectual world-view in contrast with his inability to question the ‘maxims that he imbibed at his mother’s knee’, which he associates with what ‘the psychologists so much emphasise – the immensely stronger hold upon us that our very early associations have than those of later times’.<sup>505</sup> This is in keeping with the sociologists’ assertions regarding primary socialisation: Kant’s mother ‘imposed [her beliefs] upon him’, ‘defin[ed]’ an ‘objective reality’ for him, and the emotional closeness of the maternal bond maintained these foundations despite their incongruity with Kant’s other beliefs – their dissonance with his cognitions concerning reality.<sup>506</sup>

Towards the end of this essay Russell turns to emotion, which he believes lies at the root of people’s desire for religiosity. Neuroscience acknowledges the supremacy of emotion in cognition: emotion is processed significantly faster than coherent information, and consequently affects our in-the-moment ability to be rational.<sup>507</sup> Furthermore, psychology and cognitive studies acknowledge the power of ego-bias (and therefore the primacy of subjective

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<sup>502</sup> *Christian*, p. 16. ‘The idea that things must have a beginning is really due to the poverty of our imagination’.

<sup>503</sup> ‘Georges Lemaître’ *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/Georges-Lema%C3%Aetre/47718> retrieved on: 01/09/2021.

<sup>504</sup> *Christian*, p. 39. Russell points out the characteristic of human self-importance in Christianity specifically in ‘Has Religion Made Useful Contributions to Civilisation?’

<sup>505</sup> *Christian*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>506</sup> Berger and Luckmann, pp. 149-153.

<sup>507</sup> Kandel describes an experiment that demonstrates the speed of emotional arousal compared with conscious cognition in *Principles of Neural Science* [sixth edition] (New York: McGraw Hill, 2021), p. 1048. Highly emotional memories are also stored more effectively.

emotion), in our interpretation of, and response to, the world. His argument that subjective emotion is at the base of faith – which he finds to be in opposition to ‘argumentation’ – is therefore supported by modern understanding of the brain. He asserts first that ‘one is often told that it is a very wrong thing to attack religion, because religion makes men virtuous’. This, logically, would be a cognition held by a religious person, and therefore the associated ‘virtuousness’ would apply to them, and to attack religion would therefore be to attack them. Russell questions the validity of the assertion that religion and virtue are mutually inclusive by referring to instances in which the virtue of humanity has been improved by opposing the will of the church.<sup>508</sup>

Russell observes that Christians are taught to understand that belief in God makes one good; to be perceived as ‘good’ is associated with feelings of contentment, of security within the religious ingroup. To not believe is ‘wicked’: to be perceived as ‘wicked’ would lead to ostracization and loss of the security of the group. The modern understanding that emotion plays a vital role in decision-making support Russell’s argument: the ‘decision’ to maintain religious faith, for Russell, is one governed ultimately by fear: ‘fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death’.<sup>509</sup>

Russell argues that religion is primarily based upon fear. He rationalises the statement by comparing belief in a deity with the desire to have a protective ‘elder brother’. With such a protector, he asserts, all the fearful things in life, such as death or defeat, appear more manageable.<sup>510</sup> Fear has been shown to be a powerful motivator in many areas. This is not surprising: history holds endless examples of the power of fear over behaviour. Research has illustrated its pervasiveness as a tool across the political spectrum, and supports Russell’s argument that it is a motivator powerful enough to undermine logic or reason.<sup>511</sup>

The subtitle for this essay’s conclusion, ‘What We Must Do’, reiterates and clarifies his stance: that religion is bad for humanity, and must be recognised as such. He opens this passage by stating the necessity for courage:

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<sup>508</sup> *Christian*, p. 25.

<sup>509</sup> See Jonathan D Cohen, ‘The Vulcanization of the Human Brain’, pp. 3-24.

<sup>510</sup> *Christian*, p. 25.

<sup>511</sup> See, for example, Jost, Stern et al, ‘The Politics of Fear: Is There an Ideological Asymmetry in Existential Motivation?’ *Social Cognition* Vol. 35:4 (2017), pp. 324-353. Available online: <https://guilfordjournals.com/doi/pdf/10.1521%2Fsoco.2017.35.4.324> retrieved on: 06/08/2021. Note that this study acknowledges a greater emphasis on fear in conservatism, which is more traditionalism-orientated and therefore more closely aligned with dogmatic systems of belief.

We must stand upon our own feet and look fair and square at the world – its good facts, its bad facts, its beauties, and its ugliness; see the world as it is, and be not afraid of it.<sup>512</sup>

His repetition of the word ‘facts’ reinforces his argument throughout that, in his own experience, evidence is rarely used to support arguments for the existence of a deity. He again refers to fear – alluded to in ‘standing on our own feet’, and directly in his request that we are ‘not afraid’. He asks that, instead of evading logic – instead of reducing dissonance with illogical arguments and evasive concessions to the doctrine – what is real is addressed, acknowledged, and accepted. His previously scathing tone disappears, and he appeals, non-judgementally, to the reader’s desire for happiness, asserting that ‘a good world needs knowledge, kindness, and courage’. His understanding, repeated several times, of how this might be achieved, is through ‘free intelligence’. He asserts his belief that the world does not need a ‘hankering after the past, or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men’, and states that instead it needs ‘a fearless outlook and a free intelligence’.<sup>513</sup> With this, he believes a desirable, attractive future is possible. This concept of ‘free intelligence’ is comparable with Dewey’s reference to ‘freed intelligence’: unshackled by dogma; able to acknowledge and utilise new information; capable of changing one’s stance.

The similarities between the two philosophers in educational terms were discussed in the previous chapter. It is, in some ways, difficult to understand why they themselves felt they differed so enormously, although from a purely philosophical perspective this becomes clearer – Dewey was a Pragmatist and Russell an ‘Analytic’ philosopher, and Russell disliked Pragmatism because he found its relationship with ‘truth’ problematic.<sup>514</sup> Their similarity in terms such as these – the importance they placed on evidence to support knowledge, their shared suspicion of dogma and its imposition on intelligence and freedom of thought – indicates a powerful convergence. According to Madigan, their disagreement was a problem of the definition of ‘truth’: a central aspect of Dewey’s philosophy and approach, whereas for Russell ‘truth’ itself was a problematic concept. For Russell, ‘truth’ could not be associated with ‘human affairs’. Dewey attempted to ‘close all gaps and reject all dichotomies’.<sup>515</sup> For

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<sup>512</sup> *Christian*, p. 26.

<sup>513</sup> *Christian*, p. 26.

<sup>514</sup> See *A History of Western Philosophy* pp. 816-818. Available online: [https://archive.org/stream/TheHistoryOfWesternPhilosophy/HistoryOfWesternPhilosophy-BertrandRussell\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/TheHistoryOfWesternPhilosophy/HistoryOfWesternPhilosophy-BertrandRussell_djvu.txt) retrieved on: 12/07/2022.

<sup>515</sup> This is a classically pragmatist approach to interpretation. See, for example, William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. Available on Project Gutenberg: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5116/5116-h/5116-h.htm> retrieved on: 27/06/2022.

Russell, there were always dichotomies and problems of perspective and context in human affairs; furthermore, new evidence was constantly changing the face of ‘knowledge’, and therefore ‘truth’ was a useless handle to hold onto the world with.<sup>516</sup> Both, however, agreed that humanity would benefit from a better ability to think clearly and coherently, unrestricted by dogma and bias.

Russell often argues that religion is a social phenomenon, and finds in its social function predominantly negative outcomes. His ironic description of a person ‘under the influence of extreme Protestantism’ likens religion to a drug: something that is taken for personal reasons (for example, ‘fear of defeat’, ‘fear of death’) that has an overt effect on behaviour (for example, in justification of it and beliefs about reality; to ‘denote any serious personal convictions as to morals or the nature of the universe’<sup>517</sup>), but that has little other usefulness – one might even extrapolate from Russell’s allusion that he suspects they might regret their choices when they awaken.<sup>518</sup> To use religion in this way, in order to explain reality, morality, and the universe, he feels is ‘unhistorical’.<sup>519</sup> His exploration of religion as a purely social force continues in his assertion that it is the church – that is, the social embodiment of religion and the social engine that powers it – that truly creates ‘religion’ as it is understood by its followers. He asserts that, rather than simply disseminating the teachings of Christ, the church reimagines and regurgitates Christ’s teachings for its own purposes:

As soon as absolute truth is supposed to be contained in the sayings of a certain man, there is a body of experts to interpret his sayings, and these experts infallibly acquire power, since they hold the key to truth.<sup>520</sup>

This is particularly interesting when considered alongside his reference to historicism, and might indeed have alluded to the bible’s history in England. The first English translation of the bible was made in secret by a man named William Tyndale. The church were horrified that he had covertly made the word of God intelligible to the common (literate) man and had him hanged. His translation differed slightly in some of its word choices, and in so doing, undermined something of the church’s supremacy and power. Both the act of attempting to dissociate the word of God, or Christ, from the keyholders, and the interpretation that

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<sup>516</sup> Tim Madigan, ‘Russell and Dewey on Education: Similarities and Differences’ *Bertrand Russell: Public Intellectual* (New York: Tiger Bark Press, 2016), pp. 51-52. Available online: [https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1004&context=philosophy\\_facpub](https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1004&context=philosophy_facpub) retrieved on: 06/08/2021.

<sup>517</sup> *Christian*, p. 27.

<sup>518</sup> *Christian*, p. 27.

<sup>519</sup> *Christian*, p. 27.

<sup>520</sup> *Christian*, p. 28.

relinquished something of the power of their key, were punished with the greatest possible severity.<sup>521</sup> A large portion of Tyndale's work was used in the subsequent English version of the bible, an act of hypocrisy not unlike what Russell describes as characteristic of such institutions.

This is evocative of Berger and Luckmann's thesis, and the primacy they place on the role of institutions in the formation of social 'reality'; how certain institutions are reified in social understanding and make themselves 'independent of human activity', allowing themselves a superiority inaccessible to an ordinary person, conferring on them a status of 'necessity' outside the realms of argument.<sup>522</sup> When the 'key to truth' is seen to be held by those who control and define an institution's character, they are above questioning because they 'manage' the foundations of its reality. This disallows acknowledgement of hypocrisy and contradiction. The sociologists also describe 'theological knowledge[']s]' deliberate institutionalised 'unintelligibility'. Russell's understanding of the deliberate separation of the 'truth' by its holders from those who seek to know it is therefore supported by sociological theory. Interestingly, Berger and Luckmann largely engage with the idea of 'god' or 'gods' when referring to alternative societies, such as polytheistic tribal societies. They relate god(s) to the institutions they represent, and the relationship between faith and identity.<sup>523</sup> This correlates with Russell's assertions about the relationship between an individual's internal, emotional experience and their (unconscious) desire to maintain religious faith.

Russell refers to ingroup and ego-bias:

The usual argument of religious people on this subject is [...]: 'I and my friends are persons of amazing intelligence and virtue. It is hardly conceivable that so much intelligence and virtue can have come about by chance. There must, therefore, be someone at least as intelligent and virtuous as we are, who set the cosmic machinery in motion with a view to producing us'.<sup>524</sup>

Russell's humorous interjection connects with the 'Dunning Kruger Effect', not described until 1999. Dunning and Kruger observed that it is characteristic of those with lower competence (in any field) to believe that they have greater competence than they do.<sup>525</sup> Russell follows this

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<sup>521</sup> See 'William Tyndale', *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/William-Tyndale/73991> retrieved on: 12/01/2023. See also, Nick Hayes, *The Book of Trespass* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 103-107.

<sup>522</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 107-108.

<sup>523</sup> Berger and Luckmann, p. 118.

<sup>524</sup> *Christian*, p. 32.

<sup>525</sup> For a brief explanation of the Dunning Kruger Effect, see Brian Duignan, 'Dunning Kruger Effect', *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/Dunning-Kruger-effect/631901> retrieved on: 17/09/2021.

with his own feelings about the supremacy of humanity ('I cannot but think that Omnipotence operating through all eternity might have produced something better') and his understanding of the prognosis for the future of the universe: that entropy will, ultimately, cause humanity and everything else to cease to exist.<sup>526</sup>

The third essay, 'What I Believe', is also relatively well-known, although unfortunately largely because of its contextomic utility against Russell in the New York College affair.<sup>527</sup> It is a science-orientated justification of his stance on the nature of the universe, in which he argues that the more popular stance is unscientific, stating that 'current morality is a curious blend of utilitarianism and superstition'.<sup>528</sup> He explicitly discusses the brain, writing, 'what we call our thoughts seem to depend on the organisation of tracks in the brain in the same sort of way in which journeys depend upon roads and railways'.<sup>529</sup> This is over-simplistic, but appears in keeping with current understanding that ways of thinking and interpreting can become habitual, and thus a 'thought' will often take a 'journey' because of previously built, easily accessible 'tracks', which are the result of previous responses to external stimuli, conditioning, and 'associative' cataloguing of meaning. This relates to the neuropsychological assertion that 'what fires together, wires together'.<sup>530</sup> He points to the power of such simple factors as nutrition on cognition, using the example that 'a deficiency in iodine will turn a clever man into an idiot'.<sup>531</sup> He questions the use of emotion or divine experience as argumentation for God since 'mental phenomena seem to be bound up with material structure; i.e. inexplicable experiences can usually be explained through the chemical interactions within our brains, as opposed to being the result of divine intervention'.<sup>532</sup>

Russell again aligns theism with human egotism. He describes how a belief in God 'humanise[s] nature', misaligning nature and (the human concept of) value, and the desire to believe so strongly in one's importance so as to believe in immortality. He states that belief in God 'make[s] men feel that physical forces are their allies', that a belief in immortality 'soothes

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For a more in-depth explanation of the Dunning Kruger Effect, see Justin Kruger and David Dunning, 'Unskilled and Unaware of it: How Difficulties in Recognising One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* Vol. 77:6 (Dec 1999), pp. 1121-1134. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10626367/> retrieved on: 11/02/2023.

<sup>526</sup> *Christian*, p. 32.

<sup>527</sup> Edwards' introduction to the essay, *Christian*, p. 43.

<sup>528</sup> *Christian*, p. 54.

<sup>529</sup> *Christian*, p. 44.

<sup>530</sup> This is attributed to Donald Hebb in 1949, and is used repeatedly throughout David Eagleman's *Livewired* (Edinburgh: Cannongate, 2021), various. This also relates to Kelly's Theory of Personal Constructs, discussed throughout the thesis. The essay was originally published in 1925, so significantly earlier than Hebb's coining of the phrase.

<sup>531</sup> *Christian*, p. 44.

<sup>532</sup> *Christian*, p. 44.

men's fears [of death]'.<sup>533</sup> He argues that humans ought not to fear the end of life, or happiness, or love; to 'think truly about man's place in the world': not to artificially superiorise, but accept. He suggests that 'happiness is none the less true happiness because it must come to an end', and that, although the 'open windows of science' might 'first make us shiver after the cosy warmth of traditional humanising myths, in the end the fresh air brings vigour'.<sup>534</sup> This echoes the tone of the first essay's conclusion: it acknowledges the comfort in anthro-centric belief systems, empathises with their usefulness; but asserts the greater strength and comfort in interpreting the world through evidence. My argument supports this: it is at first uncomfortable to question those cognitions, beliefs, thought processes that are embedded in our identity; but in so doing it is possible to achieve a clarity and clearness of vision – a truthfulness with oneself, perhaps – that is worth the discomfort.

Of the remainder, two essays are of particular interest. The first is an ironically-toned piece entitled 'Nice People'. Russell uses 'nice' to describe those who are socially described as 'nice', but whose beliefs and behaviours, when interrogated, contradict the definition most would hold for 'nice'. This is supportive of his prior assertions concerning the dissonant beliefs regarding those who consider 'Christian' to be synonymous with 'good', and effectively highlights a form of culturally-propagated confirmation bias he observed in British society.<sup>535</sup>

The second is 'Freedom and the Colleges' and concerns his experience with New York College. This essay is far more involved with his own ideology regarding education than with religion. 'Academic freedom' is an issue about which Russell felt strongly, and one that he felt was undermined in the context of that situation. He writes that 'teachers should be chosen for their expertness in the[ir] subject', and judged by other experts in their field. Instead, he observes, the 'opponents of academic freedom' hold that any expression of opinion that 'controverts those of the holders of power' is enough to undermine the validity of a person's expertise. This belief he aligns with the behaviour of powers in totalitarian states, using such examples as the exiled 'learned men' of Germany, and the 'tyranny' over Italian universities:

A democracy in which the majority exercises its powers without restraint may be as tyrannical as a dictatorship. Toleration of minorities is an essential part of wise democracy, but a part which is not always sufficiently remembered.<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> *Christian*, p. 47.

<sup>534</sup> *Christian*, p. 47.

<sup>535</sup> 'Nice People', *Christian*, pp. 101-106.

<sup>536</sup> *Christian*, p. 123.



This is interesting because of its perceivable relationship with the Dewey study. Russell considers ‘democracy’ and the necessary conditions for its fulfilment, this time wishing to critique this American cultural ideal from the perspective of a person whose experience has demonstrated the faults in its enactment in that country.

Throughout this book, Russell observes human prejudices and biases and their power in ideology and everyday behaviour. His most powerful arguments are associable with the cognitive mechanisms considered throughout this thesis. He argues that religion is fundamentally orientated around the ingroup and the desire for safety and security.<sup>537</sup> He maintains that, often, the arguments in favour of a particular dogma are self-contradictory and can only be maintained through the processes associated with cognitive dissonance: rejection, avoidance, or re-interpretation of reality. Religion has particular strength in achieving consonance, because it is its own explanation, making the achievement of consistency easier – the answer can always be ‘because it is so, because I have faith’. He accords confirmation bias regularly with people’s ongoing belief in a deity: similar to cognitive dissonance, the believer, in Russell’s understanding, cannot find veracity in a statement that does not align with their faith. His debate with Father Coplestone is the best example of this, since every argument Russell makes against the priest’s logic confirms the priest’s belief in Russell’s ignorance.<sup>538</sup>

Throughout, Russell maintains that he is ‘agnostic’. Even in his strong conviction that no God exists, since he cannot prove his belief using concrete evidence, he cannot conscionably define himself as an atheist. This is perhaps the book’s greatest testament to his belief in ‘critical thinking’, and a simple demonstration of his disagreement with Dewey. For Russell, ‘truth’ represents something that is certain, and because science continues to alter its perspective on what is ‘true’, Russell found the concept of truth uncomfortable and, in a sense, untrue.

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<sup>537</sup> Russell delivered the inaugural series of Reith Lectures in 1948, a number of which concerned social behaviour. In them he mentions ‘herd instinct’, similarly to Murray (see Part One). The lectures are available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUS2QVHJWBk&list=PLx8tKM6zpSqX6OT1xnD9mbufNaqkpGc4N>

retrieved on: 16/06/2022.

<sup>538</sup> *Christian*, pp. 133-153.

### 2.5.3 *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare*

#### 2.5.3.1 Russell and the Nuclear Threat

*Enmity springs only from blindness, not from any inexorable physical necessity.*<sup>539</sup>

Russell was, obviously, not alone in his preoccupation with the nuclear threat – an anxiety that has recently seen a resurgence. Numerous non-fiction books were published internationally in the fifties and sixties concerning the Cold War and its potentially apocalyptic outcome, and probably thousands of works of fiction were born of it. Allen and Unwin participated in the conversation, although not exhaustively. Works written by other commentators included: *The Atomic Age*, a collection of talks to which Russell contributed (1949); *Conventional Warfare in the Nuclear Age* by Otto Heilbrunn (1965), which aimed to propose a ‘safe’ strategy with which to fight future wars; and *The Rule of Folly* by James Newman (1961) – the content of which was similar in scope and argument to Russell’s *Common Sense*. The contrast between Heilbrunn’s war-orientated stance and Russell and Newman’s assertions that war could – and had to be – prevented provides another example of the firm’s dedication to printing ‘both points of view’. Russell also wrote numerous essays, published in collections of his own work, as well as another full-length book on the problem, *Has Man a Future* (1961).

Russell’s stance concerning nuclear warfare changed. Between 1945 and 1948, he publicly advocated an approach more closely aligned with the USA’s ongoing policy: to threaten Russia by stockpiling nuclear weapons. This is something for which he was criticised and about which he was misrepresented; but also something about which he was later uncomfortable, and it has been speculated that he may have wished to ‘disguise a portion of the record’, perhaps in order to protect the integrity of his later entirely anti-nuclear sentiments.<sup>540</sup> This is interesting because it implies a hypocrisy, not in keeping with the academic’s public-facing integrity. Considered retrospectively, this ‘cover-up’ is perhaps forgivable in light of his anti-nuclear activism, which included encouraging civil disobedience and helping organise and participating in the famous Ban the Bomb protests in Aldermaston. After 1948, Russell remained staunchly opposed to any form of nuclear stockpiling, threat or warfare, and his argument was clear: nuclear war would put an end to conflict and cooperation alike, since it would put an end to all human life. Unfortunately, his and others’ dedication did

<sup>539</sup> Bertrand Russell, ‘The Ethics of War’, *International Journal of Ethics* Vol 25:2 (January 1915), p. 133.

<sup>540</sup> See Ray Perkins Jr, ‘Bertrand Russell and the Preventive War’, *The Journal of the Bertrand Russell Archives* (Winter 1994-5), pp. 135-153. Available online: <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/russelljournal/article/download/1867/1893> retrieved on: 17/09/2021.

little to slow stockpiling: American estimated nuclear capacity peaked in the mid-sixties, while Russia's appears to have peaked in the mid-eighties, approximately concurrent with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.<sup>541</sup>

In 1954, Russell broadcast an essay for the BBC entitled 'Man's Peril From the Hydrogen Bomb', foreshadowing *Common Sense*:

Here, then, is the problem I present to you, stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race, or shall mankind renounce war?<sup>542</sup>

This broadcast brought Russell 'back into public life in earnest', paving the way for his subsequent activism.<sup>543</sup> He leapt to action, writing a manifesto that called upon scientists from all over the world to work together to alter governments' policies regarding nuclear arms, which Albert Einstein, among others, signed. Russell attempted to persuade the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to organise the neutral countries into a bloc – a suggestion that is echoed in his proposals for neutral actors such as India to participate in conciliation in *Common Sense*.<sup>544</sup>

The Committee of 100 was created by Russell and Ralph Schoenman in 1960, described as the 'rebellious offspring' of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND, formed by Russell in 1958) and the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War (a group formed in 1957 who were already 'pledged to civil disobedience', but had less popular support).<sup>545</sup> The 'committee' was composed of commentators, artists and thinkers who supported unilateral nuclear disarmament. Their illegal activities were seen as problematic and self-defeating, even by some involved in the CND, however they did achieve their goal of garnering awareness. Russell was originally uncomfortable with the idea of civil disobedience, but acknowledged its power to draw sufficient media attention necessary to push for policy change.<sup>546</sup> In 1963, he published an essay, 'Civil Disobedience and the Threat of Nuclear Warfare', in which he

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<sup>541</sup> 'How US and Russian Nuclear Arsenals Evolved' (chart) *Federation of American Scientists*. Used in John Rachel, 'Bertrand Russell and Ban the Bomb', *OpEd News*, 30/08/2021. Available online:

<https://www.opednews.com/articles/Bertrand-Russell-and-Ban-t-by-John-Rachel-Demonstrations-Doomsday-Doomsday-Clock-History-Activism-210830-953.html> retrieved on: 23/09/2021.

<sup>542</sup> Russell, quoted in Slater, *Bertrand Russell: Polymath*, p. 18.

<sup>543</sup> 'Man's Peril', *CBPR* Vol. 28, chapter 16 [no author given], McMaster University. Available from: <https://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~russell/cpbr28p16.pdf> retrieved on: 11/02/2023.

<sup>544</sup> Slater, *Bertrand Russell: Polymath*, p. 19.

<sup>545</sup> Frank E Myers, 'Civil Disobedience and Organisational Change: The British Committee of 100' *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 86:1 (March 1971), pp. 92-95. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2147352> retrieved on: 24/09/2021.

<sup>546</sup> See the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 'The History of CND'. Available online: <https://cnduk.org/who/the-history-of-cnd/> retrieved on 24/09/2021.

argued that rules could permissibly be broken when the threat of obeying them was obviously undesirable – and the threat of mass extinction, he felt, fitted that description.<sup>547</sup>

### 2.5.3.2 *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare: Publication*

In concurrence with the South African censorship of Russell's previous book, correspondence with Howard Timmins regarding *Common Sense* displays positivity and optimism. Timmins sent Unwin an advertisement that appeared in the *Cape Times*, which read:

perhaps the most impressive book of this year, because this brilliant man tells you exactly what will happen in any future war. Translations are being published in no less than eighteen different countries...including Russia. [...] **every person alive today** should read it<sup>548</sup>

While the advertisement exaggerates, its sentiment seems at odds with *Christian's* banning only a month later in its description of Russell, nor does it foreshadow his future infamy there. The book was praised by many, and as the advertisement states, translated into many languages. It was so popular that it was successfully used as one of the firm's early trials in paperback publishing.<sup>549</sup>

Russell mentions this book in his *Autobiography*. Of his hopes for the book's usefulness, he wrote:

the policies that were needed were those dictated by common sense. If the public could be shown this clearly, I had a faint hope that it might insist on governmental policies being brought into accord with common sense. I wrote [*Common Sense*...] with this hope.

Unfortunately, he understood that its reception had been coloured by the powerlessness felt by most, and the biases maintained by those who were better informed:

it did not tackle the question as to exactly how each individual could make his opinion known and influence policy making, a fact that left some readers dissatisfied [...] I realised that most of the already informed people who read my book would read it with a bias so strong that they would take in only what they wished to take in.<sup>550</sup>

<sup>547</sup> Bertrand Russell, 'Civil Disobedience and the Threat of Nuclear Warfare', in Clara Urquhart (editor), *A Matter of Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963), pp. 189–196.

<sup>548</sup> Letter 25/03/1959, Appended to letter HT to SU [bold in original], AUC 853/3.

<sup>549</sup> *Remembrancer*, p. 218.

<sup>550</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell: Volume Three (1944-1967)* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 105.

Here Russell refers to confirmation bias – he understood that some would be incapable of interpreting the fullness of the danger as a result of their personal preconceptions. Festinger notes a similar phenomenon with respect to being presented with information that creates dissonance. He describes a study in which the responses to anti-racism propaganda by people whose behaviour and beliefs could be regarded objectively as racist were to misunderstand or misinterpret the information they were presented with so that it did not apply to themselves. Festinger quotes the researchers: subjects ‘prefer not to face the implications of ideas opposed to their own so that they [are not] forced either to defend themselves or admit their error’.<sup>551</sup> In terms of Russell’s text, this might be an appropriate description of those who read the text and disagreed with its forecast – to acknowledge the likelihood of both sides’ destruction would be to recognise the pointlessness of maintaining advocacy of ‘sides’; most in power were too heavily invested in the ideological aspect of the Cold War.

### 2.5.3.3 Common Sense: The Text

*the world at present is obsessed by the conflict of rival ideologies, and one of the apparent causes of conflict is the desire for the victory of our own ideology and the defeat of the other.*<sup>552</sup>

Russell’s arguments throughout the text depend upon a shared understanding of ‘common sense’ – i.e. choosing a course of action that is in the interest of humanity, rather than believing that a nuclear holocaust could logically be in the interests of either ‘side’. In order to highlight the apparent international deficiency in ‘common sense’, he repeatedly observes the dissonance between policy and the desire to survive. The title’s reference to ‘common sense’ is interesting in its potential allusion to Gramsci’s ‘common sense’, of which Russell would likely have been aware.<sup>553</sup> Gramsci states that ‘common sense’ has different qualities depending on the agents in question:

The popular element ‘feels’, but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element ‘knows’, but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel.

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<sup>551</sup> Festinger, p. 135.

<sup>552</sup> Bertrand Russell, ‘What Desires are Politically Important?’, Nobel Lecture, 1950. Available from: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1950/russell/lecture/> retrieved on: 01/07/2023.

<sup>553</sup> *Letters From Prison* was actually rejected by the firm in 1948, because it appeared not relevant enough to the British audience. AURR 16/3/62.

The two extremes are therefore pedantry and philistinism on the one hand and blind passion and sectarianism on the other.<sup>554</sup>

This quote can be read into *Common Sense*. Russell's arguments seek to appeal to both the 'popular element' and the 'intellectual element' – who might, in this context, be considered the public and policy-makers respectively. The public, or 'popular element', were powerless to act but 'felt' the mortal anxiety created by the nuclear threat; *Common Sense* sought to provide a greater foundation of knowledge and understanding about the state of affairs, and a possible solution to counter the 'feeling' of mortal fear. The policy-makers, or 'intellectual element', acted on the 'knowledge' of the other sides' nuclear capability, and the '[mis]understanding' that, due to the state of 'cold war', weapons must continue to be produced and stockpiled – but perhaps did not 'feel' the same, powerful fear, felt by those with no power over their states' actions. The dissonance he observed differed for the two 'types' of reader: for the public, it was a side-effect of powerlessness; for policy-makers, a consequence of the desire and necessity to appear 'in control'. Gramsci's interest in hegemonic processes is also relevant: the power of the states between which the conflict existed (Russia and the USA) over the rest of the world's future survival was absolute, and came without the desire or permission of other states.

Russell's preface states his political neutral stance, a point he repeats throughout. The book's international popularity is testament to his success in conveying and maintaining this political and ideological neutrality – the book was popular in Russia and America, and throughout Europe. He is equally critical of both Communist and Capitalist powers, and implies a general disdain for humanity's collective behaviour: in one instance, he describes the 'petty squabbles of the animated lumps that disgrace' the planet.<sup>555</sup> It could be argued that what Russell asks of the reader – or indeed the world – is, ultimately, to approach the problem of nuclear armaments in a 'critical' way. His characteristic approach of pulling apart the logical fallacies and dissonances inherent in the apparent cognitions of those wielding policy power illustrates this – for Russell, it was (by this time) evident that the only way to protect humanity from certain destruction would be to cease the creation of nuclear weapons, and prevent their use – ever again.

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<sup>554</sup> Antonio Gramsci, quoted in Arun K Patnaik, 'Gramsci's Concept of Common Sense: Towards a Theory of Subaltern Consciousness in Hegemony Processes' *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 23:5 (Jan 1988), pp. PE2-PE10. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4378042> retrieved on: 23/09/2021.

<sup>555</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 19.

Russell's introduction attempts to mitigate against a biased interpretation of the book by pre-empting and undermining the misreading of his arguments through the misinterpretation of his stance as being a product of his political leaning:

It is surprising and somewhat disappointing that movements aiming at the prevention of nuclear war are regarded throughout the West as Left-wing movements or as inspired by some ism that is repugnant to ordinary people. [...] The peril involved in nuclear war is one which affects all mankind and one, therefore, in which the interests of all mankind are one.<sup>556</sup>

What is interesting is his simultaneous appeal to 'self-interest', with which he punctuates the text. It is an important aspect of his argument, since he perceives the counter-argument, or default position, to be that of the polarised, offensive perspective that dictated that either side preferred total devastation over the success of their enemy. This sets up and begins a consistent allusion to the cognitive dissonance involved in the belief that continuing to produce armaments was a necessary, inescapable, and productive action to take.<sup>557</sup> This appeal to self-interest, also, is interesting in its correspondence with the idea of large-scale social identity and group membership.

#### 2.5.3.4 Cognitive Dissonance

Russell appears to explicitly refer to cognitive dissonance:

In the great majority of human beings, there is, in addition to outer conflicts, an inner conflict between different impulses and desires which are not mutually compatible.<sup>558</sup>

This quote is taken from a chapter in which Russell discusses the 'changes in outlook' he perceives to be necessary for humanity's survival. It could be argued that the book's central argument is founded in a desire to address an international state of cognitive dissonance. He begins chapter two, 'If Nuclear War Comes', with a statement that describes this perfectly from the perspective of most 'ordinary' people:

There are a great many people who, having realised that a nuclear war would be a disaster, have convinced themselves that it will not occur.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 11.

<sup>557</sup> Festinger had, in fact, published his *Theory* two years before, in 1957.

<sup>558</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 83.

<sup>559</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 21.

It is not only those who evade the problem, or rather ‘persuade themselves that no conflict exists’ between reality and their understanding.<sup>560</sup> He refers more repeatedly, and with greater incredulity, to the state of dissonance in the beliefs of those who wielded power on either ‘side’. He observes ‘the reason for the danger is that leading statesmen on both sides believe, or profess to believe, that their side might secure a victory in the old-fashioned sense’, despite the inarguable danger to both sides in the event of nuclear war. As related above, the distinction might be interpreted in terms of the contrast between ‘understanding’ and ‘feeling’ that Gramsci describes.

Russell is equally critical of both ‘sides’. He cites a letter he received from Khrushchev that asserts ‘Communism, the most progressive of human teachings, will not cease to exist [...] if imperialism unleashes a new war, it will perish in it’, a statement that entirely omits to acknowledge that a state of nuclear war would also annihilate Communism, insofar as it would annihilate humanity.<sup>561</sup> He quotes Dulles, an American General, as stating ‘I do not know whether we will win this Cold War or not’, which Russell observes to be an opinion not necessarily shared by other American counterparts, but one that still fails to take into account the prospect of a war without ‘winners’.

He continues by observing that Western powers had stated that they would not initiate a nuclear war. Russell points out that this was, ultimately, meaningless: with weapons available, were Russia to attack with nuclear arms, retaliation would naturally be with the same. The statement itself implies dissonance: to make such an assertion while recognising the possibility of the other sides’ aggression is meaningless, since either ‘side’s’ initiation would have the same outcome.

Russell observes dissonance in cognitions peripheral to the central issue, stating ‘those in the West [...] maintain that they are defending democracy [...] not only democracy, but freedom.’<sup>562</sup> He considers how an ‘Indian’ (used throughout as an example of a ‘neutral’ state) might consider either ideology to have good and bad aspects, and that such an uninvested observer would not be convinced of the necessity to die for either.

Festinger discusses the state of dissonance created by forced compliance, either through threat or reward, and the incompatibility of a person’s public and private beliefs in such contexts.<sup>563</sup> Russell appears to understand the cognitive state of many of his readers to be

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<sup>560</sup> ‘Cognitive Dissonance’, *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic-eb-com.eul.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/cognitive-dissonance/24662> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>561</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 22. The statement also omits to acknowledge the ‘imperialist’ character of the USSR.

<sup>562</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 74.

<sup>563</sup> Festinger, pp. 84-97.



something akin to this. It might be argued that part of his intention in writing the book was to encourage his readers to acknowledge the dissonance between their public acceptance and private discomfort with the state of affairs. The framing of the threat by powers in invested countries was centred around the ideology of the opposing agent – in the West, this was Communism; in the East, Capitalism. The supposed ‘reward’, as Russell framed it, would be domination of the preferable ideology. Obviously, as he argues, the cost would be the likely termination of both, alongside the destruction of the human race.

Festinger also discusses voluntary and involuntary exposure to information.<sup>564</sup> It might be argued that, in observing the pervasiveness of dissonance among those whom he intended to read the book (both populations and policy-makers), Russell chose to write it in order to expose to them their own internal conflict regarding nuclear arms policy. Since the nuclear situation had ‘high relevance’ to most, the book’s attractiveness as a source of potentially ameliorating and personally relevant information was clear.<sup>565</sup> Using Festinger’s discussion of how dissonance interacts with information sought, it might be argued that Russell’s choice of title – one that does not ‘take sides’ but instead appeals to a general attribute, ‘common sense’ – sought to appeal to those who either supported (privately as well as publicly) nuclear policy or those who did not (either in the sense of ‘forced compliance’ or in a total sense), thus making the text appealing to people with differing cognitions concerning nuclear policy. Festinger supports this by observing that ‘the presence or absence of dissonance in some particular area will have important effects on the degree of information seeking and on the selectivity of such information seeking’.<sup>566</sup> By choosing a title that is (potentially) appealing to any level of dissonance and any position, Russell opens reader’s cognitions to being convinced either way to a greater degree than if he had chosen a title more clearly illustrating his stance. This, for Festinger, reduces the problem of ‘expectations concerning what content [the] source would yield’.<sup>567</sup> That said, Russell’s anti-nuclear stance was by now well-known. Festinger goes on to describe how a person will seek out new information which might reduce their dissonance. For those who strongly felt the dissonance between their public acceptance of the status quo and their private fear, a book proposing a solution would automatically be attractive. In accordance with the previous observation, having read the book, they might learn that they are not alone in their private concerns, and the ‘social support’ of which Festinger speaks is

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<sup>564</sup> Festinger, pp. 123-137.

<sup>565</sup> Festinger would describe it as of ‘high relevance’, because of its direct effect on everyone.

<sup>566</sup> Festinger, p. 126.

<sup>567</sup> Festinger, p. 127.

therefore provided.<sup>568</sup> For Russell, this is encouragement to act, it is the ‘social support’ required for the dissent necessary to encourage change. As Festinger observes, the presence of any sort of dissonance creates motivation to seek out information, and so in observing the pervasiveness of dissonance, Russell’s provision of information and proposals to alter the status quo – and therefore extinguish the source of the dissonance – was an effective course of action.<sup>569</sup>

Festinger observes that the most effective informational characteristic for moving a person’s cognition towards a state of useful dissonance – in terms of the text, in those who believed that the status quo was acceptable because it was necessary for their own ideology to be victorious – is the statement of intent, rather than subsequent informational content.<sup>570</sup> Russell appears to have been cognisant of the importance of first impressions. His preface and introduction address preconceptions immediately, by stating that such biases are irrelevant to his argument.

### 2.5.3.5 Social Identity Theory

Russell’s discussion of nationalism contrasts with his repeated appeal to self-interest. Nationalism in its extreme, ‘modern’ form, for Russell, was a form of ‘collective self-glorification’ characterised by a ‘conviction that it is right to pursue the interests of one’s own nation however they may conflict with those of others’.<sup>571</sup> Mats Andren discusses Russell from an internationalist perspective, writing:

The new threat would make humanity transcend to new levels of global thinking, responsibility and personality, if it did not terminate humanity before that was accomplished.<sup>572</sup>

Andren also points to problems inherent in the particular form of internationalism affected in this period. Russell took patronage in the ‘Congress for Cultural Freedom’, an international society that was later found to be originally sponsored by the CIA and whose main stance was

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<sup>568</sup> Festinger, p. 19, 21. Here he discusses the method of changing behavioural or environmental cognitive elements to reduce dissonance. By discovering the ‘social support’ of Russell and other readers, there is the possibility of changing the cognitive element of acceptance, pushing back against the publicly declared compliance and strengthening the privately held opinion.

<sup>569</sup> Festinger, pp. 124-137.

<sup>570</sup> Festinger, pp. 160-162.

<sup>571</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 78.

<sup>572</sup> Mats Andren, ‘Atomic War or World Peace Order? Karl Jaspers, Demis de Rougemont, Bertrand Russell’ *Global Intellectual History* (2020, ahead of print volume) available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23801883.2020.1830494> retrieved on: 19/08/2021.

anti-communist, for example. It is not clear whether he would have been invested in this organisation had he been aware of this. It does appear however that, outside his specific consideration of twentieth-century politics and the nuclear threat, he supported the ever-increasing ‘interconnected[ness]’ of the world, and felt uncomfortable with the insular, superiority-orientated form of nationalism.

Russell makes numerous references to nationalism. In reference to what he understood to be an under-acknowledged balance, he describes how both West and East were in equal danger, something he felt ‘[wa]s obvious to anyone who ha[d] time to consider the matter and [wa]s not obsessed by the nationalist ambitions of foreign offices’.<sup>573</sup> This statement is suggestive of a dissonance in group cognitions concerning reality. Later, he asserts the need for such group characterisations to change entirely, stating that ‘each individual should learn to view groups other than his own as possible co-operators, rather than as probable competitors’.<sup>574</sup>

Russell’s proposal to create a ‘World Authority’, to oversee nuclear disarmament and end the threat of war, he finds to be most limited – after (and related to) the conflict of ideology – by nationalism. Interestingly, the ‘opposition between Communism and Capitalism’ that is the basis of the threat might itself be considered in terms of ‘ingroup bias’ – of which nationalism is an example – on a very large scale. This is particularly interesting in its exclusion of all else: the two powers, as Russell describes, considered the fate of the entire world and all of humanity to be held – presumably fairly – in their hands. This dichotomy is in line with the modern description of social identification behaviour: focusing primarily on perceived favourable characteristics in one’s own ingroup, and on perceived negative characteristics in the outgroup – in this case, to the exclusion of all other interests.<sup>575</sup>

Russell is aware of this oversimplification, and his observations on the problem of the smaller, nationally-defined ingroup demonstrate his insight into group mentality’s role in international conflict. He describes nationalism in terms of ingroup bias, observing that ‘nationalism in each nation consists partly of beliefs as to one’s own nation’s excellence’. Russell’s interpretation of the term is broader than this, as illustrated in his assertion that ‘it has also its good aspects. It would not be good if people all over the world were alike’, linking his concept of nationalism with national identity and ‘independence’ rather than the more limited

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<sup>573</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 58.

<sup>574</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 83-84.

<sup>575</sup> See Naomi Ellemers, ‘Motivation’ in ‘Social Identity Theory’, *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/social-identity-theory/604139> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

modern definition of nationalism which is predominantly characterised by negative attributes.<sup>576</sup> Of the ‘dangerous aspects of nationalism’ Russell writes:

Unlike Capitalism and Communism, nationalism is not a single, world-wide system, but is a different system in each nation. It consists essentially in collective self-glorification and in a conviction that it is right to pursue the interests of one’s own nation however they may conflict with those of others.<sup>577</sup>

To illustrate both his objectivity and the pervasiveness of this trend in European history, he first uses the example of the lyrics of ‘Rule Britannia’: ‘Britons never shall be slaves’, and observes that this had clearly not applied to non-British people. He then describes similar tropes in French and German modern history. Russell points to the oddly contradictory character of ‘bad’ nationalism – were an individual to proclaim:

I am morally and intellectually superior to all other individuals, and, because of this superiority, I have a right to ignore all interests except my own.<sup>578</sup>

Then they would be ‘thought ill of’, however when a population ‘collectively make such a declaration about themselves, they are thought noble and splendid and spirited’, pouring admiration on the ‘most blatant advocates of the national conceit’.<sup>579</sup>

Russell asserts that ‘we have become so accustomed to nationalism that it has come to be seen as an inherent part of human nature’, an idea he counters with references to its historical absence in many cultures. He does however acknowledge the human tendency toward group mentality that is at the root of nationalism, describing the ‘psychologically natural dynamic’ that has ‘almost invariably governed the development of nationalism’, the ‘exaggerat[ion] of one’s own side’s ‘merits and the demerits of foreign oppressors’, explaining that ‘nationalism’ has been distinct from religious herd mentality; and describing modern nationalism as a ‘reaction against foreign imperialism’.<sup>580</sup> He finds some sense in this, since in order to garner support against a foreign oppressor there is utility in viewing them negatively, and one’s own group positively. He goes on to assert that ‘[t]he appeal to group self-esteem fits in so well with people’s natural propensities that it is not easily combated except where there are dissident groups having collective self-esteem at variance with that of their nation’, thus acknowledging the difficulty in combating nationalism in cultures in which it is pervasive. Here Russell

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<sup>576</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 77. See also ‘Nationalism’, *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available online: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125289> retrieved on: 19/10/2021.

<sup>577</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 78.

<sup>578</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 78.

<sup>579</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 79.

<sup>580</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 79.

challenges the notion that conflict of interest was the primary reason for ingroup favouritism and outgroup bias, prior to Tajfel, in his observation of the primacy of ‘group self-esteem’.<sup>581</sup>

### 2.5.3.6 Fear

Fear plays a crucial role in Russell’s argument. In *Christian*, he observed that fear ‘breeds cruelty’ and can be used as a tool for control. In the first chapter of *Common Sense*, he observes that it also breeds lunacy, and reiterates its powerful capacity to affect control:

Increasing fear will lead to increasing armaments involving increasing expenditure and increasing rigidity of the social structure with continually diminished liberty. Only a constant propaganda of hate and terror will induce populations to accept the burdens involved.<sup>582</sup>

In chapter six, he idealistically observes that alleviation of the ‘terrible load of fear’ that pervaded the world and directed energies to ‘hate and destruction and futile rivalry’ would allow for the redirection of those energies to ‘bringing happiness and prosperity to parts of the world which, throughout long ages, have been oppressed by poverty and excessive toil’, going on to suggest that ‘kindliness, generosity and sympathy’ were being kept in the ‘iron fetters’ of fear – fear of the invisible enemy.<sup>583</sup> While this passage might be interpreted as overly idealistic, its central idea is not invalid in reference to history since: it could be argued that, were wealth better distributed and extant technologies therefore made more widely available internationally, many of the burdens of poorer nations might have been reduced. In the subsequent chapter he considers ‘mutual fear and the suspicion of bad faith’ as being the most dominant obstacle to peaceful policy, alongside the other very human problems of status and ideology; later, he observes that ‘Europe is at present entirely dominated by fear of war’.<sup>584</sup>

Fear is probably the most powerful, and ancient, of the human brain’s emotional responses. It is evolutionarily necessary for survival, and governs a great deal of human behaviour. Fear conditioning is incredibly quick: only a small number of iterations are required for an individual’s brain to create an association with a stimulus that invokes a fear response.<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> ‘Social Identity Theory’, *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/social-identity-theory/604139> retrieved on: 28/09/2021. Tajfel et al, ‘Social Categorisation and Intergroup Behaviour’, pp. 149-178.

<sup>582</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 16.

<sup>583</sup> *Common Sense*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>584</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 59.

<sup>585</sup> See ‘The Limbic System’, *Queensland Brain Institute*. Available online: <https://qbi.uq.edu.au/brain/brain-anatomy/limbic-system> retrieved on: 28/09/2021. See also Eric Kandel, *Principles of Neural Science* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2021), pp. 1053-1055.

The ‘propaganda of hate and terror’ to which Russell refers, then, is a reliable mechanism with which to create consensus for policies of continued stockpiling, and modern history demonstrates the effectiveness of, particularly American, campaigns instilling a pervasive cultural terror of Communism – often completely abstracted from the premise itself, and more closely defined as a fear of totalitarianism. Interestingly, many Americans were probably equally fearful of the danger of being *perceived* as pro-communist in their own society.<sup>586</sup> Furthermore, as Cohen asserts, emotionality (particularly in the context of fear) creates irrationality; and a permanent state of fear would therefore logically provoke a non-rational mentality regarding nuclear actions and policy.<sup>587</sup> As Festinger observes, when there is an emotional environment of abstract fear in a society, communities will create less abstract things to attach it to, in order to achieve greater cognitive consonance. The more concrete idea of the enemy is more easily connected with the fear cognition than the abstract threat of nuclear holocaust.<sup>588</sup>

Although Russell attempts to adopt a critical stance, there is a great deal of emotional language used throughout. While this was effective in conveying the seriousness of the problem, it was perhaps also counter-productive. Reviewers’ main criticisms related to the apparent naivete and idealism of his proposals. Had he adopted a more objective tone, in keeping with the neutrality he sought to convey, his detractors might have interpreted his proposals differently. That said, his proposals were ultimately based on the assumption that world leaders were capable of reaching universal accord. This is not something that has ever been achieved; and might, in fact, be entirely unachievable.

### 2.5.3.7 Russell’s Proposal

Russell’s proposed course of action was problematic due to its idealism, and its reliance on the unlikely achievement of effective communication and cooperation by ideologically opposed national governments. Of this he was aware, as evidenced in his assertion that he had ‘already travelled a long way into Utopian regions’.<sup>589</sup> Despite his awareness of the inherent difficulty

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<sup>586</sup> Ellen Schrecker provides an interesting discussion of this aspect of McCarthy-era American culture in ‘McCarthyism: Political Repression and the Fear of Communism’ *Social Research, Fear: Its Political Uses and Abuses* Vol. 71:4 (Winter 2004), pp. 1041-1086. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40971992> retrieved on: 30/09/2021.

<sup>587</sup> Cohen, ‘The Vulcanization of the Human Brain’, pp. 3-4.

<sup>588</sup> Festinger, pp. 236-238. Festinger describes those living in an area peripheral to a disaster zone being more likely to catastrophise because of the abstracted fear of nearby disaster, even when there is no evidence of it in their immediate location.

<sup>589</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 69.

in achieving his proposals, perhaps because of the enormity of the danger, he proposes a solution involving unity in reason, potentially achievable, he considered, in light of the alternative.

Chapter VII, 'Steps Towards Conciliation', begins with an acknowledgement of the difficulty in finding such universal understanding. He writes, 'let us suppose a situation reached in which East and West alike are convinced that nuclear war would be a disaster to all parties', implying both its unlikelihood and his personal disdain for the absence of such an acknowledgement. Here Russell proposes that first this 'solemn pronouncement' must be made, and with it, a mutual recognition of the fact that 'war could not serve the purposes of any signatory Powers'.<sup>590</sup> Could such an agreement be reached, it would then be necessary to form a 'conciliation committee', chaired by two representatives from each of the main nuclear powers, Russia and America; one Chinese representative, one Western European and two 'neutrals'. He suggests the 'neutrals' might come from India and Sweden, since 'one should lean towards the East and the other towards the West'. In reference to the required knowledge and mental energy of such a committee, he makes an observation very similar to Lippmann's in *Public Opinion*:

One of the difficulties in the modern world is that all policy-makers are too busy to be able to acquaint themselves with more than a small proportion of the facts upon which policy ought to be based.<sup>591</sup>

In order to mitigate against such limitation, he proposes that the members of the committee have no other responsibilities. He recommends that they 'meet together in daily contact', not only 'in a business way but also socially'. This proposal appears to desire the creation of a sort of microcosm of international community (or what we might now term 'global society'): by creating a relationship of friendship and brotherhood between these representatives, their represented states ought, by extension, to remain at peace. The neutrals' contribution would be to 'smooth things over' and promote a 'more tolerant mood' between camps. He asserts the importance of the committee's non-competitive nature; stating that 'agreement, rather than diplomatic victory' should be sought by its members.<sup>592</sup>

Russell was aware that his proposals were problematised by human nature's inherent unreasonableness. Besides the committee, he recommends the establishment of an 'international authority' whose responsibility would be the prevention of war. This

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<sup>590</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 53-54.

<sup>591</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 54.

<sup>592</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 55.

‘governmental and legal control over the relations between national states’ he finds to be ‘necessary for survival’; while acknowledging its ‘Utopian’ character. In order for it to be achievable, he observes that a ‘lessening of mutual fanaticism’ would be needed – something that, in the hypothetical world he describes, would require all ‘sides’ to cease their ‘propaganda of hate and terror’. He concludes the chapter with a further acknowledgement of difficulty:

The world is faced with a race between reason and death. Advocates of death point out, with a lamentable degree of truth, that reason is a very feeble force in human affairs. So long as this is the case, hopes and fears must remain balanced in any forecast of the future.<sup>593</sup>

Finally, similarly to Dewey and in accordance with his arguments against dogma in *Christian*, Russell proposes that education is part of the ongoing solution. In chapter ten, when outlining the necessary changes in outlook for successful, permanent removal of the threat, he makes what is perhaps the most broadly and timelessly applicable proposal of all:

Education in most countries is mainly in the hands of the national State and, therefore, tends to teach an outlook which is considered to be in [its] interests [...] It has not been thought, hitherto, that the interests of one State coincided with those of another [...] [...] it is no longer to the interest of any country to emphasise its superiority to other countries.<sup>594</sup>

Russell proposes that the most important alterations would be to the study of history. He observes that each country defines heroism by its own people (that in France, heroism is French, in England, English) and that such framing was not conducive to the mentality required for the permanent alleviation of nuclear anxiety. Instead, he proposes that ‘in every country the history of that country should be taught from books written by foreigners’, observing that ‘no doubt such books would have a bias, but it would be opposed by an opposite bias in the pupils, and the outcome might be fairly just’.<sup>595</sup> While the proposal might again be considered idealistic, it is a powerful idea. In reference to his discussion of nationalism and my own observation of its parallel with group mentality, such a move might serve to counter feelings of superiority and hostility towards outgroups. The engagement with alternative bias, within the framework of school education, would be an immensely useful way to integrate a more objective world-view into the curriculum, and, ultimately, the culture.

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<sup>593</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 71-72 (whole paragraph).

<sup>594</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 80-1.

<sup>595</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 81.



Russell feels that most subjects would require some alteration, and here his proposals are particularly interesting in the contemporary context. He suggests that:

Everything (except, perhaps, arithmetic) should be taught as part of the progress of Man, and as a series of steps in the conquest of obstacles with which he has been faced and is still faced.<sup>596</sup>

In framing education in this way, he argues, any diminution of ‘excitement’ created by the reduction and reframing of the study of war would be countered by the framing of Man – as a species – in ‘contests with those difficulties and dangers other than those of war’. He divides these contests into three ‘spheres’ and perceives the journey’s framing as one always towards greater ‘wisdom’: ‘the contests with nature, the contests between men, and the contests within man’s own self’.<sup>597</sup> This is an attractive premise: to frame education and its outcomes around a human thirst for wisdom and progress, as opposed to a means with which to gain power or wealth.

His description of man’s ‘mastery over nature’ has aged badly, although his observations are not untrue: mankind has certainly presided over, and triumphed against, nature in ways that have been incredible for man’s needs but often terrible for ‘nature’s’ wellbeing. The second type of contest (between men), being that with which the book is concerned, he repeats his argument against. Comparing the possibilities of modern conflict with the destruction of Rome by barbarians, he observes that ‘it is not now barbarians who constitute the danger [...] it is those at the forefront of civilization’.<sup>598</sup>

His final statement regarding man’s ‘three great spheres of contest’ (the beginning of which has already been cited) is particularly appropriate to this discussion:

In the great majority of human beings, there is, in addition to outer conflicts, an inner conflict between different impulses and desires [...] Systems of morality are intended to deal with such conflicts and, to a certain degree, they are often successful. But I think that changes in moral outlook are necessary from time to time. One such change, which is especially necessary at the present time, is that each individual should learn to view groups of human beings other than his own as possible co-operators, rather than as probable competitors.<sup>599</sup>

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<sup>596</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 81.

<sup>597</sup> *Common Sense*, pp. 81-83.

<sup>598</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 83.

<sup>599</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 83-84.

Unfortunately, Russell does not go into further detail as to how this might be achieved. He does, however, finish this chapter with a repetition that fear must be substituted for hope. His description of the ‘human family’ as capable of realising the ‘splendid thing that life may be’ by cooperating is at once powerful and depressingly utopian.<sup>600</sup>

It is clear that this book was written from a place of deep emotion, and Russell at times allows this to permeate his argument. However, the book broadly manages to sustain a fairly objective stance, in that it does not take preference over either ‘side’. While the book is not explicitly concerned with individual thinking or awareness of cognitive biases, its narrative is explicitly aware of the problems of collective, and individual, human psychology.

The book had a mixed reception. Frankland accused Russell of naivete, assuming that his comparison between the Black Death and nuclear war in his introduction is made without an understanding of the differences between natural and man-made disaster. Frankland went on to assert that ‘to claim that [Russell’s] argument is Utopian is to understate the case’ and criticises the book’s ‘swing[s] between the obvious and the impossible’.<sup>601</sup> Frankland’s harshness is understandable: the book maintains Russell’s characteristic hopefulness, perhaps to too great a degree. Its intended usefulness in preventing all future war might have been naively optimistic, but the book’s utility as an insight into Russell’s understanding of human psychology is notable, despite the glaring inconsistency in its proposals’ acknowledgement of the same. Burns made clear what is lacking in Russell’s argument: consideration of the problems inherent in achieving his suggested course. Burns acknowledged that the central argument of Russell’s book is attitudinal. He accused Russell of being ‘irritating’, asserting that Russell hinged too great a part of his argument on the problems of ‘ignorance, folly and stupidity’.<sup>602</sup> Such an accusation is warranted, and acknowledging this also undermines something of its power: by accusing such a great proportion of humanity of stupidity or ignorance, he alienates a great portion of his audience, and implies a perceived superiority that detracts from his intended objectivity.

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<sup>600</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 84.

<sup>601</sup> Nobel Frankland, ‘Review: *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare*’, *International Affairs* Vol. 35:4 (Oct 1959), p. 463. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2609137> retrieved on: 28/07/21.

<sup>602</sup> Arthur Lee Burns, ‘Disarmament or the Balance of Terror: Review of Inspection for Disarmament. by Semour Melman: *The Arms Race: A Programme for World Disarmament*. by Philip Noel-Baker: *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare*. by Bertrand Russell: *Permanent Peace: A Check and Balance Plan*. by Tom Slick’ *World Politics* Vol. 12:1 (Oct 1959). Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2009218> retrieved on: 28/07/2021.

### 2.5.4 Conclusion

Russell remains an important figure today, and Unwin's six-decade publishing relationship with him played an important role in the philosopher's contribution to Britain's intellectual output in the twentieth century. Russell's consistent appeals to logic, in whatever subject he was considering, made him a convincing commentator. It is particularly interesting how often his arguments observe the cognitive dissonance in public consciousness, and it almost seems as though he and Festinger should have met to discuss their observations. Certainly, had Russell read *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, he would have found nothing new.

These two texts are only a small sample of Russell's enormous output, a majority of which was initially read, and subsequently published by, Unwin. Their oddly terse, but highly congenial relationship is of historical interest, in part because its relationship with a Victorian idea of class and status appears to go against both men's progressive ideas. This is perhaps simply a product of the modern perspective, however: while both in their own ways sought greater equality – Unwin through his work to provide greater availability of educational texts in developing countries, Russell in his far-reaching humanitarian battles – they both appear to have conformed to their class-orientated conditioning.

A study of Allen and Unwin's non-fiction publishing that did not consider Russell's output would be conspicuous: Russell's contribution to the firm's list was enormous. His *Principles of Social Reconstruction* was a strong contender for the thesis, however these later works were more relevant to the arguments and chronological nature of the study. His observations and arguments will also provide useful and insightful material in Part Three.

### **Part Three**

*For increased knowledge of human nature would directly and in unpredictable ways modify the workings of human nature [...] the primary and chief effect of a better psychology would be found in education. [...]*

*The public pays generously to take care of the results of bad conditions.<sup>1</sup>*  
John Dewey

*What must be done is, first of all, psychological.<sup>2</sup>*

Bertrand Russell

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<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (Ohio University Press, 2016), p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Common Sense*, p. 31.

### 3.1 Introduction: Today

In little more than two decades, the twenty-first century has brought immense changes in the way humans interact with one another and with information. This is due to a combination of factors; but the most important in terms of the interests of this study are the Internet and its by-products, social media and ‘surveillance capitalism’. Although the Internet itself emerged much earlier, it did not become ‘visible to the general public’ until the early 1990s; and did not achieve its exponential increase in reach and availability until this century; arguably (at least in part) as a consequence of the creation of the modern ‘smartphone’ and the concurrent decline in the price of producing Internet-capable and Internet-distributing devices.<sup>3</sup> The Internet has inarguably brought enormous benefits, but the commodification of its use has also brought complex new problems.

Social media also appeared shortly before the millennium,<sup>4</sup> but only achieved its modern status and universality over the course of the following decade – first with MySpace, and then with the enormous success of Facebook.<sup>5</sup> According to figures taken in 2022, Facebook has an active user base of nearly three billion people;<sup>6</sup> social media in general is used by approximately four billion people; and the Internet is available to around five billion people<sup>7</sup> in a world inhabited by around eight billion.<sup>8</sup> Social media, therefore, is now a commonality shared by approximately half of the living human population – more people now use social media than were alive at any one time during the period with which the majority of this thesis is concerned: the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Kahn and Michael Aaron Dennis, ‘Internet’, *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/Internet/1458> retrieved on: 19/01/2023. Jobs’ iPhone was the first fully Internet-capable, computer-like ‘smartphone’.

<sup>4</sup> According to *Britannica*, the first social media site comparable to those of today emerged in 1997 (SixDegrees.com). ‘Social Media’, *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/social-media/634550> retrieved on: 19/01/2023.

<sup>5</sup> MySpace was the most popular social network site between 2005 and 2008; now little used and entirely overtaken by Facebook. ‘MySpace’, *Britannica Academic*. Available from: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/Myspace/443867> retrieved on: 19/01/2023.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 3rd quarter 2022’, Statista. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/> retrieved on: 14/01/2023.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Number of Internet and social media users worldwide as of July 2022’, *Statista*. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/> retrieved on: 19/01/2023.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Population’, from the United Nations website. Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/population> retrieved on: 19/01/2023.

<sup>9</sup> The United Nations article gives a figure of 2.5 billion in 1950. Parts One and Two are concerned with the period between 1914 and around 1960. According to ‘Worldometer’, the approximate human population of the world in 1960 was 3.04 billion. Available from: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/world-population-by-year/> retrieved on: 01/07/2023.

Approximately concurrent with, and a contributing factor to, the rise of social media has been the advance of what Shoshana Zuboff has termed ‘surveillance capitalism’.<sup>10</sup> This phenomenon is the now-ubiquitous model used to market products and services to Internet users around the world. Zuboff correlates its inception with Google’s introduction of ‘AdWords’, originally a means of monetising the search engine.<sup>11</sup> The AdWords method – which essentially targeted users with advertisements tailored to their searches and online behaviour – quickly became the dominant method of monetising free online services and creating hyper-personalised user experience. Surveillance capitalism is, in essence, the harvesting of users’ behaviour for the purpose of retaining their attention and advertising products to them. ‘Behaviour’ describes a broad spectrum of a person’s activities: anything from when and where a person is working, sleeping or otherwise engaged;<sup>12</sup> to the movements of their facial muscles;<sup>13</sup> and their conversations in the digital and non-digital worlds.<sup>14</sup>

The ‘behavioural data’ with which this study is most concerned is that which informs a service provider (social media, streaming, or search engines, for example) of a person’s inner life: their interests; their views, beliefs, and ideological leanings: their ‘preferences’. This data forms a psychological profile of a person that allows the site or service to provide them with a hyper-personalised user experience. It is this algorithmic spoon-feeding of information that has played, and continues to play, an enormous role in the spread of mis- and disinformation, facilitates the manipulation of publics, and is contributing to a global trend of increasing polarisation of communities and societies. False and misleading information have always been available as political and ideological tools; the present-day information and communication environment has made their use unprecedentedly easy – and effective.

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for Freedom at the New Frontier of Power* (London: Profile Books, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Zuboff traces AdWords and Google’s major contribution to the genesis of surveillance capitalism in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, for example, pp. 40-49, p. 59, etc. For a brief explanation of the use of AdWords by social media providers, see Daniel Chandler and Rod Munday, ‘Google AdWords’ in *A Dictionary of Social Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Available online: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191803093.001.0001/acref-9780191803093-e-29?rskey=wJgwwI&result=1> retrieved on: 19/01/2023.

<sup>12</sup> Many apps can access a device’s location, and some operating systems harvest this data for, for example, Google. Some apps record sleeping data for the user’s information, however this data can be shared or added to a person’s profile.

<sup>13</sup> Some apps and websites access a device’s camera in order to collect behavioural surplus, for example, Pokemon Go. Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, p. 149, for example.

<sup>14</sup> Devices such as Amazon’s Alexa ‘listen’ to conversations and language production when not switched ‘on’.

### 3.1.1 Structure of Part Three

This thesis began with an overview of Stanley Unwin's career. Part Two traced moments of it, through books he chose to publish, and the ideas and observations of his authors; observed through an interdisciplinary lens. Part Three will bring the discussion into the contemporary context, and consider the relevance and salience of these ideas in the context of the modern world: how the authors, and the study, speak to the present day. How can the observations these writers made about the flaws in human thinking, and the values that Unwin attempted to weave into his publishing practice, be used in the formation of a solution to contemporary issues in human interactions with information and interpersonal discourse?

Belloc's *Free Press* (1918) outlined his concerns regarding human interaction with information, in relation to the progress of, and perceived problems with, mass media in this time. This Part's subchapter on Belloc will consider contemporary issues associated with news media and the consumption of information online.

Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) explored his observations concerning the flaws in the democratic model.<sup>15</sup> This Part's subchapter on Lippmann will consider the parallels between his proposed technocracy and 'surveillance capitalism', and the utility of his observations in the much changed, and yet fundamentally and inescapably similar, contemporary human world.

Čapek's works (1920s and 30s) reflect the anxieties of the early to mid-twentieth century more generally. Čapek's science fiction is particularly relevant to the contemporary problems of the collective environmental crises and their associated existential threat, while his realism speaks to the increasing problem of social polarisation through his belief in the power of tolerance and the importance of diversity.<sup>16</sup> This Part's section on Čapek will consider these parallels.

Dewey (1940s) and Russell's (1950s) works engage with anxieties directly connected with the observable consequences of human progress. This Part's subchapter on Dewey will argue that his assertions concerning the importance of the educational process to society, to an individual's life, and to the maintenance of democracy, are deeply important today.

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<sup>15</sup> Concerns about democratic ideal's flaws are not new. Certainly, Plato, among other roughly contemporary Greek philosophers, disapproved of the democratic model and preferred the 'aristocratic tribalist' model for society, as discussed by Karl Popper in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> 'Environmental crises' intends to refer to the combined ecological and climate crises. 'Climate change' does not necessarily refer to the problems of plastic pollution, the depletion of nature, or mass extinctions of other animals precipitated by human activity. 'Environmental crises' is therefore preferable in its implication of the combined problems of the 'Anthropocene' era.

Russell's *Why I am Not a Christian* (1957) is, at root, a discourse on dogma – and the associated problem of poorly considered beliefs – that uses religion as its exemplar. *Common Sense* is perhaps the most relevant of all the books in the study to the contemporary world, in its clear parallels with present-day existential concerns. This Part's subchapter on Russell will consider his observations in relation to this parallel – in connection with climate-orientated civil disobedience, the ongoing importance of 'freed intelligence', and, relatedly, the importance of facilitating the development of self-aware thinking in the education system.



### 3.2 Unwin: Principles, Propaganda and Censorship

It was Unwin's principles, his publishing choices, the period over which his 'influential, socially useful, internationally important' career took place, and his commitment to cooperation and collaboration, that have motivated his centrality to the study.

Unwin was not perfect, as Part One observes. However, just as Russell's use of language regarding 'inferior' or 'uncivilized' races indicates a person with progressive ideas beholden to the prejudices of their socialisation – their cultural conditioning – Unwin too was a 'product of his time'. Just as we can concurrently recognise the positive characteristics of other historical figures with far more objectionable views, such as Winston Churchill or Rudyard Kipling, we might forgive Unwin his conditioning – while acknowledging it, exploring it, trying to better understand it. Indeed, were the educational process to more deeply and explicitly engage with, and interrogate, historical perspectives associated with a person's socialisation, a greater depth of understanding of both those historical figures and the phenomenon of conditioning itself – and its application in the present – might be achieved.<sup>17</sup> Some of Unwin's subjective biases were discussed in the Part One, in part to demonstrate their pervasiveness in human thought, and in part to illustrate their presentation in an individual.

Part One's engagement with Unwin's work in improving cooperation across the book industry was intended to reflect the importance of collaboration, the possibility in fighting against polarisation, and the power in effective communication. The reason why these attributes formed the basis of this study are their contemporary importance, in the highly polarised, politically unstable, 'post-truth' United Kingdom of today.

Unwin's principles – which, alongside keen business acumen, the inheritance of a broad and impressive list, and financial freedom garnered through other investments – led to his publishing some of the most important thinkers of the twentieth century, only a tiny number of whom are represented in this study. Those seemingly simple rules: to publish 'both sides of the argument', to increase the volume of international voices in British books, and to publish only the 'best in the field', have informed the interpretation of critical thinking proposed in this

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<sup>17</sup> This might be associated with the idea of 'historical relativism' or the 'historicist' idea that historical periods (and by extension figures) must be understood on their 'own terms'. However, this proposal argues that this be done in such a way as to compare contemporary values and perspectives with historical ones in order to better understand the sociological mechanisms underlying them, and better understand the genesis of prejudice and intolerance in present-day perspectives. See 'Historical relativism' and 'Historicism' in *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*. Available from: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758-e-1208#> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

study. By providing alternative perspectives on a variety of issues, Unwin made it easier for his readers to come to more informed conclusions. By promoting international trade in books, he further increased the diversity of perspectives – which, as Berger and Luckmann’s work argues, provides greater opportunity for the nurturing of tolerance; and is especially important in a highly ‘interconnected’ world.<sup>18</sup> By ensuring that the books he published were the ‘best in their field’ – by using expert readers, and by publishing the works of expert authors, he attempted to create a reliable informational environment.

Part One considered the subject of propaganda during the twentieth century’s two world wars. The *OED*’s definition of propaganda describes it as ‘the systematic dissemination of information, esp. in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a political cause or point of view’.<sup>19</sup> The use of disinformation, by, for example, the Russian regime, to create chaos, promotes the ‘political cause’ of undermining Western democratic systems. Propaganda has inevitably achieved greater effectiveness through the invention of micro-targeting, because it can be tailored very precisely to an individual’s world-view and context. Mis- and disinformation are often forms of propaganda, designed to undermine trust, or create panic or chaos; all of which serve a political purpose and manipulate beliefs.<sup>20</sup>

Unwin was critical of aspects of First World War propaganda, but felt less objectionable towards its use in the Second World War, because he perceived this to be a war of ‘ideas’, a war that was fought to preserve freedom and democracy. While this might appear incongruous – fighting ideological extremism with psychological manipulation – the focus of Second World War propaganda was often on boosting morale and maintaining a sense of camaraderie. It could be argued that Unwin’s feelings regarding propaganda differed according to its use and context, an idea supported by his reference to a quote asserting that ‘most literature could be held to be propagandist’.<sup>21</sup> Literature often does offer an alternative perspective and interpretation of a problem, timeless or contemporary, and through its form of ‘emotional manipulation’ can promote sympathy with it. The difference, obviously, is that literature is openly and recognisably artificial, it does not claim to present objective ‘truth’, certainties, or ‘facts’. What is more often understood to be propaganda – the framing of current affairs, advertising, etc – is less honest and open in its bias. Today, true propaganda – the framing of reality for political

<sup>18</sup> ‘Interconnected’ is taken from the Russell’s 1959 interview, quoted in the Russell chapter.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Propaganda’, *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available from: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/152605> retrieved on: 20/05/2023.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Ilya Yablokov, ‘Russian Disinformation Finds Fertile Ground in the West’, *Nature Human Behaviour* Vol. 6:6 (June 2022), pp. 766-767. Available from: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-022-01399-3.pdf> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>21</sup> Letter 27/11/1917, SU to J A Spender, AU FSC 32/205.

ends – has become a very real problem, because of the algorithmically-driven manner in which humans have come to interact with information. This is particularly evidenced in the Cambridge Analytica scandal, discussed presently. Peacetime propaganda is arguably more effective in convincing people at a deep, unconscious level, because there is less of a sense of responsibility by the populace to adhere to a security-associated narrative, and less expectation of propaganda.

Also of interest, because of Unwin's distaste for it, was censorship: the censorship of pacifist perspectives in the First World War, the 'internalised' censorship of the British reader, and the trial for the previously censored *Lady Chatterley's Lover* for which he sat on the defence. Today's 'cancel culture' might be interpreted as a form of censorship. The subject has not received a great deal of scholarly attention, and perhaps rightly so, since, like so many other concepts weaponised in the British and American 'culture wars', there is little widely agreed consensus regarding what precisely it means. Richard Duque et al describe it as a 'political correctness ethos', and observe the 'parado[x]' of the 'liberal voices' of (American) cancel culture simultaneously 'supporting free speech' and 'cancelling' that which is deemed 'politically incorrect'.<sup>22</sup> Meredith Clark's paper takes an interesting view, considering the problems, moral and otherwise, with attempting to enforce moral conformity.<sup>23</sup> The majority of the scholarly work pertaining to this issue looks at American 'cancel culture', which is different in nature, in part because it is a symptom of a culture, and British and American culture are separate entities. The problem is not discussion concerning what is and is not morally acceptable itself, but the hypocrisy that appears inherent in the entirety of the discourse, on either 'side'. On the one hand is a collective seeking greater cultural inclusivity, and hoping to achieve it by – sometimes, although the characterisation is that this is the dominant trope in these groups' actions – highly aggressively excluding voices from discourse, for example in the case of Kathleen Stock, a Philosophy Professor who was subjected to such severe abuse for her views on gender identity that she left her University – a situation that brings to mind Russell's discussion of academic freedom.<sup>24</sup> On the other are the critics of

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<sup>22</sup> Richard B Duque, Robert Rivera and EJ Leblanc, 'The Active Shooter paradox: Why the rise of Cancel Culture, "Me Too", ANTIFA and Black Lives Matter... matters', *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* Vol. 60 (Sep 2021). Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1359178920302482> retrieved on: 16/11/2022.

<sup>23</sup> Meredith D Clark, 'Drag Them: A Brief Etymology of 'Cancel Culture'', *Communication and the Public* Vol. 5:3 (2020), pp. 88-92. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2057047320961562> retrieved on: 16/11/2022.

<sup>24</sup> See [no author given] 'Kathleen Stock: University of Sussex Free Speech Row Professor Quits', *BBC News* (29/10/2021). Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-59084446> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

‘cancelling’, citing the argument of ‘free speech’<sup>25</sup>; a group who, in some cases, simultaneously support the erasure of dissenting voices from political debate<sup>26</sup> and the silencing and criminalisation of protest;<sup>27</sup> both important elements in free, democratic societies, and associated with freedom of speech.<sup>28</sup> Relatedly, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie argues that by shutting down dissident views – either through violent or abusive language, or through ‘cancelling’, we lose our ability to convince others to understand our stance and, ultimately, endanger the future of creativity itself.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, today, the problems of propaganda and censorship are complicated by various issues, including political polarisation, government rhetoric and the means by which information is consumed.<sup>30</sup> While there is insufficient space to discuss these issues in great depth, they are worthy of note in their relationship with the means by which information, ideas and ideology are spread and shared in the contemporary world. The dual hypocrisy, by those who consider themselves on either ‘side’ of this social issue, is something that it appears has not received sufficient attention, and further work could be done in this area. Certainly, the existence of these issues supports the argument that better criticality and self-awareness in thinking would be powerful assets for a more cohesive society.

Unwin’s and likeminded colleagues’ hard work in promoting and facilitating cooperation encouraged greater coherence and more effective collaboration among book industry groups in the UK and internationally. In the highly polarised present, an educational

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<sup>25</sup> See Charles Hymas, ‘New free speech law to protect against wokery and cancel culture’, *The Telegraph* (14/12/2021). The article refers to a bill proposed by Suella Braverman. Available online: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/12/14/new-free-speech-law-protect-against-wokery-cancel-culture/> retrieved on: 24/11/2022.

<sup>26</sup> This refers to a bill that threatens speakers with banning from speaking in parliament if they are found to have criticised the government on social media. See Edward Malnick, ‘Woke speakers critical of Boris Johnson banned from Whitehall’, *The Telegraph* (27/11/2021). Available online: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2021/11/27/woke-speakers-critical-boris-johnson-banned-whitehall/> retrieved on: 24/11/2022.

<sup>27</sup> This refers to the Public Order Bill, which gives police greater powers to prevent protest, to ‘stop and search [suspected protesters] without suspicion’, and to forbid citizens from protesting again (whether or not they have been convicted of an offence when previously protesting) with the ability to incarcerate them should they break the terms of their ban. See ‘Public Order Bill’, UK Parliament. Available online: <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/48041/documents/2333> retrieved on: 24/11/2022.

<sup>28</sup> Braverman, who worked on both the proposed Free Speech Law (above) and the Public Order Bill (also above), associates this with what she refers to as the ‘poison of identity politics’. ‘Suella Braverman: 2022 Speech to Conservative Party Conference’. Available online: <https://www.ukpol.co.uk/suella-braverman-2022-speech-to-conservative-party-conference/> retrieved on: 24/11/2022.

<sup>29</sup> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, ‘Freedom of Speech’, BBC Reith Lectures 2022. Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001fmtz> retrieved on: 20/12/2022.

<sup>30</sup> Regarding government rhetoric, one example of government ‘culture war’ stoking might be Suella Braverman’s description of climate protestors as the ‘Guardian-reading, tofu-eating wokerati’. Clip available via *The Independent* on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QR5-9-xQkQ&t=1s> retrieved on: 24/11/2022.

focus on cooperation, through the promotion of tolerance and engagement with the value of plurality, would be extremely beneficial in promoting greater social cooperation. The oft-cited UK ‘culture wars’ are, perhaps, a symptom rather than a cause of this polarisation. It might instead be argued that the nature of online interaction – its brevity and anonymity, that lend themselves to more aggressive communication – are at the root of the broadening social divides being observed internationally.

Unwin’s dedication to high-quality information and cooperation among peers are attributes that are of enormous importance today, in our efforts to create a more workable, peaceful and sustainable future. It is only through consensus, fairness and dedication that meaningful behavioural and social changes can be achieved in the pursuit of an environmentally and socially sustainable future, and it is only by virtue of those traits in a society that democracy can truly be protected – and improved. By understanding ourselves, and our global community of peers, more deeply and empathetically, this might be achievable.

### 3.3 Belloc

In *The Free Press*, Belloc wrote of his concerns regarding news media: the press had too much power over public opinion, too much power over government, and insufficient accountability. The biggest newspaper publishers were able to sell at an artificially low price because of the subsidy afforded by advertising. This, he felt, undermined the objectivity of their reporting, and the apocryphal story about oatmeal is testament to this. Of course, Belloc was not overly concerned by the power of the oatmeal lobby; but what the advertiser's power over the press signified. The chain of power over the cultural narrative – advertiser, editor, politician – was too vulnerable to exploitation. The present reality is in many ways a product of those very mechanisms: the information a person is 'fed' is inextricable from the potential capital that might be garnered from them because of the 'surveillance' model, leading some to assert that the consumer is the 'product'.<sup>31</sup> The social and cultural narrative, when accessed via online platforms such as social media or video-sharing sites, is personalised, tailored specifically to our individual biases; and this tailoring makes it more difficult to ascertain whether a story, image or statement is real or true.<sup>32</sup>

The advertising subsidy model, that allowed newspaper companies to charge little for their product by making money from advertising space in their papers, has today achieved enormous success in a broad range of products and services (including newspapers), particularly online. It could be argued that it is this very model that precipitated 'surveillance capitalism': Google and Facebook, for example, are largely able to offer their products without a subscription charge because they use targeted advertising. Some platforms offer an 'ad-free' subscription alternative to their free service, although many still harvest behavioural data to 'improve user experience'. The means by which targeting is possible is parallel to the means by which information is fed to a user, i.e., through the creation of a psychometric profile, which can 'feed' users that which they enjoy.

Belloc did not trust the mainstream press in his time, and this view is mirrored *en masse* today. In the Edelman Trust Barometer's 2022 survey, only 22% of respondents felt that

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Karl Hodge, 'If it's free online, you are the product', *The Conversation* (19/04/2018). Available online: <https://theconversation.com/if-its-free-online-you-are-the-product-95182> retrieved on: 20/12/2022.

<sup>32</sup> According to Yvonne McDermott Rees, 'media people believe and share online is often dictated by an individual's preconceptions'. Quoted in Alex Wilkins, 'How will AIs that generate videos from text transform media online?', *New Scientist*. Available online: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2346939-how-will-ais-that-generate-videos-from-text-transform-media-online/> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

traditional media outlets were trustworthy.<sup>33</sup> The problem of press objectivity also has great resonance. 69% of Edelman's respondents felt that the mainstream press 'were not doing well at being objective and non-partisan', and 56% felt that news organisations were 'more concerned with supporting an ideology than informing the public'.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, it is the same partisan bias or ideology across the majority of publications in the UK: according to the Media Reform Coalition's 2021 report, nearly 52% of newspaper 'brand reach' was taken up by only three companies, all of which had a right-wing bias. Overall, of the most popular national newspapers read in that period, only 24% had a left-wing bias, with a right-wing bias accounting for most of the remainder.<sup>35</sup> Only one popular national newspaper in the UK alleges a politically centrist perspective (*i.* the present incarnation of *The Independent*). Their assessment did not, however, take into account BBC news consumption; which remains one of the union's most popular news brands.<sup>36</sup> The BBC's impartiality is a contentious subject; however, despite the government's criticism of its apparent left-wing bias, it remains among the most trusted and impartial brands, alongside *The Guardian* (left-wing bias) and *The Times* (right-wing bias).<sup>37</sup> The dominance of a singular partisan bias, and overrepresentation of the same holding companies, lends to that bias magnifying itself, as different papers will give the same perspective on any given event. This is not unlike Belloc's story of the news being restricted to a singular, un-critical and mass-produced narrative.

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<sup>33</sup> Edelman Trust Barometer 2022. Available online: <https://www.edelman.co.uk/sites/g/files/aatuss301/files/2022-01/2022%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20UK.pdf> retrieved on: 21/11/2022.

<sup>34</sup> Edelman Trust Barometer, UK Media Deck 2021, p. 36. Available online: <https://www.edelman.co.uk/sites/g/files/aatuss301/files/2021-02/2021%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20-%20UK%20Media%20Deck.pdf> retrieved on: 26/11/2022.

<sup>35</sup> Tom Chivers, 'Who Owns the UK Media?', Media Reform Coalition, p. 8. Available online: [https://www.mediareform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Who-Owns-the-UK-Media\\_final2.pdf](https://www.mediareform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Who-Owns-the-UK-Media_final2.pdf) retrieved on: 26/11/2022.

<sup>36</sup> See Amy Watson, 'Leading News Sources in the UK from 2013 to 2022', *Statista*. Available online: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266709/leading-news-sources-in-the-uk/> retrieved on: 26/11/2022. See also, [no author given] 'Culture wars make BBC impartiality tougher, director general Tim Davie says' *BBC News* (21/09/2021). Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-58637968> retrieved on: 24/11/2022. This argues that the perception of BBC impartiality has become harder to achieve because of the 'culture wars'.

<sup>37</sup> The BBC's impartiality is reflected in the findings of a 2020 Ofcom report, discussed in an article on the BBC, 'Our response to the Ofcom poll on impartiality', *BBC Media Centre* (02/12/2022). Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/mediacentre/statements/ofcom-poll-impartiality> retrieved on: 28/11/2022. The BBC also now provides impartiality training to its staff. See BBC Press Office, 'BBC Delivers Progress on Impartiality Plan', *BBC Media Centre* (01/07/2022). Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/2022/bbc-delivers-progress-on-impartiality-plan> retrieved on: 28/11/2022. The ratings for trustworthiness were taken from Ofcom's 2022 News Media in the UK Report, available from: [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0027/241947/News-Consumption-in-the-UK-2022-report.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0027/241947/News-Consumption-in-the-UK-2022-report.pdf) retrieved on: 28/11/2022. *The Times*, while rated highly for trustworthiness by app users, is owned by News Corp, whose publications in other countries rate badly for trustworthiness, for example *Fox News* (see footnote 39).



According to a report by the Media Reform Coalition, the most widely-read newspapers (print and online) in the UK in 2020 were *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*, owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Media UK and the Daily Mail and General Trust respectively, and accounting for approximately 37.5% of traditional outlet news consumption in the UK. In combination with Reach Media, the publications of these three groups account for nearly 70% of the most popular newspapers in the UK.<sup>38</sup> Murdoch has been described as a 'modern Northcliffe' and owns a number of questionably factual reporting outlets;<sup>39</sup> while DMGT's *Mail* was banned by Wikipedia as a source because of its unreliability in 2017.<sup>40</sup> This newspaper regularly receives criticism for the factual inaccuracy of its reporting.<sup>41</sup>

Belloc's suggestion – that citizens turn to 'free' sources of information, unshackled by the publisher's editorial line or the commercial voice – has perhaps become more problematic in the present-day context. One by-product of the increasing distaste at the overt ideological bias and distrust in the veracity of the mainstream newspapers is the increased popularity of 'alternative' news sources – YouTube channels, TikTok content creators; or worse: platforms created for and by those who have been banned from other platforms for unacceptable behaviour or for spreading mis- and disinformation; such as Gab or Voot.<sup>42</sup> Often this means that news consumers migrate towards content creators not affiliated with any reputable publisher, who are unaudited,<sup>43</sup> and can spread false information with almost total impunity; for example British 'alt-right' commentator Milo Yiannopoulos.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, as a result of the untrustworthiness of the traditional sources of information, more people are migrating to sources of information that have no responsibility for correctness. Choices concerning where to access one's news, where they are made at all (since many access their news primarily on

<sup>38</sup> 'Who Owns the UK Media?', p. 6. Does not include BBC News because they do not produce a newspaper.

<sup>39</sup> For example, the USA's Fox News, which A J Bauer et al assert should perhaps be described as 'propaganda' as opposed to news. See Bauer et al, 'What is Fox News? Partisan Journalism, Misinformation, and the Problem of Classification', *Electronic News* Vol. 16:1 (Jan 2022), pp. 18-29. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/19312431211060426> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>40</sup> Jasper Jackson, 'Wikipedia bans Daily Mail as 'unreliable' source', *The Guardian* (08/02/2017). Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/feb/08/wikipedia-bans-daily-mail-as-unreliable-source-for-website> retrieved on: 28/11/2022. The *Mail* responded by publishing numerous articles criticising Wikipedia.

<sup>41</sup> For example, Media Bias/Fact Check, an independent fact- and bias-checker based in the USA, describes gives the *Mail* a 'factual reporting score' of 'low', and describes it as a 'questionable source'. Available from: <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/daily-mail/> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>42</sup> For more information, see Richard Rogers, 'Deplatforming: Following extreme Internet celebrities to Telegram and alternative social media' *European Journal of Communication* Vol. 35:3 (May 2020), pp. 213-229. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0267323120922066> retrieved on: 24/11/2022.

<sup>43</sup> Most British newspapers are overseen by the Independent Press Standards Organisation, while televised and radio news is overseen by Ofcom. Content creators have no responsibility to these organisations.

<sup>44</sup> Rogers uses Yiannopoulos as an example in 'Deplatforming: Following extreme Internet celebrities [...]'.



social media feeds), are increasingly the product of a person's preferences for the presenter, and that person's ideological stance and worldview, as opposed to the veracity of their assertions – according to a 2019 Ofcom poll, approximately half of UK citizens accessed their news through social media, and this is likely to have risen substantially since with the increased popularity of TikTok.<sup>45</sup> This is a difficult problem to untangle: not only must traditional outlets regain trust, but the public must also become better judges of the quality of the information with which they engage. This situation is opposed to what Dewey felt must be prioritised for the protection of democracy: only a well-informed public is able to make sound political decisions. This demonstrates the problem with Belloc's suggestions to avoid the bias of mainstream publications: the 'alternative' media are not held accountable for spreading falsehood.

Belloc commented on the problem of confirmation bias, describing how most will choose to read that which 'takes for granted a philosophy' that conforms to their own, a tendency that entrenches confirmation bias.<sup>46</sup> As described, the algorithmic organisation of information on social media feeds, in search engines, and on platforms such as YouTube, makes this almost inescapable – users will automatically be shown that which is similar to what they have already shown an interest in. News they are fed will adhere to their worldview, and sources they see will align with their preconceptions.

In the absence of means with which to rebuild trust in traditional media, or indeed the means to make it more trustworthy, and without the ability to regulate alternative news sources, the only means with which to protect consumers is to establish better 'media and information literacy'. There is at present a UK government initiative to provide training in this area, however, the project focuses only on 'hard to reach' communities.<sup>47</sup> The UK's independent fact-checking organisation, FullFact, provides an important service to help increase awareness of factual inaccuracies in news reporting, however they are a small organisation with limited time and reach, and their service is only used by those who are already aware of it – those with a pre-existing understanding of the present-day issues of mis- and disinformation, arguably, those who least need it.<sup>48</sup> These problems require extensive, comprehensive action across all

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<sup>45</sup> 'Half of people now get their news through social media', Ofcom 24/07/2019. Available online: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/half-of-people-get-news-from-social-media> retrieved on: 24/11/2022. See also [no author given] 'Teens shun traditional news channels for TikTok and Instagram, Ofcom says', *BBC News* 21/07/2022. Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-62238307> retrieved on: 24/11/2022.

<sup>46</sup> *The Free Press*, p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> See the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Media Literacy Taskforce Fund Guidance page, available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/media-literacy-taskforce-fund> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>48</sup> See 'Who We Are', *FullFact*. Available from: <https://fullfact.org/about/> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

communities, and, particularly, must be addressed in education. The Media and Information Literacy Alliance (MILA) seek to bring together experts across the country to improve media literacy in a broader spectrum of communities, however this group is only in its early stages of development.<sup>49</sup>

Biased thinking is easier to identify in others than in oneself.<sup>50</sup> Belloc engaged heavily with ideas relating to confirmation bias, a phenomenon that is almost impossible to completely avoid, but one which is recognisable and can be mitigated through explicit training.<sup>51</sup> This indicates that, were the concept to be integrated into numerous school subjects and discussed explicitly, its effect on young people's interactions online, in the context of the present and their futures, might be reduced. Educating communities about the particular biases of particular broadcasters and publishers might also provide a foundation on which can be built a more discerning attitude to the information contained in the news and on social media. One way to expose oneself to party-political bias across the spectrum in the UK might be to read *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* (right-wing bias). These are both long-established newspapers which, crucially, are independently owned. Unfortunately, *The Telegraph* is only available through subscription, and is therefore unlikely to be attractive to readers struggling in the current period of financial instability.

Belloc writes on the caricaturing of popular figures. This, too, is a powerful factor in the relationship between consumers and the news today, as evidenced by the character assassinations of public figures such as the ex-leader of the Labour party, Jeremy Corbyn, by the press. The controversy surrounding antisemitism in the Labour party was only a small portion of his systematic disreputation. The more powerful sentiment (for a time), echoed throughout a large proportion of the British press and (still) remarked on by politicians, was

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<sup>49</sup> The Media and Information Literacy Alliance published their charter in June 2022, available from: <https://mila.org.uk/about-us/mila-charter/> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>50</sup> This is well-accepted. Qi Wang and Hee Jin Jeon discuss this, and its reduction when comparing oneself with others, in 'Bias in bias recognition: People view others but not themselves as biased by pre-existing beliefs and social stigmas', *Plos One* (09/10/2020). Available from: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0240232> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>51</sup> Dunbar et al's findings using video game training reinforce Halpern's findings regarding explicitness. See Norah E Dunbar et al, 'Implicit and explicit training in the mitigation of cognitive bias through the use of a serious game', *Computers in Human Behaviour* Vol. 37 (Aug 2014), pp. 307-318. Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563214002763#s0165> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

that he was a political extremist.<sup>52</sup> As Belloc writes, ‘the truth confirms itself [...] uncontradicted falsehood sufficiently repeated [has a] curious power of illusion’.<sup>53</sup>

Belloc’s *House of Commons and Monarchy* suggests that the democratic model is not fit for the British populace, and proposes that a return to rule by unelected monarchy might be more effective and appropriate. This would still be an unpopular proposal today, despite some of the British public’s clear affection for the late Queen Elizabeth II. The incidence of arrests made of peaceful protestors during the period of mourning for her passing suggests that Čapek’s observations regarding the ‘honour held in aristocracy’ is still very much a characteristic of the British.<sup>54</sup> This appears to contradict the argument made by many who wished to leave the EU that the ‘unelected’ politicians ‘making decisions’ for the country was unacceptable, and it could therefore be argued that this odd cultural incongruity could be interpreted as an example of cognitive dissonance – in this instance, holding the belief that democracy is of absolute importance, while simultaneously feeling that the expensive land-owning monarchy is above criticism and should be maintained by the taxpayer.<sup>55</sup>

Belloc’s feelings regarding political apathy remain relevant. The electoral turnout in the past twenty years has been, on average, lower than throughout most of the twentieth century, with a temporary spike for the heavily publicised and highly contentious EU referendum. On average, there has been an approximately two-thirds voter turnout over the past twenty years, compared with an average of approximately three-quarters pre-2000.<sup>56</sup> It seems counter-intuitive to do away with democracy because of poor voter turnout: might poor engagement not be more a product of feelings of personal powerlessness than a product of national stupidity? Were the education system to instil a greater feeling of political empowerment, perhaps political engagement would increase.

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<sup>52</sup> For example, *The Sun* accused Corbyn of being a communist spy; an assertion rejected in an article in *The Conversation*. Jane Barlow, ‘Was Jeremy Corbyn a Communist Spy? The Evidence Says No’, *The Conversation* (15/02/2018). Available online: <https://theconversation.com/was-jeremy-corbyn-a-communist-spy-the-evidence-says-no-91962> retrieved on: 26/11/2022.

<sup>53</sup> *Free Press* p. 88.

<sup>54</sup> This was reported fairly extensively. See, for example, Christy Cooney and George Bowden, ‘Arrests of Protestors Prompts Free Speech Concerns’, *BBC News* (13/09/2022). Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-62883713> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>55</sup> Arguments citing the EU’s ‘unelected officials’ as a reason for Britain to leave the ‘undemocratic’ Union were pervasive. This is discussed by Alan Butt Philip in ‘How Democratic is the European Union?’, *The Conversation* (20/05/2016). Available from: <https://theconversation.com/how-democratic-is-the-european-union-59419> retrieved on: 28/11/2022. See also (no author given) ‘Reality Check: What Role do unelected EU officials play?’ *BBC News* (06/06/2016). Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36429482> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>56</sup> D. Clark, ‘Voter turnout in general elections and in the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom from 1918 to 2019’, *Statista*. Available online: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1050929/voter-turnout-in-the-uk/> retrieved on: 16/11/2022.

A final note regarding Belloc is his prejudiced attitude. Belloc's antisemitism, in particular, is problematic. As mentioned previously, the attitudes of historical figures are of interest, in part, because they can provide insight – not only into the cultural tropes of their own time, but into characteristics of contemporary culture. The question that we ought perhaps to ask is – in what way will *we* be looked back upon? How will we be perceived to be 'products of our time'? Furthermore, by interrogating the problematic views of figures in history in an objective, analytical way it might become easier to identify similar views in the information we consume, in the interactions we have.

### 3.4 Lippmann

*The study of error is not only in the highest degree prophylactic, but it serves as a stimulating introduction to the study of truth. As our minds become more deeply aware of their own subjectivism, we find a zest in objective method that is not otherwise there. We see vividly, as normally we should not, the enormous mischief and casual cruelty of our prejudices.*<sup>57</sup>

In the 1920s, *Public Opinion* inspired and informed Bernays' *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923) and Dewey's *Public and its Problems* (1927). While they do not draw directly on Lippmann's work, there are two contemporary books worthy of parallel, one for its association with the 'manufacture of consent', and the other for its intention to educate readers about human biases and heuristics; forms of 'oversimplification' and shortcuts in thinking.

Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein's *Nudge* achieved international success with its proposals for using 'choice architecture', inspired by behavioural economics, to encourage people to make better decisions.<sup>58</sup> In 2010, the UK coalition government introduced a 'Nudge Unit' (now the privately owned 'Behavioural Insights Team'): a department dedicated to the deployment of 'nudges' – ostensibly to help people make better personal choices.<sup>59</sup> The book, and the BIT, are benign in their intentions, proposing an ideology described as 'Libertarian Paternalism' – preserving people's freedom to make decisions for themselves, while simultaneously seeking to protect their interests. Its utility has the capacity to be less benign, a fact acknowledged in their 'final edition', published in 2021.<sup>60</sup> Their concept of 'Libertarian Paternalism' appears itself to mirror Lippmann's desired future in its 'coerciveness for the greater good' rationale. Indeed, an endorsement on the back-cover of the most recent edition describes the 'nobler virtu[e] of [...] persuasion'.<sup>61</sup> They base part of their argument for this, much as Lippmann did, on the fact that humans are vulnerable to biases and prone to taking

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<sup>57</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 410.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge: The Final Edition* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).

<sup>59</sup> For more information on the BIT, or Nudge Unit, see the Behavioural Insights Team website, available from: <https://www.bi.team/> retrieved on: 28/11/2022. See also Institute for Government's 'Explainer: What is the Nudge Unit?', available from <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/nudge-unit> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>60</sup> Roger Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge: The Final Edition* (London: Allen Lane, 2021), p. 313, for example. They note various examples of 'self-interested' nudging throughout; and here, in the final chapter, acknowledge the possibility of 'malicious' choice architects.

<sup>61</sup> David Lammy, quoted on back matter of *Nudge: The Final Edition*.

thinking ‘shortcuts’, which can often lead to bad decision-making. Thaler was awarded a Nobel Prize in 2017 for his contributions to behavioural economics.<sup>62</sup>

Daniel Kahneman’s *Thinking, Fast and Slow* relates to his research into biases and heuristics, for which he also received a Nobel Prize.<sup>63</sup> Kahneman’s book argues for the use of ‘slower, more deliberate and effortful’ thinking, in order to mitigate against the effects of biases and heuristics.<sup>64</sup> As he writes, ‘humans [...] need protection from those who deliberately exploit their weaknesses’; a tendency he aligns with deliberately confusing contracts, but one that can easily be associated with algorithmically-driven mis- and disinformation; the use of ‘bots’ to create false consensus; and the work of bodies such as Cambridge Analytica.<sup>65</sup> Kahneman therefore advocates for something akin to Dewey’s response to Lippmann: education. Kahneman’s method of education is similar in character to the proposals explored in this section and outlined in the conclusion: teaching readers to recognise, and attempt to regulate, their own biases. His ‘system two thinking’ has clear parallels with Dewey’s ‘reflective thinking’. Kahneman’s book, and his work on biases and heuristics, is enormously important to the argument this thesis makes: the world’s leading expert on ‘cognitive fallibilities’ seeks to educate publics about them, in order to mitigate their subjective and social effects. Kahneman has already worked with numerous businesses on reducing bias and ‘noise’ in corporate processes.<sup>66</sup> While his main foci are concerned with an individual’s economic choices, his underlying message mirrors that of this thesis: with an understanding of their ‘cognitive fallibilities’, an individual can be empowered to reduce their effects on their own thinking, and consequently, come to better conclusions.

An important reason for the use of Lippmann’s text in the study is the parallel between his proposals and the ‘surveillance capitalist’ model. The differences are stark: rather than using the vast amounts of data that are collected about human behaviour in order to help create societies that work more effectively for all, and to educate people about social behaviour and human psychology, data is instead used by unconscious algorithms to target individuals with marketing. This ‘social knowledge’ is also being used to create ‘conceptual pictures of the world’ – but for machines, to help them more effectively emulate human behaviour and

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<sup>62</sup> See ‘The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2017’, available from: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/2017/summary/> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>63</sup> See ‘The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2002’, available from: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/2002/summary/> retrieved on: 26/11/2022.

<sup>64</sup> This is a phrase he uses repeatedly, for example, p. 12.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 216.

<sup>66</sup> He discusses this in *Thinking, Fast and Slow* and *Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment* (London: William Collins, 2021), co-authored with Oliver Sibony and Cass Sunstein. *Noise* explores other obstacles in decision-making, such as context.

intelligence.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, Alistair Duff describes Lippmann as an ‘information society theorist’, although does not explore the ramifications of the manipulative aspect of the information superhighway’s products.<sup>68</sup>

Timnit Gebru, a data scientist, co-authored a paper exploring the issues with Google’s use of vast online ‘natural language’ datasets for the training of artificial intelligence in 2020. The paper highlighted concerns about the use of online corpora in training AI, arguing that this generates the same prejudices and biases in the programmes as exist in human interactions. The article asserted that ‘large datasets based on texts from the Internet overrepresent hegemonic viewpoints and encode biases’, pointing out that such datasets cause AIs to ‘pick up on subtle biases and overtly abusive language patterns’ including the overrepresentation of ‘white supremacist and misogynistic, ageist, etc’ views, leading to the AIs using the same problematic terminology and expressing the same biases and prejudices.<sup>69</sup> She was forced to resign from her post at Google following her refusal to retract the paper, indicating the corporation’s discomfort with public discussion of the flaws and moral issues in their work. Amazon’s use of biased AI to make hiring decisions is another example of unforeseen issues in dataset biases.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the training of AI, arguably because of its human enactment, is beholden to the same problematic simplifications and biases as humans are. The practice of using unedited human interactions, as Gebru argues, pushes humanity back in time, perpetuating – and to some degree justifying (through the objectivity of the machine) – those prejudices and intolerances that endanger equality and, ultimately, social progress.

Lippmann describes the ‘pseudo-environment’, the version of reality inhabited by an individual, areas of which they share with others. The concept in its original form is an analogy for the subjective nature of reality – about which he was correct, from the perspective of individual psychology, and modern neuroscientific theory. As has been explored throughout this study, our experience informs our interpretation of the world – from meaning-making, in which we create associations between things we experience in conjunction, to the specific

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<sup>67</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 408.

<sup>68</sup> This might be because Duff’s article was written in 2012, when this issue was less well-understood. Alistair Duff, ‘Pundit for Post-Industrial Times? Walter Lippmann as an Information Society Theorist’, *Information, Communication and Society* Vol. 16:6 (2013), pp. 967-988. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369118X.2012.755209> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>69</sup> Emily Bender, Timnit Gebru et al, ‘On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models be too Big?’, *FAccT* 3-10<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Available online: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3442188.3445922> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>70</sup> See Jeffrey Dastin, ‘Amazon scraps secret AI recruiting tool that showed bias against women’, *Reuters* (11/10/2018). Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-amazon-com-jobs-automation-insight-idUSKCN1MK08G> retrieved on: 26/11/2022.



prejudices we inherit from our care-givers, to our sensory experience – the information that forms our reality, which, by its nature, is incommunicable and incomparable.<sup>71</sup>

There is a new dimension to ‘reality’, that did not exist in Lippmann’s time, which could also be described as a ‘pseudo-reality’: the digital world. The online ‘pseudo-reality’ is hyper-external: a single ‘tweet’, ‘post’, comment or ‘like’ can be seen or experienced by tens, hundreds, thousands or even millions of people. The pseudo-reality of the Internet provides users with a form of anonymity that appears to negate the social norms that usually inhibit people from behaving antisocially.<sup>72</sup> It is truly a false environment, in that it bears very little resemblance to the real world while appearing to mirror and represent it. The world of social media is almost an inversion of Lippmann’s pseudo-environment: a constantly updated and reconfigured alternative reality, that affects, is affected by, and magnifies human cognitive fallibility, prejudice and intolerance – which, in turn, provides the data input for the training of AI. What Lippmann writes of public figures – that they are largely a fiction, created to represent the desired or desirable vision of a personality – is, arguably, now true of anyone who uses social media.

Lippmann’s ‘pictures in our heads’ can also be reinterpreted for the contemporary world. With the advent of social media, many people’s relationships – especially outer-circle acquaintances – are conducted largely through the use of pictures, broadcast directly to others’ ‘heads’ (in that the experience of looking at one’s device screen is largely individual). These are projections – they are not the true person, but what they have chosen to share publicly, sometimes idealised or exaggerated. Lippmann uses the example of celebrities, and this has not lost relevance: celebrities, and influencers, are now the benchmarks against which people compare themselves – and yet they are as real as the characters we more readily recognise as fictions, in the elective ‘manipulation’ of stories. Some researchers believe that the nature of this kind of online interaction, and associated feelings of inferiority, are damaging to young people’s mental health.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> If following Berger and Luckmann’s thesis, these are ‘inherited’ through ‘primary socialisation’. See also, Clare Wilson, ‘Why some aspects of physical reality must be experienced to be known’, *New Scientist* (10/01/2023). Available from: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2353765-why-some-aspects-of-physical-reality-must-be-experienced-to-be-known/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023. Wilson discusses the problem of sensory experience and the individual brain’s interpretation of it differing from one individual to another.

<sup>72</sup> Tim Jordan discusses the idea of the anonymity of online interaction in connection with bullying and ‘trolling’ in his article ‘Does online anonymity undermine the sense of personal responsibility?’, *Media, Culture and Society* Vol. 41:4 (April 2019). Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0163443719842073> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>73</sup> See for example Alanna McCrory et al, ‘It’s just one big vicious circle’: young people’s experiences of highly visual social media and their mental health’, *Health Education Research* Vol 37:3 (May 2022), pp. 167-184. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyac010> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.



The oversimplification that makes up a large proportion of Lippmann's observations is itself a portion of the means with which people are manipulated into making choices, believing false narratives, or disagreeing with one another. Social media's soundbite-sized post-formats necessitate succinctness and brevity, both of which are conducive to the use, and precipitation, of stereotyping. The 'meme' is an example of this, as are the ultra-short videos shared on platforms such as TikTok. Famous figures known for specific things – such as actors made famous by a particular role, or politicians famed for a particular view – will be used in a meme in order to create that association and leverage a particular stereotype.<sup>74</sup> Stereotypes are leveraged in media and political rhetoric, for example, the UK Home Secretary's labelling of climate activists as 'the Guardian reading, tofu-eating wokerati'.<sup>75</sup> Such stereotypes are then perpetuated in interpersonal interactions, exacerbating social polarisation. Notable examples of popular stereotyping terms include 'gammon' – a pejorative term used to describe a white male, with conservative views, characterised as having a red, gammon-like complexion (this term is more or less synonymous with 'bigot'); and 'woke' – a term used pejoratively to denote virtue-signalling and aggressive identity politics, or positively to describe a person who is invested in social justice. These stereotypes are powerful tools with which to 'pit people against one another'.<sup>76</sup> This brand of linguistic and social weaponization could – and should – be challenged, dismantled and interrogated in educational contexts.

The UK's Leave.EU campaign, which was found to have collaborated with the political consultancy Cambridge Analytica, made extensive and deliberate use of stereotypes.<sup>77</sup> According to a report by investigator Emma Briant, the campaign, using the 'strategy Cambridge Analytica had given them', and made use of 'Nazi propaganda techniques' by 'leverag[ing] an artificial enemy' and 'exploiting voters' concerns' about immigration.<sup>78</sup> This

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<sup>74</sup> For example, one popular meme uses an image of Clint Eastwood's face and states 'In my day, climate change was called seasons'. This (falsely) implies Eastwood's disbelief in anthro-genic climate change by using his historic political alignment to imply it. Available from: <https://imgflip.com/i/2v0trj> retrieved on: 20/12/2022.

<sup>75</sup> Suella Braverman in the House of Commons in October 2022. Clip available from YouTube, *The Independent* channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QR5-9-xQkQ> retrieved on: 17/11/2022.

<sup>76</sup> Christopher Wylie, in an interview with the *Guardian* about his work for Cambridge Analytica, described how the company had deliberately sought to 'pit people against one another'. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXdYSQ6nu-M&t=1s> retrieved on: 26/11/2022.

<sup>77</sup> Cambridge Analytica was a subsidiary of SCL Group, a political consultancy. The company facilitated the Trump electoral campaign in the USA through the use of micro-targeting Facebook users. For more information about this company and their activities, see, for example, Margaret Hu, 'Cambridge Analytica's Black Box', *Big Data and Society* Vol. 7:2 (July 2020). Available online: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2473717894> retrieved on: 26/11/2022.

<sup>78</sup> See 'Research on Leave.EU and Cambridge Analytica Strategy Published', UK Parliament. Available online: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/378/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/news/103479/research-on-leaveeu-and-cambridge-analytica-strategy-published/> retrieved on: 26/11/2022. All associated research papers are available from this site.

is a clear example of outgroup bias, as well as stereotyping, being used – insidiously and undemocratically – to achieve political goals. One particular poster used by an associated campaign – that was widely criticised and retracted – showed a vast queue of people with a caption that read ‘Breaking Point: the EU has failed us all’ and ‘we must break free of the EU and take back control’.<sup>79</sup> The photograph was of predominantly non-white refugees crossing the Croatia-Slovenia border in 2015. It was designed explicitly to invoke a racist stereotype, in order to promote an emotional response associated with immigration. This was not only a utilisation of stereotyping, but of conditioning – creating the association between existing latent racism, migration, and the EU. The repetitiveness of this brand of imagery will have made use of the ‘associative’ nature of meaning-making – consistent iterations of those associations would, in theory, have strengthened the described associations in the minds of those it targeted, further exaggerating belief in the legitimacy of the false connection. Nigel Farage’s poster operated on a shallow invocation of a particular brand of racism and sought to connect the emotional experience of the image of those people with the concept of EU citizens’ migration to the UK. The false stereotype, a cognitive dissonance deliberately created for the purpose of its emotional reaction and the power such a reaction might provide the problematic immigration-associated cognition. The allusion to Nazi techniques aligns with the chilling testament of Cambridge Analytica’s whistle-blower, Christopher Wylie, who said of the company’s work, ‘if you want to fundamentally change society, you first have to break it’.<sup>80</sup>

Lippmann writes of the ‘variables’ in different people’s impressions of the ‘invisible world’, and mentions the complexity in attempting to deal with these *en masse*. He describes the problem of creating messages that appeal to shared areas of the ‘pseudo-reality’ within a culture, the need to use symbolism in order to invoke support from the plethora of differing interpretations of reality. In Lippmann’s imagined future, the rules were different. It was necessary to maintain a level of similarity, purely for logistical reasons, between the messages that were broadcast. It is no longer necessary to construct messages that appeal to large demographics. Language, imagery, focus, implication – these can all be tailored very precisely

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<sup>79</sup> The poster was produced for UKIP, the party invested in encouraging a vote to leave the EU; whose biggest donor was Aaron Banks, who also funded the Leave.EU campaign. Banks tried to sue the journalist who exposed the Cambridge Analytica scandal for libel. See Heather Stewart and Rowena Mason, ‘Nigel Farage’s anti-migrant poster reported to police’, *The Guardian* (16/06/2016). Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/nigel-farage-defends-ukip-breaking-point-poster-queue-of-migrants> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Christopher Wylie by *The Guardian*, YouTube. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXdYSQ6nu-M&t=1s> retrieved on: 26/11/2022.

to the individual: to the ‘personality’, in order to better impact their subjective ‘pseudo-reality’.<sup>81</sup>

Finally, in reference to the parallels between Lippmann’s imagined future and Zuboff’s commentary on the real present, it is worthwhile to note that, in order for a democracy to function as it should, it is necessary for participants to be informed, and to be autonomous, as Dewey asserted.<sup>82</sup> These ideals are implicit in the UN’s Human Rights and Normative Framework.<sup>83</sup> These two tenets of democracy are flouted both in Lippmann’s proposed technocracy and in the reality of today’s surveillance capitalist global society, particularly in instances of psychological targeting like the work of Cambridge Analytica. While it might be argued that it is not democratic governments, but multinational corporations, who have begun to manipulate these aspects of the human experience; the capacity to do so is open to exploitation by governments.<sup>84</sup> Perhaps more importantly, does it matter who is doing the manipulating? Should we be more comfortable with money, rather than political power, choosing our future?

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<sup>81</sup> Christopher Wylie, an ex-employee of Cambridge Analytica, described how, in their campaigns, they would adjust the ‘framing, topic, content and tone’ of a communication to tailor it to a ‘personality’, rather than a ‘voter’. Interview with Christopher Wylie by *The Guardian*.

<sup>82</sup> Education Today, p. 62.

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/democracy>

<sup>84</sup> In China, the social credit system is used by the government to control the population’s behaviour; however, China is not ordinarily described as a functioning democracy. See, for example, Fan Liang et al, ‘Constructing a Data-Driven Society: China’s Social Credit System as a State Surveillance Infrastructure’, *Policy and Internet* Vol. 10:4 (Dec 2018), pp. 415-453. Available online: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/poi3.183> retrieved on: 26/11/2022.

### 3.5 Čapek

Čapek's science fiction – discussed particularly in terms of *The Absolute at Large* – feels prophetic of today's urgent ecological crises, products of the seemingly insatiable human appetite for economic growth, consumption and convenience. While the convenience provided by automation has had socially beneficial attributes in terms of the reduction of labour, can the same be said for the present-day brand of psychological convenience? Is it beneficial, or damaging? Is the thirst for consumption truly a quality of human nature, or is it a by-product of the capitalist mindset and the inescapability of advertising? Čapek's *Three Novels* explore the deeply human, our internal struggles with ourselves, our needs and desires and identities.

Čapek's thoughts on the British (indeed, his *stereotyping* of the British) maintain their surprising astuteness. He commented on the contradictions in the 'national character': its 'democratic' and simultaneously aristocratic personality, its insularity, its 'tolerance' in combination with its extensive 'prejudices'. Such contradictions are easily aligned with cognitive dissonance, and there is evidence of their astuteness in recent history, for example in discourse surrounding the right to roam and land ownership, the UK's withdrawal from the EU, and asylum seekers. Cognitive dissonance is characterised by internal contradiction: perhaps Čapek's observations suggest that the British suffer from a cultural cognitive dissonance.

The tension between the aristocratic and the democratic was observed in the Belloc section, in the apparent incongruity between the British sense of democracy and simultaneous affection for the monarchy. The paradox – or dissonance – of England's 'tolerance' and 'prejudice' is also of interest in the present-day context. The UK has a highly plural population, and there are many programmes that seek to address imbalances in social equality perpetuated by systemic prejudice. However, following the international Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, the British government undertook an investigation into racism in the UK. Its findings were controversial, and various commentators were critical of its conclusions and perspective.<sup>85</sup> Despite controversy concerning its assertion that systemic racism was not the problem many perceive it to be,<sup>86</sup> it acknowledged that 'overt racism' still existed and is a 'real

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<sup>85</sup> For example, Halima Begum, Director of Runnymede Trust, said she felt 'deeply, massively let down' by the report's findings. [no author given] 'Race Report: UK not Deliberately Rigged Against Ethnic Minorities', *BBC News* (31/03/2021). Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56585538> retrieved on: 22/12/2022.

<sup>86</sup> The report asserts that mortality figures do not reflect a systemic issue (p. 31), and asserted that 'systemic' racism was often conflated with subjective experiences of 'othering' and instances of overt racism (pp. 35-36). 'Real force', p. 8. 'Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities', Independent Report. Available online:

force in the UK'.<sup>87</sup> The report's admission of continued problems with interpersonal interaction, coupled with the controversy surrounding its findings and proposals, suggest that while the UK has sought, in a variety of ways, to overcome systems and mentalities of prejudice in its culture, there are still notable issues of prejudice to overcome.

Britain's nationally characteristic 'insularity' was utilised by the Leave.EU campaign, as mentioned in the Lippmann discussion. These strategies might perhaps have been less effective were Čapek's observations concerning the British character less astute, although the success of the Nazi's techniques in the thirties suggest that perhaps this is not an exclusively British trait, and might instead be interpreted as a more universal trait: under the correct conditions, perhaps any population can be encouraged to become more insular, less welcoming of 'plurality' and 'diversity'. The insularity, the prejudice, of which Čapek spoke is observable in the reviews of his work from the time, in their characterisation of the 'Slav temperament' and 'whimsical philosophizing' deemed a Central European trope – criticisms justified by stereotyping of a nation's character. According to Oxford University's Migration Report, 'salience' (i.e. it was deemed an issue of 'high importance' by respondents) of immigration in the national consciousness reached a thirty-year peak during the period of the EU referendum; increasing enormously in a short period and swiftly reducing again afterwards.<sup>88</sup> This perhaps suggests not that Čapek's stereotyped characterisation was infallible, but that a latent capacity for insularity, and for prejudice, was activated during the campaigns around the referendum. Racially motivated hate crimes have, according to some sources, been increasing ever since 2016.<sup>89</sup>

Čapek's science fiction implied prescient concerns about man's domination over nature. *Absolute's* narrative observation of the insatiable human – or capitalist – appetite for materialism and consumption is particularly salient in the present-day context. Zuboff compares the progression of the first two industrial revolutions with the progression of the

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974507/20210331\\_-\\_CRED\\_Report\\_-\\_FINAL\\_-\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf) retrieved on: 29/09/2022.

<sup>87</sup> Commission Report, p. 30. The statement is countered, however, by the assertion that instances of overt racism are more notable because of their public nature and the widespread use of social media.

<sup>88</sup> 'UK Public Opinion toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern', *The Migration Observatory* (University of Oxford), 20/01/2020; Figure 3. Available online: <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-immigration-overall-attitudes-and-level-of-concern/> retrieved on: 29/09/2022.

<sup>89</sup> According to *The Guardian*, between 2016 and 2019 racist hate crimes increased by ten points. See Robert Booth, 'Racism rising since Brexit vote, survey reveals', *The Guardian* (20/05/2019). Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/20/racism-on-the-rise-since-brexit-vote-nationwide-study-reveals> retrieved on: 21/12/2022. See also Stop Hate UK, who assert that hate crimes reported to the police increased by 9% on 2019-20 (see <https://www.stophateuk.org/about-hate-crime/>). 48.5% of incidents reported to the organisation were racially motivated.

(very recent, and very rapid) second two, paralleling the cost to the Earth of the first and second with the cost to human autonomy and freedom of the third and fourth; all of which might be described as driven by the desire for greater convenience, greater consumption, and the pursuit of wealth by a small minority.<sup>90</sup> Just as Čapek's science-fiction humanities did not recognise the dangers of continuing their pursuit of greater convenience – through endless power in *Absolute*, through enslavement in *Newts* and *R.U.R* – so too has the real humanity made unwitting sacrifices in its continued pursuit of human convenience, and the pursuit of wealth and power by a small minority.

Čapek's realist fiction tends towards smaller, more personal stories. In Hordubal's suffering it is difficult not to find some familiarity – if not from personal experience, then from observation of the experience of others. It is particularly the cognitive dissonance, so damaging as to have contributed to his death (it is implied) that is of most interest. Another example of cognitive dissonance-promoting marketing during the EU referendum leadup was a bus, branded with the message 'We send the EU £350 million a week/Let's fund the NHS instead'.<sup>91</sup> This message was created by the Vote Leave campaign. This is deliberately vague – it does not assert, but instead implies, that this money would be spent on the health service. The design invokes a simultaneously national and individual concern (the NHS) and suggests a connection between its funding and viability and the country's membership of the European Union. This promoted cognitive dissonance because it was counter to the known fact that the austerity measures put in place by the government had contributed to the NHS's difficulties, and counter also to the underacknowledged, but widely recognised (by those opposed to leaving), financial benefit of membership of the bloc. Like the poster discussed earlier, this provided a seemingly rational reason, from an individual and collective perspective, for the nation to vote to leave. It also established an apparently legitimate connection with another (false) trope used against immigrant citizens in the UK – that they abuse the welfare and health systems and 'gave nothing back' to the country in return. In essence, this message encouraged those who already wished to vote to leave the EU in its use of a national symbol of togetherness (leveraging social identity and ingroup bias) and its appeal to self-interest – using a red, double-decker bus in order to further invoke an idea of national character – to argue against membership. It might be argued that some were genuinely convinced by its messaging, however, it appears that for

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<sup>90</sup> Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, p. 8.

<sup>91</sup> The 'Brexit Bus' is discussed in Andrew Woodcock, 'Brexit might have been a mistake, says Vote Leave supremo Dominic Cummings', *The Independent* (21/06/2021). Available online: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/dominic-cummings-brexit-bus-johnson-b1887457.html> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

some, the utility of the bus was in its ability to provide a seemingly legitimate reason for concern, while associating itself with an implicit, more widely held, but less socially acceptable or legitimate concern. It is this appeal to self-interest – the subjective aspect of the cognitive dissonance – that connects this with Hordubal's experience; his desire to maintain the belief that the narrative he had attached to his life was true, to tell himself that his wife still loved him and protect himself from the pain of acknowledgement, to the detriment of his health, and ultimately, his life. The awful irony in the contemporary context, again relevant to this parallel, is the financial cost of the country's break from the EU, and its potential to further undermine the ability of the health service to preserve life.

In *Meteor*, each of the narrators finds in the fallen man an aspect of themselves. They impose upon him those facets of what is left of the man's life which have some connection with their own experience. This was paralleled with the human desire to create narrative, to impose interpretable and navigable organisation on the chaos of existence. The 'evidence' they observed and interpreted – such as that his aloneness in death must have indicated an aloneness in life, his foreign currency suggestive of a lost soul – was, it was implied, understood through their own subjective lens, informed by their own subjective concerns and anxieties. In today's world, social media creates an environment in which narratives can be generated similarly. In particular, those who monetise their use of social media could be seen as deliberate facilitators of subjective narrative adjustment. These 'influencers' and 'YouTubers' are often chosen by, or, more often, for, the individual because the content they create connects in some way with the individual's interests. There is an element of social identity – how these people can be perceived as members of the individual's ingroup, whether this is because of their interests, their profession, or their political leaning. Because of this desire to feel a connectedness or affinity with the public figure, the individual will interpret their statements and content according to their own worldview and experiences. What is different about this relationship is the deliberate nature of the exchange. It is in a content creators' interest that their 'followers' read themselves into their stories, so that they continue to engage with their content. This relationship can also be profitable for the 'user', in that it has the potential to create a sense of belonging, of social solidarity. This tendency generally therefore serves a positive, pro-social purpose – when the content is not ideologically charged. The variably false sense of kinship felt by the 'follower' allows them to counter the terrible aloneness Čapek's narrators explore in their stories. However, particularly when the public character has been chosen for ideological reasons, this relationship of reality-reinforcement has the potential to serve antisocial ends, particularly when beliefs that run counter to accepted facts or commonly-held morality are



reinforced by ‘influencers’ – for example, Andrew Tate.<sup>92</sup> In such situations, the ‘social support’ mechanism to alleviate cognitive dissonance is provided. This negative aspect of social support can particularly be seen in ‘alternative’ platforms created for content creators who have been ‘de-platformed’ for breaching codes of conduct, and these present a significant danger, particularly to young and/or vulnerable people.<sup>93</sup>

This desire to find one’s own story in others’ stories can create real difficulties in the world. In recent years, there has been a burgeoning problem of radicalisation in young people through exposure to online content, particularly by far-right groups.<sup>94</sup> Where reporters interviewed young people about their experiences of radicalisation, often a by-product of a desire for social support, themes of loneliness and isolation are common. Katherine Vitozzi quotes John (a pseudonym) referring to the ‘sense of belonging’ offered by the far-right ideology, which is supported in Patrik Hermansson’s report on the phenomenon.<sup>95</sup> James Crow, a young person who was previously radicalised by far-right ideology, describes how his experience of being bullied in school badly affected his mental health, and made him feel isolated and alone. This precipitated his experience of radicalisation. Groups he found online helped him to feel as though he belonged to a community who cared about him: to whom he ‘belonged’.<sup>96</sup> In a sense, the pull of the sense of belonging is a desire to find one’s own story in others’ experiences, a need to find community. According to the *Guardian* interview, those who are most vulnerable to this kind of radicalisation are often young people who experience difficulties in school, and feel let down by the institutions in their society that should serve

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<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Antoinette Radford, ‘Who is Andrew Tate? The self-proclaimed misogynist influencer’, *BBC News*, 21/06/2023. Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-64125045> retrieved on: 22/06/2023.

<sup>93</sup> See Richard Rogers, ‘Deplatforming: Following extreme Internet celebrities to Telegram and alternative social media’, *European Journal of Communication* Vol. 35:3 (May 2020), for an investigation into the usefulness of deplatforming. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0267323120922066> retrieved on: 29/09/2022. For a discussion of the danger of extreme platform availability online to young people, see, for example, Richard Adams and Sally Weale, ‘UK Children Being Ensnared by Far-Right Ecosystem Online’ *The Guardian* (03/08/2022). Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/aug/03/revealed-uk-children-ensnared-far-right-ecosystem-online> retrieved on: 29/09/2022.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example: Michael Holden, ‘UK Police Warn Younger Children Involved in Far-Right Terrorism’, *Reuters*, 17/03/2022. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-police-warn-younger-children-involved-far-right-terrorism-2022-03-17/> retrieved on 20/09/2022. Katherine Vitozzi, ‘Sharp rise in children investigated over far-right links’, *Sky News*, 24/11/2020. Available online: <https://news.sky.com/story/sharp-rise-in-children-investigated-over-far-right-links-including-youngsters-under-10-12131565> retrieved on: 20/09/2022. Richard Adams and Sally Weale, ‘Revealed: UK children being ensnared by ‘far-right ecosystem’ online’ *The Guardian*, 03/08/2022 (see above).

<sup>95</sup> Patrik Hermansson, ‘Hitler Youths: Rise of the Teenage Far-Right’, *Hope Not Hate* (2020). Available from: <https://docslib.org/doc/10982648/hitler-youths-the-rise-of-teenage-far-right> retrieved on: 30/11/2022.

<sup>96</sup> Sally Weale and James Crow, ‘‘It felt so powerful’: how I was seduced by the UK’s far-right’, *The Guardian* (03/08/2022). Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/aug/03/it-felt-so-powerful-how-i-was-seduced-by-the-uk-far-right> retrieved on: 21/12/2022.



them. In groups like Britain First, or The British Hand, they find ‘authority’ figures who make them believe that they understand their experience, and that they stand for their needs. Their personal ‘story’ is attractively amplified in these spaces, the (often false) associations they find in those communities create social support for the belief that their problems are the fault of ethnic minorities, the establishment, and the political left. As Baugut and Neumann found, once an individual has become ingratiated in these communities, aggressive strategies are used to prevent them from engaging with alternative modes of thinking.<sup>97</sup>

In *An Ordinary Life*, the unnamed everyman finds in himself ‘the whole of humanity’. His reflection on his past – made the more intense by his own decision to interrogate it by writing his memoirs – allows him insight that, it is implied, he might have benefited from earlier in his life. The man’s experience of his plural self is not a pleasant one. His epiphany does not alleviate his discomfort, but rather confuses and confounds him. Čapek does not appear to intend to convey a sense that, in discovering the inherent plurality of the self and of an individual life, there is any obvious immediate personal gain. However, he does seem to imply that despite the difficulty and unlikely immediate benefit, the outcome for society is hugely positive – by recognising our own plurality we might become more tolerant of the plurality of those external to our experience – and this is reflected in his postscript to the collection. It might be argued that Čapek here observes that, while greater self-awareness might not be comfortable, it is socially important.

The enlightenment-like experience of the everyman in the final novel is akin to a metacognitive exercise (although in his case it is involuntary): he is suddenly capable of seeing aspects of his thinking and his internal experience throughout his life more clearly than ever before. One might argue that this clarity is achievable in part due to his imminent death – but perhaps Čapek’s hope is that this acts as a warning. The man is liberated from the confines of his own perceived identity, and as a result, understands his place and part in a vast whole: the ‘whole of mankind’.<sup>98</sup> He is liberated in the very last moments of his life: Čapek asks that we save ourselves from enslavement to a lie and find this liberation earlier in our lives. The incongruity between inclusivity and suppression, emblematised by the discourse surrounding ‘cancel culture’ and ‘wokeness’ discussed in the Unwin section, is also related to this idea.

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<sup>97</sup> Philip Baugut and Katherina Neumann, ‘How Right-Wing Extremists Use and Perceive News Media’, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* Vol. 96:3 (Nov 2020), pp. 696-720. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699018803080> retrieved on: 30/11/2022.

<sup>98</sup> *An Ordinary Life*, p. 460.

The progressive world Čapek's novels advocate is one in which prejudice gives way to generosity of spirit, where generosity of spirit is an implicit aspect of tolerance and inextricable from morality. The aspects of human psychology and cognition that Čapek's works draw attention to play an important role in some of the modern world's most complex contemporary issues. Čapek's particular request for plurality can be aligned with the proposals made in this chapter: by becoming more self-aware thinkers, participants in society should consequently become more capable of recognising those misinterpretations of 'other' that generate prejudice. By understanding those elements of thinking that are compromised by the way we interact with information, and that are exploited by the nature of our informational interaction, the character of political rhetoric, and other forms of manipulation, societies might be able to arm themselves against polarisation. Thus, by using those aspects of human nature that Čapek recognised and explored, by interrogating them as part of our process of socialisation, we might indeed be able to achieve that exciting future he envisaged: Fraternity and Diversity!

### 3.6 Dewey

*Modern life means democracy, democracy means freeing intelligence for independent effectiveness – the emancipation of mind as an individual organ to do its own work.*

*We naturally associate democracy with freedom of action, but freedom of action without freed capacity of thought behind it is only chaos.*<sup>99</sup>

*If we want individuals to be free we must see to it that suitable conditions exist [...] [we must] get rid of the ideas that lead us to believe that democratic conditions automatically maintain themselves.*<sup>100</sup>

John Dewey, 1903, 1939

The 2013 British Education reforms provide a temporal parallel with the Butler Act discussed in the Dewey chapter. These reforms ‘significantly slimmed down’ curricula, in order to ‘free up teachers’ to ‘design curricula that meet the needs of their pupils’, a sentiment evocative of Ready’s feelings about the importance of teacher autonomy.<sup>101</sup> The reforms also did away with the Critical Thinking A Level, along with a number of other ‘soft’ subjects.<sup>102</sup> GCSE reforms eliminated coursework from most subjects and redesigned the A-F marking system. These reforms have been criticised as inappropriate for the modern era, in particular due to their ‘doubling down on a narrow core of traditional, knowledge heavy subjects’ and the resultant outdated focus on ‘direct instruction and memorisation’.<sup>103</sup>

The exaggerated focus on exams necessitated by the withdrawal of coursework from many GCSE qualifications goes against received wisdom. Bloom’s taxonomy, which outlines the ‘goals for modern pedagogy’<sup>104</sup> – developing ‘higher order thinking skills’ in students –

<sup>99</sup> *Education Today*, p. 62.

<sup>100</sup> John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1940), p. 34.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Gove, 12/09/2013. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-reform-new-national-curriculum-for-schools> retrieved on: 21/09/2022.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Soft subjects’, see Victoria Ward ‘General Studies A Level is Scrapped for Failing to Meet Standards’, *The Telegraph* (16/10/2015). Available from: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/11936173/General-studies-A-level-is-scrapped-for-failing-to-meet-standards.html> retrieved on: 01/12/2022. See also Rachel Pells, ‘A Levels Dropped: Read the full list of culled subjects’, *The Independent* (13/10/2016). Available online: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/alevels-dropped-read-full-list-culled-subjects-art-history-a7359791.html> retrieved on: 01/12/2022.

<sup>103</sup> Steve Coulter et al, ‘Ending the Big Squeeze on Skills: How to Futureproof Education in England’, *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change* (23/08/2022). Available from: <https://institute.global/policy/ending-big-squeeze-skills-how-futureproof-education-england> retrieved on: 01/12/2022.

<sup>104</sup> Amy C Bradshaw et al, ‘The Relationship of the World Wide Web to Thinking Skills’, *Education Media International* Vol. 39:3-4 (Jan 2002), pp. 275-284 (p. 276). Available from: <https://web.s.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=eb73defc-674c-4a4f-9a3a-5c2f824b64c5%40redis> retrieved on: 01/12/2022.

places ‘remembering’ (or ‘knowledge’ in the modern version) at its base, recognising this as the necessary foundation, but not the ultimate and singular goal, of the educational process.<sup>105</sup> The higher functions and goals of education – analysis, synthesis, and evaluation – are all skills also associated with critical thinking.<sup>106</sup> They are also emblematic of Dewey’s ideals for education: they are essential for ‘using’, as opposed to simply ‘acquiring’ information; and are essential to the ‘power of judgement’.<sup>107</sup> The excessive focus on passing exams places far too much weight on this most basic function of education – the learning of facts – and leaves little space for the skills needed to use that knowledge – skills associated with critical and creative thinking, that are themselves far more useful in the context of the changing world and the unpredictable future of the workplace.<sup>108</sup>

The 2013 reforms asserted they were put in place to ‘restore faith in the examination system’ (which, it was argued, had suffered due to ‘equivalent’ qualifications being over-used – qualifications such as ‘Functional Skills’, designed for those who struggle with the intensity of GCSE-level study – that had been created in order to create greater equity for students with special educational needs) and improve schooling in order that it might provide ‘a better guarantee that every student will acquire the knowledge and skills to succeed in the modern world’ through its new curriculum. This statement is conflated by numerous commentators calling for greater focus on ‘soft’ skills such as critical and creative thinking: the 2022 *Times Education Commission* report repeatedly asserts the importance of these skills, and states that the English system faces the ‘perils’ of overt focus on exam-based learning and underrepresentation of thinking skills, saying it must ‘adapt to survive’.<sup>109</sup> According to a poll by YouGov, many believe the quality of education has worsened, and the pressure on young people has increased, in the past decade.<sup>110</sup>

The assertion that the reforms explicitly aimed to provide students with the ‘knowledge and skills to succeed in the modern world’ is problematic. Tony Blair’s recent report in *The*

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<sup>105</sup> Christine Persaud explains the importance of the higher levels of the taxonomy to the learner, ultimately towards developing better ‘critical thinking’ skills, in her article ‘Bloom’s Taxonomy: The Ultimate Guide’, *Top Hat* (25/02/2021). Available from: <https://tophat.com/blog/blooms-taxonomy/> retrieved on: 01/12/2022.

<sup>106</sup> For example, they are repeatedly referred to in The Foundation for Critical Thinking’s article ‘Defining Critical Thinking’ (no author given). Available from: <https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766> retrieved on: 01/12/2022.

<sup>107</sup> *Education Today*, pp. 22-23, p. 55.

<sup>108</sup> Bloom’s Taxonomy is available from: <https://www.bloomstaxonomy.net/>

<sup>109</sup> *The Times Education Commission Report 2022: Bringing out the Best* (various authors). Quote taken from p. 33.

<sup>110</sup> The poll was conducted for *The Times*, and asked ‘Do you think the school system is better or worse than it was ten years ago, or about the same?’. 35% said worse, while only 17% said better. 24% did not know. 52% of respondents felt there was greater pressure on young people. Available from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/society/education/education-commission> retrieved on: 01/12/2022.

*Telegraph* called for GCSEs to be scrapped because they ‘do far too little’ to meet the needs of the modern, AI and automation-driven world. He quotes a Department for Education survey that found that 44% of employers felt school-leavers were poorly prepared for work. Blair then asserts that, in the context of ‘increasingly digital’ workplaces, ‘pupils need to develop attributes such as critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaborative problem-solving’.<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, internationally, the importance of critical thinking and media and information literacy are increasingly being recognised as integral skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and they are among UNESCO’s present foci.<sup>112</sup> According to their International Bureau for Education, while the ‘industrial society’ necessitated a focus on ‘factual and procedural knowledge’, the ‘information or knowledge society’ necessitates the ‘development of conceptual and metacognitive knowledge’.<sup>113</sup> Despite this, the paring-down of teacher training in the UK has restricted educators’ access to knowledge and resources with which to improve their ability to teach these more abstract, ‘soft’ skills.<sup>114</sup> The assertion that the reforms provided a ‘better guarantee’ for students to acquire skills to succeed in the modern world is undermined by numerous commentators’ and scholars’ arguments that the one of the most important skills for the ‘modern world’ is critical thinking.<sup>115</sup> Heather Butler, discussing real-world outcomes of critical thinking teaching and assessment, asserts that ‘the call for a change in the way students are educated has been heard around the world’, however, it appears that this call has

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<sup>111</sup> Tony Blair, ‘It’s time to scrap GCSEs and A Levels’, *The Telegraph*, 23/08/2022. Available online: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/08/23/time-scrap-gcses-a-levels/> retrieved on: 21/09/2022

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, their pages on Media and Information Literacy: <https://www.unesco.org/en/communication-information/media-information-literacy>, Critical Thinking: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/c/critical-thinking> and ‘Twenty-first Century Skills’: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/t/twenty-first-century-skills>. Retrieved on: 21/09/2022.

<sup>113</sup> International Bureau for Education, UNESCO, ‘Twenty-first Century Skills’. Available from: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/t/twenty-first-century-skills> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, John Hodgson, ‘Surveying the Wreckage: The professional response to changes to initial teacher training in the UK’, *English in Education* Vol. 48:1 (2014), pp. 7-25. Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1111/eie.12028> retrieved on: 21/12/2022. See also ‘Silenced Voices...’, cited at beginning of chapter.

<sup>115</sup> For example, ‘The World Urgently Needs Critical Thinking, Not Gut Feeling’, *New Scientist* (issue 3156, 16/12/2017). See also ‘The Importance of Critical Thinking in the Digital Age’, *Study International* (13/12/2017). The article asserts that ‘critical thinking skills’ are ‘needed to survive in the modern jobs market’. Available from: <https://www.studyinternational.com/news/importance-critical-thinking-digital-age/> retrieved on: 01/12/2022. Paul Kirschner and Slavi Stoyanov assert that critical thinking is essential for the changing work environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in *Educating Youth for Nonexistent/Not Yet Existing Professions*, *Education Policy* Vol. 34:3 (2020), pp. 477-517. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818802086> retrieved on: 01/12/2022. Not exhaustive.

been ignored by the UK government.<sup>116</sup> Finally, there is a disjoin between the ‘calls for’ better critical thinking and the literature and received wisdom surrounding critical thinking. Often, the focus on teaching critical thinking skills is placed in higher education, rather than primary or secondary. In light of both the importance business perceives in critical thinking, and the deeper importance to the individual for building a stronger ‘cognitive immune system’, it seems more appropriate that the nurturing of these skills takes place at a stage in the educational process to which everyone has free access.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, thinking skills benefit from practice over time, and brain plasticity is greater at a younger age. It therefore appears wrong to only expect these skills to be taught explicitly and attentively to older learners.

The UK government’s call for media literacy programme proposals describes the problems of mis- and disinformation, and the need to develop citizens’ ‘critical thinking skills’ in order to enhance ‘resilience’ against the harms of false information online.<sup>118</sup> However, despite this acknowledgement of the problem and proposed solution, no mention has yet been made of updating or restructuring school curricula to reflect this priority, despite the fact that the most prolific users of social media – and particularly the use of social media to access the news – are younger people. The fact that the younger generation have grown up in this new environment does not inoculate them against its potential harms – in fact, it might well exacerbate the danger to them.

It therefore seems that, although the education reforms were relatively recent, there is a real and urgent need for reforms that address the issues discussed. One possible reason for the neglect of this issue is the instability of the cabinet: since Gove left the post in 2014, there have been eight Secretaries of State for Education, only one of whose terms of office have exceeded two years, six of whom have been appointed in the past four years. This is a product of wider political instability, however the by-product of this under-prioritisation of education is a system that is not fit for purpose, and that, as Dewey would believe, does not serve its democratic or sociological function. As one of the richest countries in the world – albeit with

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<sup>116</sup> Heather A Butler, ‘Halpern Critical Thinking Assessment Predicts Real-World Outcomes of Critical Thinking’, *Applied Cognitive Psychology* Vol. 26 (2012), p. 721. Available online: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1002/acp.2851> retrieved on 26/09/2022.

<sup>117</sup> Marina Gorbiss, Katie Joseff et al, ‘Building a Healthy Cognitive Immune System: Defending Democracy in the Disinformation Age’, Institute for the Future (2019), p. 2. Available from: [https://legacy.iftf.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/downloads/ourwork/IFTF\\_ODNI\\_Cognitive\\_Immunity\\_Map\\_2019.pdf](https://legacy.iftf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/ourwork/IFTF_ODNI_Cognitive_Immunity_Map_2019.pdf) retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Media Literacy Programme Fund’ call for proposals. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/media-literacy-programme-fund#resilience> retrieved on: 21/09/2022.

around one in five of its citizens living in relative poverty, according to government statistics<sup>119</sup> and with a projected three million more people falling into poverty in the coming year<sup>120</sup> – it seems incongruous that its education system does not seek to promote these internationally recognised skills more clearly and explicitly. It could be argued that, due to the combination of the 2013 reforms and the increased ‘on-the-job’ training for teachers, the education system has moved further away from these ideals.<sup>121</sup>

Schools that more closely aligned with Russell or Dewey’s models would be impractical: small classes, with more explorative lessons and individual-led learning, would require funding that is simply unavailable.<sup>122</sup> It would, however, be practical and practicable to begin introducing concepts associated with the subjective experience of thinking that relate directly to material being studied in the classroom – utilising the explicitness Halpern recommends, enhancing the capacity for trans-contextual transfer, with little additional work for the practitioner.<sup>123</sup> For example, a teacher of history delivering a course on the Second World War might introduce the idea of socialisation, with a particular focus on cultural conditioning, into the discussion of Nazi Germany; or a teacher of mathematics might introduce the idea of metacognition when asking students to ‘show their working’. Only a small amount of training or learning would be necessary for the teacher, and very little additional material would be required for lesson planning or delivery: the material is already there.

Finally, Dewey’s major concern – that democracy is a fragile system that requires constant attention and effort to maintain; that requires its citizens to be well-informed and provided with ‘freed intelligence’ with which to participate in the decision-making that will affect their lives – is particularly relevant today. Dewey’s (and Russell’s) concern that

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<sup>119</sup> ‘Poverty in the UK: Statistics’, Commons Library (29/09/2022). Available from:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn07096/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>120</sup> Lalitha Try and Adam Corlett, ‘In at the deep end: the living standards crisis facing the new Prime Minister’, The Resolution Foundation. Available from: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/in-at-the-deep-end/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>121</sup> The ‘schools-centred, employment-based’ model of teacher training, has led many teachers expressed concerns that teachers would not receive sufficient training in the ‘purposes and processes’ of education. John Hodgson, ‘Surveying the wreckage: The professional response to changes to initial teacher training in the UK’, *English in Education* Vol. 48:1 (2014). Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1111/eie.12028?journalCode=reie20> retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

<sup>122</sup> Some experiments in similar models have been tried, most famously Steiner schools, however there are problems with Steiner’s ideology. See Chris Cook, ‘Why are Steiner Schools so controversial?’ *BBC News*, 04/08/2022. Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-28646118> retrieved on: 21/09/2022.

<sup>123</sup> See Lisa M. Marin and Diane Halpern, ‘Pedagogy for developing critical thinking in adolescents: Explicit instruction produces greatest gains’, *Thinking Skills and Creativity* Vol. 6:1 (April 2011). Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2010.08.002> retrieved on: 10/11/2022. See also Diane Halpern, ‘Teaching Critical Thinking for Transfer Across Domains: Dispositions, Skills, Structure Training, and Metacognitive Monitoring’, *American Psychologist* Vol. 53:4 (April 1998). Available online: <https://oce.ovid.com/article/00000487-199804000-00031/HTML> retrieved on: 10/11/2022.



education prepared young people for a world that was past is still relevant. His feeling that the educational process should provide learners with thinking skills, as opposed to focusing on recall, is echoed in the discourse surrounding critical thinking today.

Zuboff repeatedly refers to the danger presented to democracy by the surveillance capitalist model, citing similar prerequisites to Dewey: the requirement, for a democracy to function, for the intellectual autonomy of its citizens. She refers to the method whereby a person's cognition is manipulated for profitmaking purposes as 'instrumentarianism'.<sup>124</sup> Zuboff defines this as:

[T]he instrumentation and instrumentalization of behavior for the purposes of modification, prediction, monetization, and control [...] "instrumentation" refers to the puppet: the ubiquitous connected material architecture of sensate computation that renders, interprets, and actuates human experience. "Instrumentalization" denotes the social relations that orient the puppet masters to human experience as surveillance capital wields the machines to transform us into means to others' market ends.<sup>125</sup>

Zuboff's description of the consumer, or Internet user, as the 'puppet' and her related concerns regarding, particularly, 'modification' and 'control' can be aligned with Dewey's discussion of the manipulation of the idea of 'human nature' (i.e. adjusting what this means for the purpose of control) in his *Freedom and Culture*. Zuboff also aligns microtargeting with B F Skinner's behaviourism, arguing that the manipulation of behaviour undermines the human right to autonomy.<sup>126</sup> Intellectual autonomy is inextricable from 'freedom' – a person must be able to think for themselves in order to be 'free' – and for Dewey, democracy is only possible in a 'free' society. Dewey refers to the use of 'human nature' as a rationale for behaviour, such as going to war. There is an implicit assumption in the pervasiveness of convenience-driven algorithms that it is 'human nature' to desire convenience over privacy – despite the incongruousness of this pairing. Furthermore, the weaponization of stereotypes by media and government described in the Belloc section make use of tendencies characteristic of 'human nature' in order to polarise people for political ends. The manipulation of 'human nature' for profitmaking ends in the contemporary reality is less explicit than what Dewey described: rather than directly appealing to aspects of human nature, mechanisms of human cognition – such as confirmation bias and emotion – are utilised in order to maintain users' attention in the pursuit of profit. The activities of bodies like Cambridge Analytica more clearly align with

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<sup>124</sup> Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, various.

<sup>125</sup> Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, p. 165.

<sup>126</sup> Zuboff *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, various.



Dewey's concerns; through their evocation of such human cognitive and psychological tendencies as outgroup bias.

Furthermore, the 'post-truth' phenomenon, which describes an increasing tendency towards the primacy of emotions over objective facts, could also be aligned with Dewey's concerns regarding the manipulation of human nature: emotion affects cognition. D'Ancona traces this modern relationship with fact and fiction to twentieth century discourse's orientation around human psychology and its focus on emotion. While this greater understanding has been 'emancipating', he writes, it has also led to unintended consequences, whereby 'emotional necessity trumps strict adherence to the truth'. According to this modern conception of reality, 'the higher purpose of humankind is to escape literalism and to shape one's own reality'.<sup>127</sup> David Block finds the post-truth phenomenon to be a product of 'the rise of social media and related social phenomena such as echo chambers and filter bubbles [...] along with relatively unrelated phenomenon such as the crisis of confidence in political establishments'.<sup>128</sup> He also discusses the importance of emotion in post-truth discourse. Interestingly, Block describes the shift from the behaviourist to the cognitive paradigm in psychology as playing an important role in the formation of the post-truth world, asserting that the shift to a more complex model of behaviour and thinking – that encompasses emotion and cognitive complexity – both contributes to and aids in understanding the post-truth tendency. Marengo agrees with Block that the crisis is one of concurrent, as opposed to causative, relations:

Digitalization is taking place in a context of sluggish productivity and increasing debt, endemic corruption, and declining electoral turnouts, mounting income inequalities, and strengthening of populism. Taken together, these issues urgently speak to the present and future relationship between capitalism and democracy.<sup>129</sup>

Finally, Dewey's consistent focus on the sociological function of education further strengthens the argument for a system of education that seeks to improve interpersonal interaction and interaction with information. In a world in which the very foundations of reality can differ vastly from person to person, because of the highly individualised nature of our relationship with information and the social world, it seems that education must provide the

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<sup>127</sup> Matthew D'Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Ebury, 2017), p. 33.

<sup>128</sup> David Block, *Post-Truth and Political Discourse* (London: Palgrave Pivot, 2019), p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Matteo Marengo, 'Capitalism and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: Does it Still Take Two to Tango?', *Italian Political Science Review* Vol. 52 (2022), p. 34. Available from: doi:10.1017/ipo.2021.23 retrieved on: 13/02/2023.

bridge between the subjective and the objective, must create a foundation of self-awareness in thinking, if some concept of objective reality is to be maintained.

### 3.7 Russell

*What must be done is, first of all, psychological.*<sup>130</sup>

Russell's texts, when considered in the contemporary context, offer interesting insights. Just as Belloc, Lippmann, Čapek and Dewey all wrote on issues they perceived in their own temporal context that maintain relevance today, Russell's observations in both *Why I am Not a Christian* and *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* can be read with reference to present-day concerns. Russell's concern about the 'cultural lag' is today particularly salient, most clearly with regard to the Internet, and particularly social media and 'surveillance capitalism'. D'Ancona writes that the 'only thing more remarkable than the impact of this technology is the speed with which we have come to take it for granted'.<sup>131</sup> However, although this statement is undoubtedly true – especially in richer countries like the UK – there are clear social and political concerns surrounding the human unpreparedness for the enormity of the sociological changes that social media has precipitated. The very existence of the 'post-truth' phenomenon is testament to this, as is the issue, or impossibility, of legislation against corporate surveillance. Humanity has embraced the convenience and power provided by the Internet, but has not yet accommodated or adapted for the consequences of these advantages, as highlighted by the problems of mis- and disinformation, and by examples such as Cambridge Analytica.

Unfortunately, Russell's comments regarding the need to integrate psychology into political understanding have only been met in an increase in populism, and the emotional component of the 'post-truth' phenomenon.<sup>132</sup> Interestingly, Christopher J. Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti discuss the rise of a 'new type of politics' they describe as 'technopopulism'.<sup>133</sup> They explore a variety of proposed definitions for this phenomenon, arguing that it cannot be defined as an ideology, nor a new 'political regime', but instead can be regarded as an

organizing *logic* of political competition, characterized by a set of incentives and constraints that result in contemporary political actors increasingly adopting both

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<sup>130</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 31.

<sup>131</sup> Matthew D'Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Ebury Press, 2017), p. 47.

<sup>132</sup> See, for example, Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy* (London: Pelican, 2018).

<sup>133</sup> Christopher J. Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, *Technopopulism: The New Logic of Democratic Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 1.

populist and technocratic forms of discourse and modes of political organization, at the expense of more substantive ideological orientations.<sup>134</sup>

They argue that it is due to the ‘contemporary salience of both technocratic and populist modes of representation’ that this form of populism has become a dominant trope in democratic politics, and discuss the idea that, under this new ‘logic’, ideological opposition is less important than effective communication of a party’s representation of the ‘people’ and communication of their competence in achieving policy goals.<sup>135</sup> Thus, not only has there been a resurgence in populist discourse in international politics, but it has been ‘rebranded’ for the modern era. Their reference to the ‘salience’ of populist modes of representation might be regarded as a side-effect of the ‘post-truth’ phenomenon: the pervasiveness of appeals to emotion, rather than discourse that engages with objective fact and realistic and achievable goals, could be argued to have played a role in the emergence of ‘technopopulist’ rhetoric. Russell’s request to future populations to look only at ‘the facts’, and not be ‘diverted by what [they] wish to believe’ appears particularly relevant in light of this new form of political discourse.<sup>136</sup>

Russell’s observations regarding humanity’s emotional and psychological response to the nuclear threat have clear parallels in the contemporary existential threats of climate change and mass extinction; particularly with regard to the cognitive dissonance-like nature of engagement with them, which has been noted by other scholars. Brower et al discuss the apparent cognitive dissonance in the responses of ‘Big Oil’ companies to the climate crisis, asserting that the industry ‘acts like the threat from climate change is existential to everyone except itself’, and arguing that the industry’s focus on ‘greening’ extraction practices fundamentally misunderstands the fact that the main driver of climate change coming from the industry is combustion, not extraction (except in the sense that extraction leads to combustion and plastic manufacture), of these materials.<sup>137</sup> It might be argued that the authors overlook the absence of the need for sincerity in these industry claims: is it truly a problem of cognitive dissonance in the cognition of actors within these companies, or is it in fact a ploy to promote cognitive dissonance mitigation in consumers? Cynically, I suspect the latter: purported

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<sup>134</sup> Christopher J. Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti, *Technopopulism: The New Logic of Democratic Politics*, p. 20.

<sup>135</sup> *Technopopulism*, p. 22-3.

<sup>136</sup> Bertrand Russell, in an interview for ‘Face to Face’, BBC, 1959. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a10A5PneXlo&t=0s> retrieved on: 03/08/2021.

<sup>137</sup> Derek Brower, Myles McCormick, et al, ‘Big Oil’s cognitive dissonance on climate change’ *Financial Times* (10/08/2021). Available online: <https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/big-oil-s-cognitive-dissonance-on-climate-change/docview/2564161712/se-2?accountid=13460> retrieved on: 22/09/2022.

intentions to ‘green’ extraction create an avenue for consumers to console themselves about their own fossil fuel consumption. These promises only serve to encourage the broader dissonance that prevails around the very concept of climate change itself: such claims provide a psychological justification for continuing to use fossil fuels – which is largely motivated by practicality and financial necessity, rather than a desire to ignore climate change literature. They allow a captive audience of fossil fuel consumers to feel slightly better about their – overwhelmingly unavoidable – use of harmful materials in their day to day lives.

Taylor, Lamm and Lundy researched hypocritical behaviour, looking at individuals with high levels of knowledge and belief concerning climate change who refused to engage in water conservation behaviours. This is emblematic of the general tendency towards cognitive dissonance with regard to climate change: around 72% of adults in the UK believe anthro-genic climate change exists and is a problem,<sup>138</sup> but this has not been reflected in the ruling party’s acceptance of financial donations and incentives;<sup>139</sup> in discussions concerning policy;<sup>140</sup> or in politicians’ behaviour.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, in December 2022, it was confirmed that the first new coal mine in the UK for thirty years had been approved, in direct contravention of promises made by the same party at COP summits.<sup>142</sup> This implies that, for the majority of people in the UK, the matter must be either ignored or suppressed, since those the state holds responsible for creating suitable conditions for ‘net zero’ appear disinterested in its achievement. This creates a psychological environment that meets the criteria for cognitive dissonance: holding incompatible cognitions and suppressing the least favourable. Without being empowered, through subsidies and policy, to live more sustainably, it is necessary to ignore the issue.

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<sup>138</sup> Figures vary, but most findings agree that acceptance of anthro-genic climate change is around two-thirds to three-quarters of the adult population. 74% was taken from YouGov figures: ‘72% of Britons Think Climate Change is the Result of Human Activity, Up 20 pts Since 2013’, YouGov (02/11/2021). Available from: <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2021/11/01/72-britons-think-climate-change-result-human-activ> retrieved on: 01/12/2022.

<sup>139</sup> According to a *Guardian* study undertaken in 2021, the UK Conservative Party received 1.3 million pounds in gifts and donations from ‘climate sceptics and fossil fuels interests’ between 2019 and 2021. Pamela Duncan, Jonathan Watts and Georgina Quach, ‘Tories received £1.3m from fossil fuel interests and climate sceptics since 2019’, *The Guardian* (25/10/2021). Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/oct/25/tories-received-13m-from-fossil-fuel-interests-and-climate-sceptics-since-2019> retrieved on: 05/12/2022.

<sup>140</sup> Refers particularly to the government’s purported plans to seek more oil from the North Sea – which were described as ‘green’ by a minister, and the reduction in ‘green’ incentives for the public, such as electric car owners’ tax break being rescinded. ‘North Sea Oil and Gas Exploration Good for the Environment – minister’ *BBC News* (08/10/2022). Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-63184412> retrieved on: 01/12/2022. ‘Electric Car Owners Must Pay Tax from 2025’ *BBC News* (17/11/2022). Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-63660321> retrieved on: 01/12/2022.

<sup>141</sup> The current Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, originally did not intend to attend the COP27 summit in 2022. He later attended, but for only one day.

<sup>142</sup> See Christine McSorley, Joshua Nevett and Justin Rowlatt, ‘First UK coal mine in decades approved despite climate concerns’, *BBC News* (07/12/2022). Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-63892381> retrieved on: 08/12/2022.

Furthermore, there is a rhetorical tendency to shift responsibility for behavioural change to the individual, but without support through policy and financial incentives this is simply impossible for many, which again is likely to create cognitive dissonance induced by the resultant feelings of powerlessness.<sup>143</sup> The journalist George Monbiot describes this as ‘micro-consumerist bollocks’.<sup>144</sup> While Taylor et al’s study identifies the cognitive inconsistency in individuals who recognise the problem but do not act; and hypothesises that discourse surrounding these inconsistencies – i.e. making them aware of their cognitive dissonance – might help encourage behaviour change, they do not provide concrete suggestions or practical solutions.<sup>145</sup> It is interesting to note this suggestion because of its connection with the proposals made in this study regarding the use of educational engagement with cognitive mechanisms such as cognitive dissonance.

Lisa Oswald and Jonathan Bright also consider individual cognitive dissonance with regard to climate change, but focus on climate change scepticism.<sup>146</sup> Interestingly, they too comment on the tendency among commentators to observe such phenomena as real problems while refraining from offering practical solutions.<sup>147</sup> They suggest communication targeted at other aspects of individuals’ worldview, such as religion, as a possible way of reducing the climate-orientated cognitive dissonance. This seems counter-intuitive: attempting to convince individuals to join scientific consensus regarding climate change through the use of unscientific, widely disagreed upon ideological preconceptions does not address the fundamental problem of ideological attachment, nor improve an individual’s relationship with objective reality. Problems of group adherence and outgroup rejection are likely to be exacerbated should issues of real-life practicality and personal ideology be conflated.

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<sup>143</sup> Morten Fibieger Byskov, ‘Climate change: focusing on how individuals can help is very convenient for corporations’, *The Conversation* (10/01/2019). Available from: <https://theconversation.com/climate-change-focusing-on-how-individuals-can-help-is-very-convenient-for-corporations-108546> retrieved on: 01/12/2022. Individual changes can have a meaningful impact – it is the ability to make them, often associated with costs, that is a barrier. Steve Westlake, ‘Climate change: Yes, your individual action does make a difference’ *The Conversation* (11/04/2019). Available online: <https://theconversation.com/climate-change-yes-your-individual-action-does-make-a-difference-115169> retrieved on: 22/09/2022.

<sup>144</sup> George Monbiot, ‘Capitalism is killing the planet – it’s time to stop buying into our own destruction’ *The Guardian* (30/10/2021). Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/30/capitalism-is-killing-the-planet-its-time-to-stop-buying-into-our-own-destruction> retrieved on: 22/09/2022.

<sup>145</sup> Melissa R Taylor, Alex J Lamm and Lisa K Lundy, ‘Using Cognitive Dissonance to Communicate with Hypocrites About Water Conservation and Climate Change’ *Journal of Applied Communications* Vol. 101:3 (Sep 2017). Available online: <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=rdg&id=GALE|A562050247&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon> retrieved on: 22/09/2022.

<sup>146</sup> Lisa Oswald and Jonathan Bright, ‘How do climate change sceptics engage with opposing views?’ University of Oxford, 2022. Available online [preprint copy]: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2102.06516.pdf> retrieved on: 22/09/2022.

<sup>147</sup> Oswald and Bright, p. 2.

Furthermore, an attempt to marry belief in climate change to belief in a deity might lead to ideas linking the danger of mass extinction with ideas concerning punishment of unbelievers, or similar. Russell would most certainly have baulked at the suggestion to improve a person's relationship with objective fact by aligning it with religious dogma. Their observation that providing information that conflicts with a person's preconceived opinions is not effective is intuitive: these are likely to be entrenched views that are subject to mechanisms such as confirmation bias, social identity, socialisation and personal experience. It is therefore likely to be more effective to provide the means with which individuals can challenge their own views, using the motivation of personal empowerment, than to simply tell people that their beliefs are incorrect. This rationale also applies to conspiracy theorists: most people whose beliefs are counter to the overwhelming cultural 'narrative' believe themselves to have access to a 'truth' others are incapable of seeing, therefore engagement with scientific understanding of thought can be incentivised through the argument that by becoming better at metacognitive regulation, individuals can more reliably access 'truths' concerning world events.<sup>148</sup> Oswald and Bright's findings reflect what my research implies: that 'active engagement with opposing views [...] may in fact be part of the problem', as opposed to the solution, to climate change scepticism – or indeed any other antiscientific belief system.<sup>149</sup> This supports my argument that in order to facilitate constructive changes of understanding it is more effective to educate populations about thinking, and develop metacognition. Their concluding remarks are that 'further work is required to suggest more about what effective strategies are' in these contexts. As I argue, the clearest answer seems to be to provide people with the tools with which to question problematic views, assumptions, and evidence; and allow them to come to more reliable conclusions through that awareness and metacognitive practice: thinking more clearly about their own thinking.

Unfortunately, without pressure from those within education, little change is likely to be seen that truly deals with the problems as they are, that genuinely acts on the tangible issues created as a result of this algorithmic mode of operation. Part of the problem is the convenience, the attractiveness of being provided with entertainment that is not challenging or educative; of being 'connected' with people who reinforce our beliefs. The UK government's recent investment in media and information literacy is an important step, but it does not have the

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<sup>148</sup> Graham Lawton describes the sense of 'superiority' felt by conspiracy theorists because 'they [...] have seen through the lies and the cover-ups to reveal the 'truth''. 'Conspiracy Theories', *New Scientist* (02/07/2020). Available online: <https://www.newscientist.com/definition/conspiracy-theories/> retrieved on: 05/12/2022.

<sup>149</sup> Oswald and Bright, p. 10.

capacity to address the effectiveness of false information because of the sophistication of the systems by which it is targeted at individuals. Certainly, teaching people to recognise good and bad evidence will serve to improve the status quo, but until citizens are made more aware of the cleverness of targeting and manipulation, the Dunning Kruger of information literacy will remain pervasive. As numerous cognitive scientists and behavioural economists have observed, even the most careful and experienced thinkers are vulnerable to biased thinking. Only with constant vigilance can these problems be addressed, and it is for this reason that education must improve people's ability to observe, and regulate, their own thinking. If it is possible to teach most people the complex system of symbols that we use every day to communicate with one another, then it ought to also be possible to teach as many people to think more habitually metacognitively.

*The second kind of civil disobedience [...] is its employment with a view to causing a change in the law or in public policy. In this aspect, it is a means of propaganda, and there are those who consider that it is an undesirable kind. Many, however, of whom I am one, think it to be now necessary.*<sup>150</sup>

Civil disobedience, a strategy used by anti-nuclear protesters including Russell – among many other important political campaigns throughout the past century; including the suffragette and civil rights movements – has become increasingly used by climate activists, which many argue is the product of desperation,<sup>151</sup> arguing that ‘all other means have failed’.<sup>152</sup> British group Just Stop Oil justify their actions through the assertion that the continued extraction and production of fossil fuels is a ‘crime against humanity’.<sup>153</sup> Modern direct action strategies include activists gluing themselves to buildings, climbing motorway garrisons, and throwing soup at works of art.<sup>154</sup> The extreme nature of this breed of direct action has precipitated deeply concerning alterations to domestic law. The UK's Public Order Bill, drawn up in response to the increased

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<sup>150</sup> Bertrand Russell, ‘Bertrand Russell on Civil Disobedience’, *The New Statesman* (17/02/1961). Available online: <https://www.newstatesman.com/long-reads/2013/11/civil-disobedience> retrieved on: 06/12/2022.

<sup>151</sup> The Climate Disobedience Centre describes the need for direct action as the result of the ‘urgency’ of the situation, and the ‘despair’ felt by many. ‘About’, *Climate Disobedience Centre*. Available online: <https://www.climatedisobedience.org/about> retrieved on: 05/12/2022.

<sup>152</sup> ‘The Time to Act is Now’, *Extinction Rebellion*. Available from: <https://rebellion.global/> retrieved on: 05/12/2022.

<sup>153</sup> ‘Frequently Asked Questions’, *Just Stop Oil*. Available from: <https://juststopoil.org/faqs/> retrieved on: 05/12/2022.

<sup>154</sup> A list of recent direct action campaigns by climate groups is available from *BBC News*. Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cjyykdw58t> retrieved on: 05/12/2022.



popularity of direct action strategies,<sup>155</sup> increases police powers to arrest protesters, permits police to stop and search ‘without suspicion’, and allows for suspected protestors who have not committed a crime to be placed under surveillance.<sup>156</sup>

While these circumstances are troubling, direct action strategies do achieve publicity. Although the media response to civil disobedience in the UK is overwhelmingly negative (in part due to the bias in the UK’s media ownership, discussed earlier), the extremity of these acts leads to media acknowledgement. Unfortunately, the increasingly authoritarian response to direct action by government actors fails to acknowledge the source of these actions – the continuation of fossil fuel investment and extraction and the failure to invest in green infrastructure – and consequently, is unlikely to deter activists. For them, the fight is for the ‘preservation of human life’, and for that reason, imprisonment is a reasonable sacrifice.<sup>157</sup>

While the need for investment into the education of future citizens might not seem as radically or urgently important as the need to cease fossil fuel extraction, pollution and the decimation of the natural world, there is a conceivable link between the two. Had the public been provided with greater awareness of the means of manipulation, perhaps the UK would not have voted to leave the EU. Perhaps the people of the world might have put greater pressure on governments to halt the use of fossil fuels earlier – and perhaps it would have been halted. Perhaps less damage to the natural world would have been done. Fossil fuel companies are responsible for a great deal of climate change scepticism, despite having been aware of the connection between fossil fuel combustion and excess carbon in the Earth’s atmosphere for many decades.<sup>158</sup> As Russell wrote of nuclear war, there are a great many people who, ‘having realised that [it] would be a disaster, have convinced themselves that it will not occur’.<sup>159</sup> The same might easily be said of the destruction of the natural world. Because a belief is

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<sup>155</sup> The Government website’s ‘information relating to the Public Order Bill introduced in the House of Commons on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022’ page clearly alludes to climate protestor’s strategies, making specific reference to ‘locking on’ (gluing oneself to a public construction), ‘obstructing major transport works’, and ‘interfering with key national infrastructure’. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-public-order-bill> retrieved on: 05/12/2022.

<sup>156</sup> See ‘Public Order Bill Explanatory Notes’. Available from: <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/48041/documents/2333> retrieved on: 05/12/2022.

<sup>157</sup> Quote taken from Russell’s *New Statesman* piece, 1961.

<sup>158</sup> This is a fairly well-known fact. See, for example, Benjamin Franta, ‘Early oil industry disinformation on global warming’, *Environmental Politics* Vol. 30:4 (2021), pp. 663-668. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2020.1863703> retrieved on: 06/12/2022. See also Shannon Hall, ‘Exxon Knew about Climate Change Almost 40 Years Ago’, *Scientific American* (26/10/2016). Available from: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/exxon-knew-about-climate-change-almost-40-years-ago/> retrieved on: 13/02/2023. Hall’s article describes the ‘millions’ spent to promote misinformation.

<sup>159</sup> *Common Sense*, p. 21.

comfortable, it does not make it correct. But a comfortable belief is an easy belief to sell. What will the next imposition on people's capacity to come to informed conclusions lead to?

## Conclusion

Unwin's central role in this study has reflected the central importance to its argument, of his purported publishing 'principles': to seek to publish 'the best' and most up-to-date scholarly works; to provide both 'sides' of the argument on controversial issues in order to allow people to come to their own, informed conclusions. These principles have formed the foundation of the study's conceptualisation of 'critical thinking': considering reliable sources giving alternative perspectives on an issue and seeking to address personal bias by challenging subjective beliefs, assumptions, and aspects of our worldview that might lead us – or allow us to be led – to poor or problematic conclusions. Unwin's financial and personal motivation for making international voices available to British readers provided the means with which his readers could challenge their cultural conditioning, and expose themselves to the perspectives of those outside their ingroups: opening the doors to new ways of thinking about, and understanding, the world. He sought to avoid allowing his own beliefs to dictate what he published – as Russell's *Why I am not a Christian* demonstrates, and as his publication of differing perspectives on the Russian Revolution, political ideology and the nuclear problem also support.<sup>160</sup> Of course, it is good business practice not to hem oneself into an ideological pigeon-hole; however, this stated principle at least balanced the content and angle of his extensive and varied list. Unwin's drive to promote and encourage cooperation and collaboration implied a belief that compromise is superior to conflict, that people work better in allegiance than in opposition or isolation.

Using these ideas, the study looked at ways in which an individual's critical faculties, and their ability to communicate effectively, can be compromised as a result of aspects of their unique cognitive makeup. For this reason, Part Two used key texts published by Allen and Unwin to focus on specific, conceptualised universal aspects of cognitive function that compromise an individual's ability to be 'critical': those thinking pathways that compromise effective interaction with information; those ways of seeing others that undermine an individual's ability to acknowledge the validity (or even veracity) of alternative perspectives.

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<sup>160</sup> Rayner Unwin also asserts the truth of this more broadly in his interview with Jane Potter. 'Interview with Rayner Unwin – London – Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1994', *Publishing History* Vol. 41 (Jan 1999), pp. 75-101. Available from: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1298000780> retrieved on: 28/01/2023.

## Stories

This study has sought to tell a story, an ambitious, multiple-perspective story about a principled publisher, the authors he worked with, and their thoughts on a changing world. Literature is the study of the stories we tell, and these represent something of ourselves, our cultures, and our moment in time. Our own lives are stories, and through our interactions we build shared stories. It could be argued that Čapek's fiction and Lippmann or Russell's social commentary do similar work: both types of narrative communicate a particular interpretation of, and perspective on, the human world. Both seek to make sense of that perspective by offering it to readers for interpretation – necessarily, in the pre-Internet age, facilitated by their publisher. Part Three sought to bring together these threads into the present, and use the observations and ideas of its characters in order to propose a solution to the problem and question outlined in the introduction:

What can be done in order to better adapt to this post-truth, algorithm-driven world; and what can be learnt from observers spanning the middle of the twentieth century – an important period of its genesis?

A narrative is an experiment with form, with the abstract; the humanities study narratives from different angles, seeking different kinds of answers from the perspective of their disciplinary interests. The human sciences (of which there is much crossover with the humanities) often experiment with data; they too seek to understand elements of the story of living, but often do this by looking at the concrete, at observable processes and systems. Without stories, those systems are meaningless – and in fact, it might be argued that the human-constructed ideas of systems themselves are 'stories', or in the very least narratives – without application to one's own story, without something with which to associate them, they have little power. Narrative is an interaction between text and reader, built upon abstracts; social science requires interaction with the concrete world – but this, too, is communicated through abstracts, constructs, narratives.

It is sometimes argued that attempts to understand the mind – particularly through the objective machinery of neuroscience – endanger creativity, uniqueness; they perhaps seek to define too much and make legible that which should be illegible and intangible. I am in agreement with neuroscientist Eric Kandel and physicist Carlo Rovelli, that art and science are simply two expressions of the same thing: human curiosity. Neither should nor can exist in isolation from the other, and both have the capacity to enhance our depth of appreciation for

the other.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, simply understanding the processes and mechanisms of mind and brain does not ‘explain’ identity, nor creativity. In fact, the quest for such understanding implicitly recognises the uniqueness of individual experience: the desire to understand the mind is not driven by a will to power; or the ambition to erase subjectivity; but by that very same curiosity that drives creativity.<sup>162</sup> As Rovelli asserts:

Our culture is foolish to keep science and poetry separated. They are two tools to open our eyes to the complexity and beauty of the world.<sup>163</sup>

It is also argued that greater understanding of the brain, and the use of that understanding, precipitates the manipulation of that knowledge for purposes of social control and oppression.<sup>164</sup> It might be asserted that this is precisely what is happening in the present day through psychological targeting. While Lippmann acknowledged this possibility and Bernays supported it, the interrogation of these ‘cognitive fallibilities’ in this study has been in order to propose that they are used instead to empower populations against this danger – that contemporary understanding of the mind is, in a sense, ‘democratised’, through education with a focus on the metacognitive regulation of these ‘fallibilities’. Rather than being used as a tool with which to engineer desirable behaviour, the knowledge that has been achieved in the past century could instead be used to counter its use for manipulative, controlling and oppressive purposes. Dewey argues for well-informed societies, and there is a pervasive absence of understanding with regard to the utilisation of individual psychology in the pursuit of profit and ideological manipulation in British society.<sup>165</sup> This is in part because the UK’s education system does not build the foundation for an informed democracy: it does not teach people about their thinking, and how it can be – and is – manipulated.

As outlined in thesis’s Introduction, the problems this study has sought to explore are directly connected to the ‘surveillance capitalist’ marketing model, which contributes to and informs the algorithmic information feeds used in search engines, entertainment and social

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<sup>161</sup> For example, see Eric Kandel, *Reductionism in Art and Brain Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). See also *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain, from Vienna 1900 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 2012).

<sup>162</sup> Certainly, some scholars’ work would suggest otherwise: Skinner’s behaviourist view of the human experience, for example, does discount the value and validity of the unique individual.

<sup>163</sup> Carlo Rovelli, *Reality is not What it Seems: The Journey to Quantum Gravity* (London: Penguin Random House: 2017), p. 88.

<sup>164</sup> Suparna Choudhury, Saskia K Nagel and Jan Slaby, ‘Critical Neuroscience: Linking Neuroscience and Society through Critical Practice’ *BioSociety* Vol. 4:1 (March 2009). Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1745855209006437> retrieved on: 02/11/2022.

<sup>165</sup> Zuboff supports this claim in her *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. This is also supported in numerous works on the ‘post-truth’ phenomenon, for example Matthew D’Ancona’s *Post-Truth*, or Goldstein’s *Informed Societies: Why Information Literacy Matters for Citizenship, Participation and Democracy* (London: Facet Publishing, 2020).

media platforms, smart home devices, and so on. Its genesis began well before the Internet existed, and, I argue, took place over the period this study observes: an era of increased understanding of the human brain and mind, used for benign as well as manipulative – profitmaking and political – purposes, a profiteering reinterpretation of Lippmann’s proposals.<sup>166</sup> A period in which totalitarianism was tested in various forms, in which the polar extremes of partisan politics were experimented with in real time; in which the power of the ‘mainstream’ press ebbed and flowed;<sup>167</sup> in which money and power often held greater power than factual accuracy and morality over the narrative of reality.<sup>168</sup> Arguably, even the ubiquity of the Internet itself is a direct product of the war-torn character of the twentieth century – although this does not detract from the incredible benefits it has brought, including, somewhat ironically, its inherently democratic essence.<sup>169</sup>

The primary problem with algorithmic information feeds is their inbuilt use of ‘psychological flattery’: a person will be shown things that are similar to other things they have sought or shown an interest in, because this is psychologically satisfying and unchallenging, and is therefore more likely to retain their attention. Users of ‘surveillance capitalist’ products are provided with a highly personalised experience, created via the collection of extensive behavioural data, that is both convenient and attractive.<sup>170</sup> It is this function of psychological flattery that has contributed significantly to an array of contemporary issues, particularly the pervasiveness of mis- and disinformation (and the real-life dangers this can create<sup>171</sup>) and ideological extremism.<sup>172</sup> The false consensus bias that is created by algorithmic information

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<sup>166</sup> D’Ancona argues that part of the genesis of ‘post-truth’, a phenomenon deeply intertwined with the informational environment created by surveillance capitalism, was the increased focus on the individual experience, psychology, and emotion in the twentieth century. *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Ebury, 2017).

<sup>167</sup> For various discussions on the power of the press over government and public opinion in this period, see Piers Brendon, *The Life and Death of the Press Barons* (New York: Atheneum, 1983). See also Adrian Bingham, *Gender, modernity, and the popular press in inter-war Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) and *Family newspapers? : sex, private life, and the British popular press 1918-1978* (Oxford: University Press, 2009).

<sup>168</sup> This refers to the various lobbies whose interests were protected to the detriment of human health and wellbeing. These include the tobacco and sugar industries’ lobbies, and more recently the fossil fuel industry’s.

<sup>169</sup> According to *Britannica*, the earliest forms of the Internet were largely American military-based. Michael Aaron Dennis and Robert Kahn, ‘Internet’, *Britannica Academic*. Available online: <https://academic-eb-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/levels/collegiate/article/Internet/1458> retrieved on: 06/09/2022. Zuboff, in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, also argues that the 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre played a role in the ubiquity of both the Internet and the widespread use and acceptance of surveillance.

<sup>170</sup> ‘Surveillance capitalist products’, refers to social media sites, streaming platforms, smart home devices, and any product or device that harvests user data in order to inform and/or subsidise its product.

<sup>171</sup> For example, the idea that pure alcohol could cure COVID 19, which led to the deaths of hundreds of people around the world. See Alistair Coleman ‘Hundreds dead’ because of Covid-19 misinformation’, *BBC News* 12/08/2020. Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-53755067> retrieved on: 22/11/2022.

<sup>172</sup> For an exploration of the increase in ideological extremism in the first decade of this century in the UK, see *The New Extremism in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Britain* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2010). There are numerous

flow strengthens confirmation biases, mitigates cognitive dissonance,<sup>173</sup> entrenches ingroup-outgroup divides<sup>174</sup> and exacerbates polarisation,<sup>175</sup> and increases the danger of radicalisation.<sup>176</sup> The intention of these algorithms is to provide convenience, entertainment and an enjoyable experience, as well as a means with which a platform can sustain itself financially. The outcomes described are unfortunate and unintended – but extremely significant – by-products.

Simultaneously, and arguably consequently, trust in the institutions that underpin the democratic ideals of freedom of thought, an informed public, and free and fair elections, is becoming increasingly strained, as observed in Part Three. The pervasiveness of mis- and disinformation has led to a breakdown of trust in many socially important institutions besides traditional news media, such as the medical establishment following the COVID 19 pandemic.<sup>177</sup> These issues have been exacerbated by conspiracy theorists with academic titles, who leverage authority bias in order to convince people that, for example, there is no such thing as disease,<sup>178</sup> that anthro-genic climate change does not exist,<sup>179</sup> and that wireless technologies are mortally dangerous.<sup>180</sup> The OED's 'word of the year' in 2016 was 'post-truth'; some

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discussions of the problem of false information. Edelman's Simon Paterson describes disinformation as something that 'will become one of the, if not the, most pressing communications challenge of the future'. 'Disinformation: The Threats to Trust are Changing, are you?' *Edelman Insights*, 16/04/2019. Available online: <https://www.edelman.co.uk/insights/disinformation-threats-trust-are-changing-are-you> retrieved on: 21/11/2022.

<sup>173</sup> By providing 'social support'.

<sup>174</sup> A good example of this is illustrated in the findings of an investigation into the Leave.EU campaign. Outgroup bias was manipulated in the 'leveraging of an artificial enemy'. See 'Research on Leave.EU and Cambridge Analytica strategy published', UK Parliament Committees. Available from: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/378/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/news/103479/research-on-leaveeu-and-cambridge-analytica-strategy-published/> retrieved on: 22/11/2022.

<sup>175</sup> See Ro'ee Levy, 'Social Media, News Consumption and Polarisation: Evidence from a Field Experiment', *American Economic Review* Vol. 111:3 (March 2021), pp. 831-871. Available online: <https://pubs.aeaweb.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/aer.20191777> retrieved on: 24/11/2022.

<sup>176</sup> This refers to Sunstein's findings, discussed in his book *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>177</sup> This has presented in a number of ways. In terms of anti-vaccination sentiments, see Jeffery S Barrett et al, 'Considerations for addressing anti-vaccination campaigns: How did we get here and what can we do about it?', *Clinical and Translational Science* Vol. 15:6 (June 2022). Available online: <https://ascpt.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/cts.13273> retrieved on: 21/11/2022. Another example is a popular conspiracy theory that claims all illness is generated by 'toxins' and that microorganisms that generate disease do not exist. See Tom Cohan's *The Contagion Myth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020) or his website: <https://drtomcowan.com/pages/the-new-biology>

<sup>178</sup> See above (Tom Cohan).

<sup>179</sup> See, for example, 'World Climate Declaration: There is No Climate Emergency', Global Climate Intelligence Group, 27/06/2022. This has been repeatedly taken down, but may still be available at: <https://clintel.org/world-climate-declaration/> retrieved on: 21/11/2022. I have a soft copy of the document, if required.

<sup>180</sup> For example, Professor Martin Pall's document '5G: Great Risk For US, EU and International Health!' available online: <https://peaceinspace.blogs.com/files/5g-emf-hazards--dr-martin-l.-pall--eu-emf2018-6-11us3.pdf> retrieved on: 21/11/2022.



scholars consider the present to be the ‘post-truth era’.<sup>181</sup> In such a world, the ability to manipulate emotions confers far greater power than the ability, or desire, to make concrete change occur. As a result, it has become difficult for many to know what is real; and it is becoming difficult for some to care. The OED’s definition of post-truth fails to acknowledge the role that has been played by the way we consume information: appeals to emotion garner ‘clicks’.

Zuboff remarks that the birth of ‘totalitarianism’ presented an uninterpretable new precedent; a reality for which there was not sufficient nor usefully descriptive language – she might equally have used the nuclear bomb.<sup>182</sup> She makes this observation in parallel with what she has termed the ‘instrumentarian’ power of today’s marketing model, which bases itself on its ability to micro-target consumers.<sup>183</sup> In *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, she argues that it is because there is no precedent nor comparable phenomenon that the surveillance model has evaded contestation and legislation, observing that prior to its emergence, privacy and autonomy were greater concerns among modern populations.<sup>184</sup> Her concerns are necessarily general; she argues that this imposition on people’s rights to privacy and autonomy – and ultimately and connectedly to intellectual and behavioural freedom – is inhumane; comparing the impact of the first and second industrial revolutions on the natural world with the threat to ‘human nature’ posed by the digital revolution.<sup>185</sup> Like Dewey, she is concerned by democracy’s fragility in the face of such power; the recent events discussed in Part Three suggest that her fears are founded. One of the greatest difficulties in attempting to mitigate against the dangers she outlines is the impossibility of creating legislation with which to protect populations and democracies, since this would either necessitate erasing, or criminalising, the vast number of subsidiaries of the surveillance model (for example, algorithm-driven social media, streaming services and online shopping, all of which are hugely popular) or greater surveillance by state governments, which is obviously undesirable. Whereas Lippmann understood that his proposals were coercive and argued to use them for good, and to mitigate

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<sup>181</sup> The OED’s definition of ‘post-truth’ is: ‘Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping political debate or public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, available from: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/58609044> retrieved on: 21/11/2022.

<sup>182</sup> Karl Popper would disagree with her, arguing that Plato’s *Republic* designs a totalitarian state. *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>183</sup> ‘Instrumentarian’ is intended to imply the conversion of the consumer, or user, into an instrument with which to make profit, as opposed to their being an autonomous and ‘free’ individual.

<sup>184</sup> She argues that the negative response to Skinner’s *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (which argues that Western conceptions of freedom and autonomy hinder cultural progress, and, interestingly, argues for the ‘engineering’ of human behaviour) is indicative of this shift. Zuboff, pp. 152-153, for example.

<sup>185</sup> Zuboff, p. 8.



against their exploitation through a system of audited objectivity, the behavioural manipulation used today is covertly coercive, vulnerable to exploitation, and has no such inbuilt protective systems. Zuboff finds this to be an affront to autonomy, to freedom and democracy: just as Chomsky, and others, found Lippmann's somewhat more honest and benignly intended proposals to be.

Today's reality is a strange combination of 'engineered consent',<sup>186</sup> in which psychological and cognitive fallibilities can be exploited hyper-successfully through micro-targeting; and something that resembles a dystopian version of Lippmann's proposed technocracy: but instead of harnessing information about populations' behaviour and needs in order to help improve and provide for societies, data is harvested for profit, directly and indirectly.<sup>187</sup> One of Lippmann's proposals, however, still has great utility: the 'social knowledge' that has provided scholars in the intervening decades with a more in-depth 'conceptual picture of the world' Lippmann described, could be used, as he suggests, to improve the educational process and better mitigate the potential damage of the 'surveillance' model.<sup>188</sup>

## Proposal

As Russell and Dewey argued, in order for mankind to continue to progress positively, it is necessary for publics to attain a greater understanding of themselves, of their societies, and of thinking: for populations to have 'freed intelligence', unrestricted by dogmatic or 'faulty' thinking.

The study's proposed model lays particular weight on the desire to achieve greater 'objectivity' when considering one's own beliefs and assumptions. Rather than considering 'critical thinking' to be something that is only necessary in 'goal-directed' thinking,<sup>189</sup> in light of the contemporary informational environment, it seems logical that we learn to recognise our subjective blind-spots when dealing with information in most contexts, particularly when using the Internet – i.e. to seek an objective and metacognitive outlook in a far broader range of

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<sup>186</sup> Bernays' re-engineering of Lippmann's 'manufactured consent', for application in propaganda and profitmaking contexts.

<sup>187</sup> Directly, through algorithm driven marketing, and indirectly, as a product of the same mechanism being used to maintain a users' attention – and therefore provide more opportunity to advertise to them.

<sup>188</sup> *Public Opinion*, p. 408.

<sup>189</sup> For example, Diane F Halpern, 'Teaching Critical Thinking for Transfer Across Domains: Dispositions, Skills, Structure Training, and Metacognitive Monitoring', *American Psychologist* Vol. 53:4 (April 1998), pp. 449-455. Available from: <https://oce.ovid.com/article/00000487-199804000-00031/HTML> retrieved on: 22/12/2022.

mental activities. Also, in alignment with the models discussed in the introduction, particular attention has been paid to ‘honest[y] in facing personal biases’, ‘open-mindedness’ and ‘flexibility’; as well as the elements of cooperation and adaptability in Sternberg’s model of ‘adaptive intelligence’.<sup>190</sup> It might be argued that the approach described presently more closely resembles Dewey’s ‘reflective thinking’ or Kahneman’s ‘system two thinking’, although both of these can be regarded as forms of, or ways of interpreting, ‘critical thinking’.<sup>191</sup> The important differences between this proposal and these models are its focus on the recognition of the validity of differing perspectives, its intention to address prejudice and intolerance, and its interdisciplinary character. The former two align with Russell’s feelings that ‘we have to learn a kind of tolerance’; and Čapek’s feelings about the importance of ‘fraternity and diversity’.

Recently, the Tony Blair Institute wrote that the British education system was ‘no longer fit for purpose’. Their argument resides largely in the problem of the examination system, but its rationale points to the increasing power of ‘AI and automation’, and to the ‘profound[ly] alter[ations]’ occurring in human societies as a consequence of the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’.<sup>192</sup> Businesses worldwide have also asserted the importance of nurturing ‘critical thinking’ skills in education.<sup>193</sup> Despite this, the education system in the UK is becoming less able to develop these skills, with many teachers feeling that they are provided with insufficient training or materials with which to teach them.<sup>194</sup> In the 2013 UK education reform, many qualifications were made entirely exam-based, making the learning of GCSE subjects more memory- than research and argument skills-based.<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, teachers are

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<sup>190</sup> Peter A. Facione, ‘Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction: The Delphi Report’, Educational Resources Information Centre (1990), p. 3. Available from: <https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/socialsciences/ppecorino/CT-Expert-Report.pdf> retrieved on: 26/01/2023. Robert Sternberg, ‘Rethinking What We Mean By Intelligence’, *Phi Delta Kappan* Vol. 102:3 (Nov 2020), pp. 37-41. Available from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epdf/10.1177/0031721720970700> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

<sup>191</sup> John Dewey, *How We Think* (New York: DC Heath and Co, 1910); Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2012).

<sup>192</sup> Tony Blair, ‘It’s Time to Scrap GCSEs and A Levels’, *The Telegraph* (23/08/2022). Available online: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/08/23/time-scrap-gcse-a-levels/> retrieved on: 06/09/2022.

<sup>193</sup> Lauren Pitts, ‘Global Critical Thinking Survey: The Results’, *Cambridge Education* (2019). Available from: <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2019/03/07/critical-thinking-survey-results/> retrieved on: 20/12/2022.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Changes to GCSE are described on the UK Government website: ‘Reforms to GCSEs in England from 2015 Summary’, November 2013. Available online: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/529385/2013-11-01-reforms-to-gcse-in-england-from-2015-summary.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/529385/2013-11-01-reforms-to-gcse-in-england-from-2015-summary.pdf) retrieved on: 28/11/2022. Little reference to the scrapping of the A Level is available, however OCR provided an explanation on their website in 2016, available here: <https://ocr.org.uk/administration/support-and-tools/subject-updates/critical-thinking-230916/> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

increasingly trained ‘on-the-job’, meaning they have less access to theoretical training that might provide them with the knowledge and insight with which to integrate awareness of more subtle social and psychological mechanisms into their practice.<sup>196</sup>

In the current economic and political climate, it is unlikely that it would be feasible, nor a priority, to make sweeping changes to the national curriculum. However, as has been illustrated repeatedly in recent years, problems of mis- and disinformation, online manipulation, and the polarising consequences of the informational environment, generate a profound social cost. It is therefore important that solutions to these problems are found; to arm populations against the dangers of the online information environment – which is likely to only become more problematic over time, as technologies improve.<sup>197</sup> This is particularly important in light of increasing concerns about the radicalisation of young people through social media.<sup>198</sup> An uncomplicated, inexpensive and practical solution is therefore necessary.

As the central portion of the study demonstrated, a great many social and political trends and events can be better understood with some insight into human cognition and psychology. These mechanisms might be integrated into the existing curriculum – could become part of the everyday of teaching and learning, so that citizens become familiar with them, aware of them, and ultimately, able to regulate them in their own thinking. Furthermore, through the process of recognising the fallibility of their own thinking and learning to understand the mechanisms by which subjective perspectives are informed, an individual might become better able to recognise and accept the validity of others’ perspectives. Through learning about socialisation and conditioning, it becomes easier to acknowledge that certain beliefs are merely cultural interpretations of reality – neither wrong nor right.<sup>199</sup> It has already been argued that better

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<sup>196</sup> See Joanna McIntyre et al, ‘Silenced voices: the disappearance of the university and the student teacher in teacher education policy discourse in England’, *Research Papers in Education* Vol. 34:2 (2019), pp. 153-168. Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02671522.2017.1402084> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>197</sup> This refers particularly to the increasing ease with which ‘deepfakes’ can be created, improvements to text-to-video AI programmes, and the rapid progress of AI more generally. See, for example, Alex Wilkins, ‘How will AIs that generate videos from text transform media online?’, *New Scientist* (15/11/2022). Available online: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2346939-how-will-ais-that-generate-videos-from-text-transform-media-online/> retrieved on: 28/11/2022. Surveillance technologies also continue to become cheaper to produce and more sophisticated.

<sup>198</sup> For example, see Katerina Vitozzi, ‘Sharp rise in children investigated over far-right links - including youngsters under 10’ *Sky News* 24/11/2020. Available online: <https://news.sky.com/story/sharp-rise-in-children-investigated-over-far-right-links-including-youngsters-under-10-12131565> retrieved on: 08/11/2022. See also Michael Holden, ‘UK Police Warn Younger Children Involved in Far-Right Terrorism’, *Reuters* (17/03/2022). Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-police-warn-younger-children-involved-far-right-terrorism-2022-03-17/> retrieved on: 08/11/2022. Not exhaustive.

<sup>199</sup> This could be aligned with the idea of ‘cultural relativism’, which argues that no cultural worldview is more authentic or privileged than another. I argue that alternative worldview awareness should form part of a more tolerant outlook, as opposed to forming the foundation of a theoretical framework. See Daniel Chandler and Rod

critical thinking might enhance tolerance; thus it might be asserted that this aspect of the model does not differ enormously from more traditional interpretations.<sup>200</sup>

Halpern's research into the teaching of 'critical thinking' and 'thinking skills' demonstrates that explicitness is more effective than implicitness.<sup>201</sup> This research included the teaching and development of metacognition, and thus its findings relate directly to my hypothesis: if individuals are trained to think reflectively about their own thinking processes and how these processes are vulnerable to fallibilities and mistakes, they should become better at recognising these fallibilities, and therefore able come to more critical conclusions. The evidence from research into metacognition appears promising. Metacognition has been found to be practicable and improvable, and should be available to most people, regardless of academic ability.<sup>202</sup> Coupled with the fact that low metacognitive ability is correlated with biased<sup>203</sup> and extreme thinking,<sup>204</sup> it seems logical that this broad-reaching skill should be prioritised, even without the contemporary problem of psychometric targeting.

Metacognition is usually divided into two areas: metacognitive awareness and metacognitive regulation. For the purpose of this proposed model, metacognitive awareness relates to awareness of the mechanisms explored throughout the study: personal constructs/meaning-making and associative cataloguing; the brain's emotional response mechanisms; biases (particularly confirmation bias, however authority bias, among other recognised biases, would also be valuable); cognitive dissonance; social identity and outgroup

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Munday, 'Cultural Relativism', *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* (Oxford: University Press, 2011). Available online: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758-e-597#> retrieved on: 28/11/2022.

<sup>200</sup> Roy Van Den Brink-Budgen, 'Critical Thinking and the Problem of Tolerance' in Wendy Turgeon, *Creativity and the Child: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Oxford: Interdisciplinary Press, 2009), pp. 37-45.

<sup>201</sup> Diane Halpern and Lisa Marin, 'Pedagogy for developing critical thinking in adolescents: Explicit instruction produces greatest gains', *Thinking Skills and Creativity* Vol. 6:1 (2011), pp. 1-13. Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1871187110000313?via%3Dihub> retrieved on: 23/11/2022. See also, Diane Halpern, 'Teaching Critical Thinking for Transfer Across Domains: Dispositions, Skills, Structure Training, and Metacognitive Monitoring', *American Psychologist* Vol. 53:4 (1998), pp. 449-455. Available online: <https://oec.ovid.com/article/00000487-199804000-00031/HTML> retrieved on: 23/11/2022.

<sup>202</sup> See for example Jason Carpenter, Maxine T Sherman et al, 'Domain-General Enhancements of Metacognitive Ability Through Adaptive Training', *Journal of Experimental Psychology* Vol. 148:1 (2019), pp. 51-64. Available online: <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2018-66881-002.pdf> retrieved on: 22/06/2023. Sternberg and Halpern both discuss the difference between classic 'academic' intelligence and metacognitive and related abilities.

<sup>203</sup> Toplak, West and Stanovich, 'The Cognitive Reflection Test as a predictor of performance on heuristics-and biases tasks', *Memory and Cognition* Vol. 39 (2011). Available online: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.3758/s13421-011-0104-1> retrieved on: 10/11/2022.

<sup>204</sup> Max Rollwage, Raymond J. Dolan and Stephen M. Fleming, 'Metacognitive Failure as a Feature of Those Holding Radical Beliefs' *Current Biology* Vol. 28:24 (Dec 2018). Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/dblibweb.rdg.ac.uk/science/article/pii/S0960982218314209> retrieved on: 10/11/2022.

bias; and processes of socialisation/conditioning. Simply put, these accessible and communicable concepts could easily be integrated into the everyday of education: in order that they become things about which every person is aware, upon which every person has thought, in relation to their own perception of the world.

Learners might also be taught to identify logical fallacies such as the ‘ad hominem’ attack, or the straw man argument; and learn to identify when biases are being leveraged for the purpose of a particular narrative. Logical fallacy recognition training is already part of traditional critical thinking syllabi, and teaching learners to recognise outgroup bias should theoretically be similar to learning to recognise and mitigate other kinds of bias. However, whereas the concepts explored throughout the study can be integrated into subjects and draw on their existing content, logical fallacies might instead be modelled using interactions between interlocutors in the classroom.

These concepts and ways of understanding cognition can be simply related to any individual’s subjective experience, and can be relatively easily integrated into curricular subjects, meaning the initial addition of ‘thinking about thinking’ into the educational process could be done with relative simplicity. The value of the interdisciplinarity of the collection of concepts lies not only in its drawing on numerous different areas and their differing perspectives, but in its holistic nature – an outward-growing conceptualisation of thinking and social interaction. All, as has been explored, have the capacity to create barriers to clear thinking and are vulnerable to exploitation, particularly in light of the existence of psychometric profiling.

Through Part Two, I explored how commentators throughout the turbulent twentieth century observed the same psychological and cognitive tendencies in populations that they perceived to have contributed to issues in their time. Part of the reason for this was to illustrate the consistency with which these aspects of human functioning affect the social world. By demonstrating the observance of mechanisms such as confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance in times prior to their description in psychology, I hope to have demonstrated utility and ubiquity of these descriptions, in order to reinforce the idea that there is utility in their being integrated into the education system. While the precision of their descriptions may, over time, be finetuned; unlike certain areas of the curriculum that are taught as fact, these concepts are unlikely to change notably over time, because they have been repeatedly observed over time.

The authors discussed in this thesis shared similar concerns, despite their very different contexts, circumstances, and perspectives. Belloc’s anxiety concerning the partiality of the

press in his time have maintained – and possibly even increased in – relevance since 1919. Lippmann’s observations, that themselves have contributed enormously to the social sciences, all today precipitate similar concerns.<sup>205</sup> However, in today’s reality, the dangers to the public are greater because the informational environment is so much more complex: the way we are informed, or misinformed, is personalised; the ‘pseudo-environment’ is no longer recognisable from individual to individual. Čapek’s belief that ‘fraternity and diversity’ – tolerance and plurality – were of the utmost importance in the modern age certainly have power today. Dewey’s arguments that education serves a primarily social purpose, that it was imperative that education maintain relevance and prepare young people for a quickly changing and unpredictable world, and that it was a ‘process’, not a ‘preparation’ for living, are perhaps even more important in the ‘post-truth’ era.

Unwin’s decision to maintain relative political neutrality in his publishing programme, writing and correspondence was a powerful one. While it might be speculated that his partisanship was more left- than right-leaning; evidenced by his publishing relationship with the Fabian Society and various trade unions, his membership of the 1917 Club, and his friendship with such figures as Ramsay MacDonald; very rarely if ever did he make direct reference to his party-political opinion or allegiance. This might have been connected with his feelings about religion – that these were private views, not to be shared or imposed on others. This itself is a principle worthy of emulation and admiration, and one that is particularly interesting in the modern context. As discussed throughout part three of the study, the contemporary world is riven with fracturing, particularly along partisan lines. Furthermore, in the British context, it has become increasingly difficult for citizens to criticise, or hold to account, the governing party. It is with these observations in mind that the decision to attempt to maintain a non-partisan scientific objectivity was made. This is also responsible for the decision to avoid explicit engagement with the philosophy of Dewey or Russell: both can be perceived in a partisan light (this decision was also influenced by the already broad scope of the study, and the desire to restrict the interdisciplinarity to those disciplines that have informed the study most heavily). It is also the justification for the avoidance of explicit engagement

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<sup>205</sup> Leonard S. Newman, for example describes *Public Opinion* as ‘a seminal work in the area of cognitive social psychology’. ‘Was Walter Lippmann interested in Stereotyping?’ *History of Psychology* Vol. 12:1 (Feb 2009), pp. 7-18. Available from: <https://oce.ovid.com/article/00120507-200902000-00002/HTML> retrieved on: 26/01/2023.

with the work of Freire,<sup>206</sup> Bourdieu,<sup>207</sup> or Jost.<sup>208</sup> As the BBC continues to be excoriated for its apparent partiality, anyone wishing to propose methods by which to approach society's most complex difficulties must attempt to restrict their argument to non-partisan, factual assertion. Thus, this work has sought to experiment with an intertwining of those human and social sciences that attempt to draw on objective observation – as opposed to theoretical speculation that might be interpreted as partisan in nature – and literary studies and book history.

The final section intended to present the present-day context in such a way as to demonstrate the relevance of all that came before it. Each commentator remarked, in their particular way and in relation to their particular interest, upon how a tendency or combination of tendencies in human behaviour and thinking adversely affect human individuals and societies in their day-to-day functioning. For Belloc, this was the tendency towards confirmation bias in particular; for Lippmann, oversimplification. For both Dewey and Russell, the solution seemed clear: an education system designed to serve its participants, and to better prepare them for the world as it is, and as it will be.

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<sup>206</sup> This particularly refers to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin, 1996). There are parallels in my proposals with Freire's concept of 'conscientização', or roughly, 'critical consciousness'. However, this is a highly political parallel to draw, and it was therefore deemed not useful to the study.

<sup>207</sup> This refers to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', which is a useful means with which to look at the impact of social structures on a person's interactions with the social world. This also has political connotations that would not have been useful in the context of the study. See 'Habitus', *SAGE Encyclopaedia of Children and Childhood Studies*. Available from:

<https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageukcacs/habitus/0?institutionId=158> retrieved on: 12/01/2023.

<sup>208</sup> This refers to 'System Justification Theory', discussed in Appendix One. See John T Jost and Mahzarin R Banaji, 'The role of stereotyping in system-justification and the production of false consciousness', *British Journal of Social Psychology* Vol. 33:1 (March 1994), pp. 1-27. Available from: <https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1994.tb01008.x> retrieved on: 12/01/2023.



## **Appendix:**

### **Additional Material on Cognitive Mechanisms**

#### **Confirmation Bias**

The conceptualisation of ‘confirmation bias’ is generally attributed to Peter Wason, however, this tendency has been alluded to throughout documented thought, and was notably observed by, for example, Dante and Thucydides.<sup>1</sup> Wason is also relevant to this study because he played an important role in the shift in psychology towards understanding that humans are not naturally logical or reason-driven.<sup>2</sup> It can therefore be extrapolated that logic and reason must be encouraged, taught and nurtured in populations in a way that is measurable and transferable, as has been proposed by others.<sup>3</sup> Despite the concept’s association with Wason, he is not mentioned in the *Britannica* article on confirmation bias, probably in part because the term was not used when describing his initial experiments. The concept has been developed and engaged with consistently since. For this reason, and because the premise is so well-accepted and relatively simple, while Wason’s work is acknowledged, more modern research has informed this study.

Social media has been attributed some blame for exaggeration of confirmation bias through the ‘echo-chamber effect’. Surrounding one’s virtual ‘self’ with those who share ideological beliefs and world-views enhances consensus bias and can lead to the belief that one’s ideas are more widely shared than they truly are. The pervasiveness of social media therefore plays a major role in the pervasiveness of problematic (i.e., factually incorrect) confirmation biases.

Modern research has also identified a number of other common biases, that are culturally, psychologically, or neurologically driven. These include, but are not limited to, authority bias (the overt attribution of veracity to the claims of people in ostensible authority,

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in R. Dubroff, ‘Confirmation bias, conflicts of interest and cholesterol guidance: can we trust expert opinions?’, *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine* (2018), p. 687. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/qjmed/hcx213> retrieved on: 08/01/2022. The article interestingly points out the prevalence of confirmation bias among experts in medicine.

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion on this, see Jonathan St B. T. Evans, ‘Reasoning, biases and dual processes: The lasting impact of Wason (1960)’, *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* Vol. 69:10 (2016). Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17470218.2014.914547> retrieved on: 29/01/2021.

<sup>3</sup> The importance of measurability of reasoning ability in assessment of critical ability discussed in Kristoffer Larsson, ‘Understanding and teaching critical thinking – A new approach’, *International Journal of Education Research* Vol. 84 (2017), pp. 32-42. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2017.05.004> retrieved on: 29/01/2021.



this can be hierarchical or professional authority), status quo bias (the tendency to dislike change and consider any alteration to the status quo to be a loss, whether or not it is demonstrably positive) and blind spot bias (the belief that one is un-biased). Also of particular note is the more recently discovered (although not as prevalent as previously thought<sup>4</sup>) ‘Backfire Effect’ (related to ‘attitude polarisation’, which Mercier and Sperber associate with motivated reasoning<sup>5</sup>). This is an extreme version of confirmation bias, in which a person will significantly enhance their confirmation bias in response to contradictory information – faith in the original (incorrect) cognitions or assumptions is strengthened. Instances have been documented in which this can be observed physically, in a ‘fight or flight’ like response. This is of utility because it is demonstrative of the power of confirmation bias (and, indeed, of the relationship between abstract, cognitive experience and concrete, physical experience).<sup>6</sup>

### Social Identity and Polarisation

Confirmation bias and the interplay of ingroups and outgroups are both associated with polarisation and the increased danger of extremism, since the ‘echo-chamber’ ‘encourages the aggregation of likeminded people [...] enforc[ing] group polarisation’.<sup>7</sup> Cass Sunstein’s *Going To Extremes* discusses research demonstrating the tendency for individuals to adopt more extreme views when surrounded by those holding stronger views than themselves.<sup>8</sup> ‘Echo chambers’ and polarisation of the sort that Sunstein discusses are both inextricable from social identity, in that they are directly associated with alignment with in-groups and the psychological comfort this provides the individual.

Social identity theory makes sense from an anthro-historical perspective: early humans travelled in groups, and other groups tended to represent a threat to security and resources. Tajfel uses the terms ‘ingroup’ for those who are members of groups with whom we align

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<sup>4</sup> See Amy Sippitt, ‘Does “the backfire effect” exist – and does it matter for factcheckers?’ *FullFact* (independent fact checking charity). Available from: <https://fullfact.org/blog/2019/mar/does-backfire-effect-exist/> retrieved on: 08/01/2022.

<sup>5</sup> See Dan Sperber and Hugo Mercier, ‘Why do humans reason? Arguments for an argumentative theory’ *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* Vol. 34 (2011), p. 10. Available online: <https://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/MercierSperberWhydohumansreason.pdf> retrieved on: 03/01/2022.

<sup>6</sup> There is extensive work on the ‘Backfire Effect’. For more information, see Brendon Nyhan and Jason Reifler, ‘Why Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions’ *Political Behaviour* Vol. 32 (2010), pp. 303-330. Available online: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11109-010-9112-2> retrieved on: 31/12/2021. See also Matthew Wills, ‘The Backfire Effect’, *JStor Daily* (03/04/2017). Available from: <https://daily.jstor.org/the-backfire-effect/> retrieved on: 31/12/2021.

<sup>7</sup> Del Vicario et al, ‘Modelling confirmation bias and polarisation’ *Scientific Reports (Nature Publishing Group)* Vol. 7 (2017), pp. 1-7. Available online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/srep40391> retrieved on: 29/01/2021.

<sup>8</sup> Cass Sunstein, *Going to Extremes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

ourselves, and ‘outgroup’ for those who are characterised in opposition to our ingroups. Tajfel observed that we positively characterise those in our ingroups and negatively characterise those in our outgroups.<sup>9</sup>

### **Cognitive Dissonance**

Festinger explores and describes numerous forms of cognitive dissonance, and acknowledges a variety of ways in which consonance (without behavioural or cognitive change that acknowledges ‘true reality’, i.e., mitigation used to preserve the problematic cognition) can be achieved. Among the most common of these are the addition of new cognitive elements, total avoidance of engagement with the dissonance-promoting idea (similar to confirmation bias) and ‘seeking social support’. The latter is of particular interest in the final chapter, which considers the contemporary world and the use of online interaction to spread problematic ideas. As Festinger put it, ‘if everyone believes it, it most certainly must be true’.<sup>10</sup> Cognitive dissonance pertaining to the problem of climate change is a particularly salient example, discussed in Part Three. Also of particular interest are the more abstract instances of cognitive dissonance Festinger describes, such as the experience of fear (described as a ‘cognition’) producing false cognitions about concrete reality (i.e., things to be feared) in order to justify the feeling of fear.

Describing it simply as an aversive state it might lead to the misinterpretation that it is a phenomenon that is predominantly avoided by achieving positive or constructive cognitive consistency (i.e., by disregarding false information or discontinuing negative behaviours). However, rather than leading to the achievement of greater clarity and criticality, cognitive dissonance more often leads to measures that create ‘false’ consistencies in a person’s cognitions. As Festinger observes, a subject is more likely to wish to maintain cognitions that align with their worldview, identity and in-group beliefs, or allow them to continue behaviours with which they align those things, and often such cognitions are by their very nature (in that they serve a self-fulfilling, rather than a logical, function) compromised.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Henri Tajfel, M G Billig, et al, ‘Social Categorisation and Intergroup Behaviour’ *European Journal of Social Psychology* Vol. 1:2 (April 1971), pp. 149-291. See also Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation Between Social Groups* (London: Published in cooperation with European Association of Experimental Social Psychology by Academic Press, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Festinger, p. 200.

<sup>11</sup> Festinger explains this with an example related to smoking cigarettes, p. 22.

Cognitive dissonance is highly pervasive, and of extreme importance to this thesis, because it very clearly demonstrates the un-criticality of human thinking.

## **Rationality**

Rationality is a popular area of research and public interest, as demonstrated by books such as Steven Pinker's *Rationality* (2021).<sup>12</sup> It is a broad subject with obvious utility in a study of 'compromised' thinking. However, because of its abstract nature and its inextricability from the more specific concepts discussed, it is an area that is deliberately neglected in the body of the thesis. The main argument for its absence is the complexity of the subject. The focus throughout has been deliberately on concepts that can be easily communicated in an educational context, in order to make the argument that these insights into cognition might easily be integrated into everyday lessons in primary and (particularly) secondary school. My work has, however, been informed and influenced particularly by Mercier and Sperber's work on the argumentative function of reasoning<sup>13</sup> and Cushman's exploration of the concept of 'rationalising' in contrast with 'rationality'.<sup>14</sup> It was therefore important to include an acknowledgement of this area of my research despite the absence of direct engagement with it.

Mercier and Sperber argue that, rather than being a function of logical thinking, human reasoning is more often a function of argumentation. They assert that:

much evidence shows that reasoning often leads to epistemic distortions and poor decisions. [...] Our hypothesis is that the function of reasoning is argumentative. It is to devise and evaluate arguments intended to persuade.<sup>15</sup>

For Mercier and Sperber (and others), therefore, what appears to the individual (and, indeed, what is intended to appear to the interlocutor) to be rational is in fact driven by the motivations of the specific context and dialogue. Clearly this hypothesis applies to specific instances, however an argumentative function of reasoning also has ramifications for internal reasoning, since once a person has created and presented their argumentative reasoning, the logic such assertions are based on has an inherently ego-centric cognitive character and function.

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<sup>12</sup> Steven Pinker, *Rationality: What it is, Why it Seems Scarce, and Why it Matters* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Dan Sperber and Hugo Mercier, 'Why Do Humans Reason? Arguments for an Argumentative Theory', *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* Vol. 34 (2011), pp. 57-111. Available online: <https://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/MercierSperberWhydohumansreason.pdf> retrieved on: 30/12/2021.

<sup>14</sup> Fiery Cushman, 'Rationalisation is Rational', *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* Vol. 43 (2020). Available online: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/behavioral-and-brain-sciences/article/rationalization-is-rational/2A13B99ED09BD802C0924D3681FEC55B> retrieved on: 30/12/2021.

<sup>15</sup> Mercier and Sperber, p. 57.

This hypothesis is supported by Cushman. He argues that rationalisation is distinct from rational action. Rationalisation he defines as a post-hoc process an individual undertakes in order to make their behaviour or interactions appear logical to themselves. Thus, rationalisation serves an ego-protective function. He writes:

Rationalization occurs when a person has performed an action and then concocts the beliefs and desires that would have made it rational. Then, people often adjust their own beliefs and desires to match the concocted ones.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, according to Mercier and Sperber, and Cushman, what appears ‘rational’ or reasoned in everyday behaviour and interaction is in fact largely based on the internal, psychological needs of the individual, rather than on logic and ‘true’ rationality. Importantly, Cushman argues that post-rationalisation should not necessarily be regarded as ‘irrational’, and proposes different ways of interpreting what rationality ‘is’. It is partly because of this difficulty that the concept is largely avoided.

According to Cushman, the main processes that compromise rational thinking are adaptive in function and can be described (broadly) as ‘instincts’, ‘habits’, ‘norms’; and ‘beliefs and desires’. He demonstrates the interplay between beliefs and desires and ‘rational action’ or ‘rationalisation’ using diagrams, and demonstrates the effect the former trio have on action. This list is deliberately reductive, and each term might be aligned with various aspects of cognition considered in this thesis. Instincts, habits and norms can be socially created phenomena: different social instincts and different norms will operate in different cultural contexts. Instinct is also associated with the brain’s makeup – often what is ‘instinctual’ is in fact governed by pre-programmed hormonal responses to stimuli, by an individual’s neural ‘programming’. Habits can be interpreted both as behaviours that have been learnt in a social setting and ‘habits of thinking’, i.e., ways of interpreting information that have become habitual. Belief is not synonymous with knowledge, and desire is often ego-centric, and therefore Cushman’s argument can be interpreted to imply that often the apparently logical elements of a person’s thinking and behaviour are in fact governed by problematic interpretations of reality. Both models utilise other concepts dealt with throughout the thesis, with specific emphasis on cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, it is important and useful to note that, on logical reasoning tasks such as the Wason Selection Task, higher numbers of people are able to quickly come to correct

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<sup>16</sup> Cushman, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Mercier and Sperber in fact attribute a great deal of confirmation bias’s pervasiveness to ‘motivated reasoning’, i.e., the argumentative function of reasoning. See Sperber and Mercier, ‘Why Do Humans Reason’.

conclusions when the information is framed in terms that relate to their experience. For example, a version of the task that uses alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks on one side and ages on the other side of the cards is far easier for participants to answer correctly.<sup>18</sup> This is important because it supports the general argument that humans are perspective-driven, and there is great social utility in encouraging a broader outlook, by exposing people to alternative worldviews and interpretations of reality.

### System Justification Theory

A number of the concepts from the cognitive and social sciences discussed in this thesis are also included in Jost's System Justification Theory (SJT) model, and it is therefore important to acknowledge this association.<sup>19</sup> My work does not directly address inequality, however – although its longer-term intentions would incidentally address inequality by means of the intention that a more positive form of intersubjectivity might be achievable through greater focus on thought and the mind in education. The study already deals with a relatively broad range of issues and this has meant that, necessarily and by design, some social issues have been neglected.

Whereas SJT does explore faulty thinking and compromised interactions in the social world, its focus is very specific and it is analytical in nature, as opposed to progress- and education-orientated. There is a very clear relationship between the two arguments, however: that individuals are 'motivated – for psychological reasons' to (universally) behave in ways that are counter-productive for their achievement of self-actualisation. However, my argument does not focus on how these psychological mechanisms 'legitimize [...] social systems' and 'accept inequality and other pervasive [social] shortcomings'.<sup>20</sup> Rather, my work argues that those mechanisms (alongside other concepts and ideas, such as my focus on neuroscience and cognitive studies, and metacognition) are responsible for faulty interaction with people and information that is more broadly counter-productive even than this, and my focus deliberately

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Richard A Griggs and James R Cox, 'The Elusive Thematic-Materials Effect in Wason's Selection Tasks', *British Journal of Psychology* Vol. 73:3 (Aug 1982), pp. 407-420. Available from: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1293705855/fulltextPDF/F6161EF235E54D32PQ> retrieved on: 28/01/2023.

<sup>19</sup> John T Jost and Mahzarin R Banaji, 'The role of stereotyping in system-justification and the production of false consciousness', *British Journal of Social Psychology* Vol. 33:1 (March 1994), pp. 1-27. Available from: <https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1994.tb01008.x> retrieved on: 12/01/2023.

<sup>20</sup> Jojanneke van der Toorn and John T Jost, 'Twenty years of system justification theory: Introduction to the special issue on "Ideology and system justification processes"', *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* Vol.17:4 (2014), p. 413. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1368430214531509> retrieved on: 30/12/2021.

avoids social inequality. This is in part because, implicit in my argument, is the premise that with education about these mechanisms such inequalities might be addressed, and in part because the general social focus of this thesis looks not directly at social inequality but at manipulation, belief in false information, and prejudice and intolerance (which are, of course, related to inequality). Due to the nature of the thesis's argument, in that it seeks to be as politically impartial and objective as possible, choosing to adhere too strongly to SJT's interpretation of these mechanisms would serve to over-complicate, and to some degree undermine, its intentions. Jost's theoretical framework seeks primarily to explain, analyse, and understand, and is limited to social-scientific theory. My work does seek to explain and understand, but at its heart is the hypothesis that, by educating publics about these concepts, their efficacy in either the context of compromising interaction with information and peers, or in their effect on social status quo maintenance (as an extrapolation from the relationship between the two frameworks) may be lessened.

Despite its irrelevance to this particular thesis, SJT has utility in further work in this field. It would, however, have been counter-productive to engage heavily with Jost's work in this already somewhat complex thesis.

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| AUC 91/3  | AU FSC 21/132 | AUC 100/14   | AUC 958/2 |
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| AUC 31/12 | AUC 806/5     | AUC 315/12/2 | AUC 52/27 |

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| AUC 36/13     | AUC 5/28       | AUC 199/6/1    | AUC 54/25   |
| AUC 64/15     | AUC 1/10       | AUC 70/1       | AUC 121/5   |
| AUC 556/10    | AUC 29/3       | AUC 34/5       | AUC 102/4   |
| AUC 243/6     | AUC 898/2/2    | AUC 864/18     | AUC 854/6   |
| AUC 853/3     | AUC 1185/10    | AUC 755/6      | AUC 710/22  |
| AUC 776/15    | AUC 1183/4     | AUC 119/3      | AUC 248/3   |
| AU FSC 3/17   | AUC 843/8      | AUC 38/7       | AUC 44/23   |
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| AURR6/4/03    | AURR 8/2/36    | AURR 5/5/21    | AURR 5/2/01 |
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