

ARTICLES ON EDUCATION AND SOCIAL STUDIES

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Published by Beta Publishing

Beta Publishing, 16 City Business Centre, Suite 62, Hyde Street, Winchester SO23 7TA

SECTION 1 – SOCIAL STUDIES

There is no common theme to the articles in this section, and therefore it would be difficult for me to write an introduction. So I think it's best to get right on into the fray.

ARTICLE 1

THE NEED TO FAIL

I have discovered that we have a desperate need to fail. That's right, fail. Of course, we want to succeed, but our actual need is to fail.

But there is some good news. I have written elsewhere that according to psychoanalytic theory, we all, as children, needed a ‘good enough mother’ (but not a ‘perfect’ one). And also that we just need one or two ‘fairly satisfactory’ relationships or friendships (but not necessarily very satisfactory ones).

Well, my feeling is that there is an equivalence with these other things, and with our need to fail. In other words, we don’t need to fail totally.

We can (and must try to) be a success in the things that matter in life. But to fulfil our need to fail, we must find a few things which we bungle at. The good news is that these things we must find to be inferior or beaten at needn’t be important things.

One of the secrets of a successful life is to allow oneself to fail at a few, unimportant things, to fulfil our need to fail. And this will leave us free to succeed in the big things.

But if we don't have that 'escape route' (failing at some unimportant things), we will find ourselves, driven by our need to fail, botching the big things.

There are a lot of people who won't like me saying what follows – but I'll go ahead anyway.

Professional sportsmen and women are driven by their desire to succeed in sport. I'm not arguing with that. But for most of the rest of us, it is a different story. Those of us who play, or have played, for example, football for an amateur Sunday league side – perhaps a

works team – do not have the same outlook as the Harry Kane's of this world.

It is not the end of the world if we lose!

In fact, I believe that playing some sport where, quite frankly, our team (or us individually) isn't too successful, is one of the ideal ways we can satisfy our need to fail.

Looking back, I realise that when playing games like chess, or scrabble, or anything like that, I deliberately (but unconsciously) move into non – thinking mode.

It's not just that I 'switch off' every time I play a game. I genuinely don't have the kind of mind that would make me potentially good at these things.

For that reason it'd probably be a good idea for me to play these sorts of games more often. Losing – as I inevitably would (if my opponent knew what he/she was doing) – would be good for me.

There is an unfortunate trend in life. A higher and higher proportion of people are taking games and, particularly, sport far too seriously. Of course, as I've already implied, if you're a top professional footballer in the premiership earning £150,000 a week or even more, then it is serious. You'll have to find something else to fail at!

I've got to be careful here. I'm not saying you should not try to do your best. I believe that (most of the time) you should. If everyone participating in sport deliberately set out to

lose, sport would, of course, lose its meaning.

All I'm saying is that it's important to find a few things which, even when you try your best at them, you are not all that good – and maybe some sport will help to fulfil that role for you. The mistake I have sometimes made in the past, is simply to avoid doing anything that I didn't feel I had a flair for.

What I'm saying is that, ideally, one should do a few things about which someone might say about us “Well he/she tries hard, but they're really not very good at it.”

But hopefully, it will not be about your main career that people will say that about you.

The biggest social / cultural change of the last decade – particularly among young people – was the ‘no-pants’ craze, which lasted throughout much of the 2010s. So I make no apologies about including several articles about this, under the heading ‘Some Slightly Naughty Articles’.

SOME SLIGHTLY NAUGHTY ARTICLES

ARTICLE 2

A TOUR OF THE COUNTRY

One year several years ago (well, it was 2017 actually) I went on a bit of a tour of the country

(lasting almost the whole year altogether), spending weeks in a Hotel at one place, before moving on to the next, etc. I must have stayed in over 15 places, for instance Torquay and Bristol in the South West, Bournemouth and Reading in the South, Nottingham in the Midlands, and even York in the North.

And I was pleased to discover that the ‘no-pants’ craze was happening just about everywhere, especially in the nightclubs.

For some reason the only place it didn’t seem to be happening was Bristol – the girls seemed to still be wearing knickers there.

I even spent a few weeks in Scotland, mainly near Fife. And I was very pleased to see that the girls there were into the ‘no-pants’ craze. Of course, some of the men were wearing

kilts, and as we all know about them – the men wearing kilts have been into the ‘no-pants’ craze for centuries (I believe).

So it was both the men, and now the women – without any underwear.

One experience I remember, which was a bit comical, was in Paignton. I was in a pub which opened late on Fridays and Saturdays, and it was quite busy. I had noticed there 6 or 7 young women at least who were knickerless – they were just the ones I noticed, there were probably more. And I had seen one of these girls ‘showing everything’ several times. She was a very attractive, tall girl, with very dark hair, and she was wearing a denim skirt. And towards the end of the evening I saw her dancing with some bloke (it wasn’t a

nightclub, it was a pub – but there was some dancing).

And I was watching these two dance, and then he grabbed her, and he obviously was going to lift her in the air (probably turning her upside down or something like that). And I saw her remonstrating to him with her arms, and then she urgently said something to him – and then he put her down.

And it was clear to me that she must have said to him – “Don’t do that – I’ve got no panties on.”

And I must admit I found that very comical.

ARTICLE 3

Those were the days

My record, during the course of one night at a nightclub, was 25 fannies, and not one pair of knickers (in sight). That was about twice as many as usual, though. Girls seemed to be falling over themselves to show me ‘what they were made of’. It could have been more (than 25), but you have to be a bit careful with all the bouncers around.

The girls knew what they were doing, as well. When one girl got out of her seat a bit clumsily, she looked all around at everyone who was looking on, and blurted out:

“Ooh, fanny time.”

Well, at least that broke the ice. There had been a momentary silence as everyone took in ‘the sights of the world’ (one girl’s fiery pussy), but now there was quite a bit of laughter and high spirits.

She said “Oh dear, I’m as forgetful as my grandma these days.”

“And long may it continue,” I said, “I’m all for it – this ‘no-pants’ craze. A night at a nightclub is a lot cheaper than a night at a strip club, and the effect is much the same.

Even more so, actually. Amateur pussy revealers can be a bigger turn-on than professional ones!”

The most fannies I saw in one dance at a nightclub was 15, when everyone got down on the floor for “Oops upside your head.” Again, hardly any knickers.

But all that was at least 10 years ago. These days (in 2026) hardly any women even wear skirts.

Most of the women who did that sort of thing (back then) must be in their 30s now.

** See my Erotica books, which are mainly about the ‘no-pants’ craze – look up ‘Chris Burnell’ on Amazon / Books.*

ARTICLE 4

ABOUT A CURRENT CRAZE

Sometimes it seems as if most of the national papers are being run by Mary Whitehouse's granddaughter, or something like that – because they seem to have such 'Victorian' or puritanical attitudes. For instance, they were so fed up about the success of 'Fifty Shades Of Grey' that virtually all the columnists 'got together' (so it seemed) and decided that the best way to attack it was to call it 'Mummy's porn'.

And now, regarding this 'sans culottes' craze which is running rampant: very little is mentioned about it at all (directly). But presumably thinking that to continually

recommend ‘the reverse’ could have some effect, there are quite a few articles recommending ‘big knickers’ – with as much flesh covered up as possible. And it certainly seems to have caught on with Marks and Spencers’ bosses at any rate – when I visited some of their stores recently (during my many trips around my county and beyond), in each of them there were loads of posters advertising ‘big knickers’ in the Ladies department. [BUT (even more recently) M & S seem to have more or less given up on knickers altogether – in their lingerie department there were hardly any – though there were loads of bras.]

** Mary Whitehouse was a prominent anti-porn campaigner back in about the 1970’s.*

ARTICLE 5

A FAIRLY TYPICAL NIGHT IN WETHERSPOONS (RECENTLY)

Quite recently, I was in Wetherspoons (the town shall remain nameless), and there was a young woman near me who had her skirt literally up round her waist, and she had no panties on. So she was showing everything - depending on what angle you were to her. She was with a group of friends, some men and some women.

As it happened, I was not at the best angle to see all that much really, so I changed chairs to get a better view.

I enjoyed this better view for several minutes, but then a couple of men from the group (one of whom might have been her boyfriend), pulled their chairs up by me (sitting between me and the young woman, spoiling my view in the process), and they proceeded to lecture me – why what I did was wrong.

I said “Yeah, but you can’t blame me for having a bit of a look, can you? – I’m not gay, you know.”

One of the men said “Yeah, but you shouldn’t actually change chairs to do so, should you?”

And so it went on.

ARTICLE 6

THESE ARE THE DAYS

(This article was written in about 2016 – in fact most of the non-fiction articles about the ‘no-pants’ craze were written in the last decade.)

In the towns that I visit (I visit most of the towns in my county – and a bit beyond), on a sunny day in the summer, there are such a lot of ‘sights to behold’, whilst this ‘no-pants’ craze carries on.

For instance, sitting outside a café or coffee shop for the morning or afternoon, when the town centre is busy (like on a Saturday) you can almost guarantee to see at least a dozen bare bums of attractive young women (and

sometimes the other side too), who are following the fashion of going pantieless, and perhaps wearing light, summer frocks. Just like when I used to go sailing, it is best if there is a bit of a breeze.

(I have rarely missed a Saturday in the summer months doing this, for the past 8 years – since roughly when the ‘no-pants’ craze started, except when it’s pouring with rain.)

ARTICLE 7

PLAYFULLY LIFTING UP A SKIRT

It is true that if I had the choice of sitting near a group of men, or a group of attractive young women (in a pub), I would choose to sit near the women – and ‘see what gives’, and sometimes, quite often actually, something did.

It was frequently the case that just a few, or even maybe only one, out of a group of young women would be knickerless. And often the girls would be joking about this. If I was near enough, I could even hear their banter (about it). And quite frequently one of the girls would

playfully lift up the skirt of the knickerless one (as a bit of a joke), so that for a few seconds there was, shall we say, a great view. Of course, I enjoyed this tremendously. It was far better than watching TV (indoors).

ARTICLE 8

SEX ON THE TRAINS – ANOTHER ‘NO-PANTS’ STORY

Quite frequently I go to London, by train (buying a ticket that includes the Underground).

Very often, if I am on an Underground train between, say, 6.30pm and 9pm on a Friday or Saturday, I find myself sitting opposite a young woman who is showing her pussy.

(Probably on the way to a ‘young peoples’ pub’ or even a party maybe, and wearing such a short dress that she leaves nothing to the

imagination, even if she tries to keep her legs together.)

I must admit that I enjoy these experiences immensely, and often stay on the train for longer than I had originally intended. (When you buy a ticket to London, including the Underground, you can use the Underground as much as you like, there are no restrictions, so this is possible.)

The most amazing experience I had relating to this was on a 'normal' train – not an Underground train. It was on a journey from Reading to Ealing Broadway (about a three quarters of an hour journey). Throughout the whole of it, there was a young woman sitting opposite her mother, and she had quite a short skirt, had no panties on, and was sitting with her legs wide apart. All the time she was

talking to her mother, animatedly, about some bland subject (I cannot now remember what the subject was). I was sitting behind the mother, and to the left, and had an excellent view.

ARTICLE 9

HOW THINGS HAVE CHANGED

When I was young I worked for an engineering company and therefore there were far more men than women working there. We used to have parties to go to about twice a month on a Saturday, but there were always about 5 times as many men as there were women.

But in the pubs there were lots of women, and these pubs were busy every night.

These days (in my home town anyway) in the pubs things have deteriorated so much. They are only busy on Friday and Saturday nights

now, and then often only after 10. Nearly everyone stays indoors till then.

And though, for a couple of hours anyway, they are very busy, they are just like those parties when I worked for the engineering company – about 5 times as many men as there are women. Goodness knows what all the young women do these days.

But my mother, who is in her eighties, has a care worker a couple of times a day, and a lot of them are young women. And they talk to my Mum about their relationships, and – what I was amazed to hear – it seems that nearly all of them meet their boyfriends online these days. So maybe that explains a lot.

One thing has changed for the better, though. These days quite a lot of young women go out

on a Friday or Saturday night without any knickers on. You don't even have to be particularly observant to notice it. 3 or 4 times a night (typically) it will happen - girl in a short skirt will cross or uncross her legs 4 or 5 feet in front of you, and there she all is. She probably knows you have just seen what she's made of, but doesn't bat an eyelid.

That never ever happened to me when I was in my twenties.

ARTICLE 10

HOW (IN 2010), I FOUND OUT ABOUT THE 'NO-PANTS' CRAZE, AND HOW I KNEW THAT THE COPPERS ALREADY KNEW ALL ABOUT IT

I was in one of my favourite pubs, and I was near enough to a group of girls to be able to overhear their conversation.

One of the women (must have been mid-twenties, I should think), was recounting getting drunk the previous weekend.

She had been to a nightclub, with at least one of the women in the group, and she was saying how she got ‘absolutely paralytic’. She said that after the nightclub closed, she was outside the nightclub, ‘rolling around on the ground’. She recounted how she had almost got arrested. And then she came out with:

“And I had no knickers on.”

I almost choked on my lager. Suffice to say that I started going to nightclubs (again). Sure enough, I discovered that it had become a ‘fashion’ for young women to go out weekends without any panties on - and it remained so for quite a few years.

An aside. Right from the start of my adulthood, until I was nearly middle-aged, I had been ‘quite religious’, and at the church I

went to, the vicar was always going on about ‘fornication’, ‘fornication’, ‘fornication’ – preaching that the Christian way was ‘no sex before marriage’.

And I wasn’t that much of a rebel in those days. I hadn’t totally abstained though – I had ‘strayed’. But I was certainly only in ‘single figures’ – if you see what I mean.

But after I overheard this conversation in the pub, with the young woman saying that she had been knickerless the previous weekend, I started to frequent nightclubs again (very regularly)

That really was a revelation.

I discovered that she very much wasn't alone in this; and most of the girls really didn't seem to mind what the men saw.

There were (at a rough guess) about 300 clubbers at the nightclub on a typical Friday or Saturday. Possibly a third of the women were wearing skirts or dresses (very often quite short).

Admittedly I didn't see much on the dancefloor – when the women were standing up (dancing), their skirts or dresses were long enough to cover their 'privates'.

But when they were having a break from dancing, and sitting down on the plush seating that was all about, it was a different story. As I said, the women really didn't seem to care what the men saw.* (Which was

indeed ‘quite a lot’, to say the least.) And if you saw anything, you far more often saw fanny than knickers!

You really didn’t know where to look!

In fact if you count ‘seeing’ (without necessarily ‘doing anything about it’), it was very much ‘double figures’ every flippin night (every Friday and Saturday – and quite a lot of Thursdays too) for very nearly a decade – in quite a few towns (mainly) in Hampshire.

PS I suppose it wasn’t that surprising that the women ‘didn’t seem to mind what the men saw’. A few years previous to this, I had been taking a bus quite often in the late afternoon – just when the schoolkids came out of school. Often there was a group of 13 or 14 year olds sitting at the back of the bus (a mixed group of

boys and girls), talking quite loudly, and one of the main things they were talking about was sharing naked pictures of each other. [Obviously, a few years on, it didn't make that much difference 'what the men saw' – if for years they had been sharing naked pictures of each other anyway!]

ARTICLE 11

THE BAD NEWS AND THE GOOD NEWS

If you're attacked by anyone (or by a group of people) – [and this is the 'bad news', by the way] – there is usually good news too.

The good news is that the chances are you are making a very positive impact on someone (or again, possibly a group of people).

So, whilst you may have to lick your wounds as a result of the attacks, there is probably something that you can pat yourself on the back, even congratulate yourself for – perhaps even it is something you don't know about.

This is because most attacks are due to jealousy. And this can only happen if you're making a very positive impression (or something equivalent) in some respect – and probably in a way that matters.

PS I don't just mean a violent (physical) attack – there are many forms.

ARTICLE 12

MAN MAY (BASICALLY) BE 'A FIGHTER' – BUT AGAINST WHOM – OR WHAT?

[I believe it is good to keep 'in tune' with our ancestors that go right back. They were closer to nature, had their finger more on the pulse, than us – us with our incredibly comfy lifestyles. If we can find some ways that are practical and reasonable to emulate their lifestyle in certain respects, I believe we will increase our 'life force' or energy level. In this case, other benefits may ensue too.]

I think we have to accept that men (probably less so most women), have a very powerful

aggressive drive, which has to be 'accommodated' (shall we say) – otherwise some form of 'emotional sickness' sets in.

So, most men fight with their families – their parents, their children, their brothers, their friends (or more likely ex-friends), and their girlfriends or wives (or often ex-girlfriends or ex-wives.)

And the situation with people in authority can be even worse – they can often be 'bullying' (effectively) towards their subordinates, for instance.

Perhaps this has always been so.

OR HAS IT?

I haven't read the famous book 'A Brief History of Time', by Stephen Hawking, but presumably the earth's history goes back many millions of years.

Obviously, there has been virtually no evolution in the human race for at least the last 4000 years or so – (the ancient Greek men (for instance) seem to me to have been far more 'real men' – both intellectually and physically (brawn-wise), than most men these days, and I really think we have gone backwards since then in almost every way.

But what if we haven't really evolved much, since the days before not only reading and writing, but even speaking (as we know it), and therefore before much socialisation, and certainly before religions.

So we would have been more of an 'island' – even more than today.

Also, we say that we were hunters and fishermen. But perhaps fishing came before hunting – it would seem to be easier in some ways. And perhaps, again, we haven't really evolved much (in ways that really matter) since then.

So – we haven't really evolved much since

We were all fishermen.

We didn't 'socialise' hardly at all (as we know it).

We all lived by the sea.

And we have assumed that we all have a very powerful aggressive drive.

Where does this lead us?

Surely this is beginning to make sense?

It explains, for instance, almost everyone's love of the sea, doesn't it?

I am suggesting that life would have been very physical – men would probably have been very strong, compared to today. And also that men's fighting (i.e. 'accommodating' their aggressive drive), would have been against 'the elements' – the wind, rain, and – in particular, the forces of the sea – not really against people, so much.

So, my idea is that if we could imitate this scenario – this very physical fight against the elements, and the sea – then we may not need to fight in the ways we do at present, which are often so destructive.

The only way I can really think that we might be able to do this, is for us not only to take exercising seriously, but to make swimming an important part of our exercising. It may be that swimming, for this reason, is an even more valuable form of exercising than is already thought.

It would be an interesting experiment to see if people who do this show different, and preferable personality traits, on average.

Also – I can attest to the very great enjoyment and pleasure one can get from watersports (in my case sailing). I was involved in this as a teenager.

ARTICLE 13

SOME TEACHERS ARE SO WIDELY READ – BUT IS IT AN ASSET?

It amazes me how many books some professors and people like that have read. Maybe 500, even 1000, in their specialist subjects. (With techniques like ‘speed-reading’, etc, I believe this is possible.)

But I really think that it may be more of a disadvantage rather than an asset. If your subject is ‘sociology’, for instance – I’m sure it’s not great to have read 500 books on the subject, often with similar conclusions – (a lot of these tend to be exam-syllabus based,

and at most universities, in a certain subject, a bit 'samey', shall we say.)

So surely it becomes rather like being on a train going along a railway line – and everyone has more or less the same line of thought – coming to roughly the same conclusions.

Contrast this with the Ancient Greeks. I read once, for instance, that Plato was known to be 'not widely read'. I wouldn't be at all surprised if that wasn't virtually the understatement of the century.

Probably the professor who found it out, and who wrote it (it was probably a professor), who had himself, I expect, read 400 - 500 books at least, was probably too embarrassed to admit that he had discovered

that Plato had read perhaps no more than a dozen books in his life.

[I don't know for sure, but wouldn't be at all surprised.]

ARTICLE 14

ABOUT MY EXPERIENCES WITH THE ENCOUNTER GROUP MOVEMENT BACK IN THE EIGHTIES

I will just say a little about my experiences with the Encounter Group Movement roughly 30 years ago.

The Encounter group Movement was strong in the eighties in particular. One of the many things people in the movement generally believed was that repressed aggression was rife – that there were a lot of ‘aggression phobic’ people. Encounter groups – aiming to

solve this problem – were considered quite trendy at this time.

There would usually be about a dozen people in the group – activities would be things like role play, but the main point of it was that everyone would be a lot more open about their feelings for other people in the group than is normal. For example, you might say what you found attractive or unattractive about someone else of the opposite sex. Or you might be encouraged to express any anger – sometimes this would be a full blown argument – a blazing row even – two people would be shouting at each other (the air would be very blue!). The idea was that it was considered very good for you to get any anger out of your system.

As I said, they were thought very trendy – almost hippyish, but controversial too. Some church groups thought that they were more ‘devilish’ than had originally been thought of rock music when it first came out.

The people in this movement (who went to encounter groups) strongly believed that we had an ‘aggressive-phobic’ society, by which they meant that a high percentage of people would be very uncomfortable (would get very tense, even) in a situation where there were people expressing anger.

[I don’t mean necessarily ranting and raving and banging the table, though it would include that

some people would be very uncomfortable about having someone express anger even in a normal voice.]

If you got into the Encounter Group scene, the chances were that one of your goals would not only be to get any anger out of your system, but generally to become a less ‘aggression - phobic’ person.

In fact repressed aggression (being angry without realising it), or being aggression phobic was thought by people in the movement to be responsible for quite a lot of major physical illnesses. It was said that heart disease and cancer could be caused by repressed aggression, for instance, as well as depression – and certainly suffering repressed aggression led to a reduced ‘lifeforce’.

One of the most important things about the Encounter Group Movement is that people in

it believed that the experience of gaining insight into the causes of any repressed anger or aggression (or other destructive emotions) could lead to being in a better state.

I was very interested in these theories at the time and found quite a few books with more or less this point of view in my local library – in fact I took one or two out to read. But recently I looked through the shelves of the library (the same one) and couldn't find a single book with this line. I think it is out of favour these days – actually it made me think of the situation in communist countries where apparently everything was censored and you could only find books in libraries pushing ideas that were in favour. It almost seemed like the same thing had happened here.

(But perhaps I shouldn't blame the libraries – there may well not even be hardly any books in print pushing this line anymore.)

But I am sure that finding safe ways of getting your anger out of your system (basically what the Encounter Group Movement was largely about) is enormously important.

And in fact I believe that the Encounter Group Movement was more or less right, and we, in our culture today, who have turned our back on these ideas and gone in the opposite direction even, are wrong.

I will summarise some of the important points made in this article:-

- a) repressed aggression is being angry without realising it – without being aware of the anger
- b) repressed aggression causes a reduced life-force
- c) becoming aware of what is making us angry leads to a better state (there is less repression)
- d) catharsis (getting anger out of our system) results in a considerably better state (as long as the way of doing it doesn't produce guilt)

PS I am aware that I am not using the term 'repression' in quite the same way as, for instance, Freud did – but think that this approach (as outlined here) is quite workable.

ARTICLE 15

RAYMONDS REVUE BAR – MY EXPERIENCE OF

INTRODUCTION

This was the most famous strip club in Britain, where about 8 girls (and 1 lad) would put on superb performances.

In its heyday it helped make Paul Raymond one of the richest men in the country.

Round about the turn of the Millenium, its popularity was waning, and it closed down in about 2004. (Places like this were being replaced by ‘Standard’ Lap Dancing Clubs.)

(It was about 1999 that I started going there.)

My article about my visits to Raymonds Revue Bar is quite long – it now follows:

Note 1: *For the purposes of this article, we can consider that sexual repression is what happens when a person's sexual needs are not fully satisfied. Sexual repression, for one thing, results in a reduced 'life force'.*

Note 2: *This article was mainly written for a male readership, but it is true to say that women seem these days to be far more excited by (the female version of) the type of event written about, than men do. Therefore I am sure the article will be of just as much interest to women.*

RAYMONDS REVUE BAR

As a young man, I found that when I didn't have a girlfriend, I often was unable to make much of an impression on new girls that I met – not so much as I had done when I had a partner.

I'm sure it was due to sexual repression. Therefore I think that, especially when one is without a girlfriend, one needs to see what one can do to combat this.

(I'll talk from the point of view of men) – and give a little bit of defence of (or indeed some praise and recommendation of) 'erotica'.

Surely, to be heterosexual, partly means that we find a good looking woman who is naked very attractive in some way.

About the best way that I can define the phrase ‘sex-phobic’ (analogous to aggression-phobic as described elsewhere in my writing) is to say that it is a denial of that.

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And I am going to say that just as those in the encounter group movement of the eighties thought we had an aggression-phobic society, it could be said that today we have a very sex-phobic one.

Of course, there have always been a lot of people – for example, religious people – who have thought that women should be ‘modest’. There have always been a lot of people who have very much looked down on glamour models, for instance.

But when I say that we are becoming very much a 'sex-phobic' society, I am going much further than that. Very much further indeed.

I can't quite say in one paragraph, really, exactly what I mean. All I can do is give a few examples. Everything is relative – and I shall quite often compare 'the situation' as I see it now, with what it was like, as I remember it, about 25 years ago.

Until about 20 years ago, I was quite religious and felt very guilty about anything in the way of 'erotica', but after I rejected Christianity, felt that guilt no more.

I bought a few girlie magazines first of all, and these helped to relax me – made me feel less tense – in other words helped me feel much better.

But eventually, wanting some ‘real live action’, I decided to go to a strip club in London. Probably the main reason why I didn’t make this decision sooner was my finances. I’ve always hated staying in the whole evening and watching television or whatever, but I knew that if I went to London, even once a fortnight, it would come to that quite often (because I wasn’t very well off).

But anyway, in the end I decided to go – to hell with the financial consequences.

The only place I had heard of was Raymond’s Revue Bar – it had been advertised – a full back page advert sometimes, in one of the girlie magazines I bought.

Also, I had read an article about it once which I was sure had mentioned that there were afternoon performances,

So I decided to go on a Thursday afternoon. Obviously it didn't really matter to me what performance I went to, and I thought it would be easier to get a ticket for an afternoon performance.

When I got there about 1.30, the place was all shut up. I found out that there were 2 performances a day – 8pm and 10pm. Also that the box office didn't open till 5pm.

My hopes sank quite a bit, actually. I thought it was unlikely that I'd get a ticket. But I decided to go along when the box office opened anyway.

I had taken quite a lot of money, and I went to a local pub and had maybe 3 drinks, though a couple of them were cokes, for obvious reasons.

I needn't have worried about ticket availability at all. When I got to the box office just after 5, the man asked me if I wanted a front-row seat.

I decided to take a seat 3 or 4 rows back – they were a bit less expensive. But I was very surprised that I had the chance of practically any seat I wanted – and I hadn't even expected to get a seat at all. Bear in mind that Raymond's Revue Bar is one of the most famous strip clubs in the world.

So anyway, back to the pub for a couple more drinks (the seat I bought was £20, or maybe £25, by the way).

I went back to the Revue Bar about 25 minutes before the performance was due to start – I was probably the first or second person there.

The music was good – quite loud, and I began to get quite excited with the anticipation. It was the first time I'd done anything like this.

I ordered a drink – served by a waiter. It was a bit more expensive than a pub, but not exorbitant (about £3.50 for a bottle of Budweiser, I think) – I had been used to nightclubs charging well over double pub prices for drinks when in my twenties – so I was actually quite pleasantly surprised.

More people arrived in the next quarter of an hour or so, of course, but really not that many.

The performance started about a quarter of an hour late (as I came to discover was normal). I'm not really good at describing things like that – the performance, I mean – it's not the kind of writing I'm best at.

But it was stunning. Those girls – there were about 7 of them – were gorgeous. I had very rarely seen such beautiful women.

Though I am certainly no expert at all, they all seemed very talented dancers to me. (There was one man too, by the way – I was to find out that there were quite often a few women in the audience.)

The costumes were amazing too - though for quite a lot of the time – much more time than

I had dared hope, the girls were effectively naked.

(Incidentally, there was quite a bit of ‘aggression’ in some of the dancing too.)

I suppose the total performance time, compared to, say, a ‘normal’ West End theatre, wasn’t that great. The performance was over just after 9.30 and there was about a 10 minute interval – so I suppose the performance time wasn’t much more than an hour.

But when you think that for a significant amount of it you’ve got 2 or 3 girls perhaps – sometimes all the dancers, dancing very provocatively without a stitch on, just a few feet away from you – well I had no complaints at all. I thought it was incredible value.

But the crazy thing was that there couldn't have been more than 30 or 40 customers. And there never really were many more than that – which meant that the theatre was just about always only a quarter full or less – though I suppose the later performance might well have been busier. But I just couldn't understand it at all. (Also a high percentage of them tended to be foreign – obviously tourists – quite a lot were Japanese I think. There really were very few ordinary British people indeed.)

(I am sure that 15 years before this, a place like this would have been jam-packed nearly every night.)

So – I very greatly enjoyed my first visit to Raymond’s Revue Bar – but the best thing about it was still to come.

This was because the next day I felt like a new man. I hadn’t felt so good in many years. My friends, especially the regulars at the pub I went to about 3 times a week, noticed the difference too. Overnight I became more confident and less tense.

I want to come back later and say something about the reaction of the people I knew (especially those in the pub), to what I told them.

Going back now to say something about there being so few customers at Raymond’s Revue Bar.

I just couldn't believe it, to be honest, and here's why. I hadn't at this time really been a part of a large group of maybe a dozen men, socialising together, for some while. But at one time it was quite common (e.g. after football training). And I always felt that I had quite good insight – that I could 'suss people out' quite well.

Anyway, suppose, then, that I was amongst this group of about a dozen men, in a pub after football training, say. And suppose that the question was put to us, that we could either go to a strip club show like the one I've just described, or to a top level football match – my instinct would be that it would be about half and half – half a dozen would like the idea of the strip club, and the others the football. That would be my guess.

And what I couldn't get my head round at all, was the fact that it appeared this guess was so inaccurate.

It is true that during the period I was going to Raymond's Revue Bar, its star was falling – it was in a bit of a decline (and I understand it closed down just a few years later). Also these stage performances were not its principal activity anymore – it turned into a lap dancing club called Amazons at 11.30pm until about 4am, I believe. And I think that format for a strip club (although outside my price range – you could get through several hundred pounds of a night) had become more popular than the stage shows it was replacing.

Nevertheless I was still surprised at this very low turnout (that it was not more than quarter

full) at these superb stage performances, at this very famous strip club, and I couldn't help but compare it with the vast stadiums filled to capacity, which top level football matches often achieve.

Going back to when I mentioned to the regulars at my local about having been to a strip club. The change in me because of this experience must have been obvious to them. You would have thought that they would be pleased for me that I had found something that 'suited me' – that made me feel good.

Not a bit of it.

I chose mainly to tell the people there about this when there might have been a group of men, a couple of them telling a few dirty jokes – it happened quite frequently. They often

would be laughing like mad at really quite crude jokes. Fair enough, I've never been one to complain about an off-colour joke – but I was really surprised that the reaction of these same people, when I told them that I had seen real strippers doing their stuff, was very subdued. It all went a bit quiet, and I realised that I had made a bit of a faux pas.

I soon learned not to mention my trips to Raymond's Revue Bar.

And I really found this hypocritical, that they would laugh so enthusiastically at a few dirty jokes, but go all quiet – obviously disapproving – when I told them I had been to a strip club.

I said I was going to compare the situation with how I remembered it quite a few years before.

I never got round to going to a strip club in my twenties – my religious views at the time more or less precluded it.

But I did get sent on a computer course in London with about 12 colleagues, and one night we all went round Soho.

Everyone (as I remember it) was quite excitedly looking at what was on offer (from outside the various premises). I was very disappointed that no-one could reach any agreement about actually paying an entrance fee and venturing inside one of these ‘dens of iniquity’. (On spur of the moment things like this I could sometimes suspend my religious

principles and I probably would have enthusiastically ventured in, if only a consensus to do so had been reached.)

But anyway, as I say, everyone was fairly excitedly discussing the possibility of going in somewhere. And supposing a couple of us had gone off and been less ‘stick in the mud’ – then I’m sure the reaction of the majority – when the pair of us came back to report, wouldn’t have been nearly so negative as I had found that many years later – I’m convinced that attitudes had changed dramatically in the intervening years.

I carried on going to Raymond’s Revue Bar, usually every fortnight, for a year or so, I suppose.

Then one of the pubs in my home town became a ‘pound in a pint glass for a dance’ place, and I transferred my time (and my money) to that. (See the beginning of my book *‘Hampshire Journalism at the cutting edge’* (also on this website).)

* The above article is from my book *‘Mainly About Conquering Sexual Repression’* – look up ‘Chris Burnell’ in Amazon / Books (that is the name I write under).

ARTICLE 16

‘OUR INSTINCTS’

They say that you're not well educated unless you've done a bit of studying about Freud. Well, Freud at first thought we had basically just one instinctual drive (sex), and later in his life added aggression to this. Adler, on the other hand, thought it was power that was the (just one) basic drive. From my own ideas, I like to think in terms of not one, not two, but six drives. (No doubt some could be 'subsumed' under others with the right arguments, so I'm not arguing that Freud or Adler were wrong, of course.)

The 6 instincts or 'drives' I have decided on are:-

Power

Sex with these first 3 in mind read Freud, Adler and their followers.

Aggression

Performance (part a) the need to ‘give performances’ (not necessarily in the traditional sense) – a lot of ‘ordinary’ things can be thought of as ‘giving a performance’ e.g. going to a nightclub (where we are very much ‘on show’).

Performance (part b)..... The need to go to performances (given by others) [we need to be selective about this – not all types of performance will suit us].

Company..... we need to be ‘in company’ some of the time.

Self-understanding..... we need to attempt to understand ourselves, e.g. by reading literature or again, psychological books.

ARTICLE 17

HOW BORING IS OUR WORK?

I have been writing for quite a few years, and although I have only rarely sought publication as such, have made a habit, from time to time, of getting quite a few copies of 'my latest stuff' printed and giving these to people I met – in some cases friends, and at other times more or less strangers.

However, I suppose it's true that, for the first 2 or 3 years I was writing (especially), people tended not to like what I wrote much. I probably lost more friends than I gained, to be

frank. But recently, those I've showed things to have been much more impressed, I've felt.

In the past, the booklets I've had printed have usually been A5 size. But when it came to some of my recent writing, the booklets I used for 'showing around' happened to be A4 size – simply because I used a different print shop than before.

And although I'm convinced that this latest writing is basically a lot more 'readable' than anything I've done before, I've met with an unusual reluctance for people to actually read it in the first place (in this latest case). Even when someone has taken a copy, I've noticed that 2 or 3 weeks later it's quite likely not been read.

And it has occurred to me that this may be because i used A4 size, rather than A5.

Thinking about it, A4 size paper is associated with documents and study material at both schools and colleges, and also work. For example, A4 ring binders (used by school pupils and students) are much more common than A5 ones. Also, I've been looking through an office products catalogue recently – at binding machines in particular (usually used in offices), and they nearly all make books in A4 format.

Now, could this thing I've noticed – this greater reluctance to read my latest (A4) booklets – somehow be a sort of 'unconscious' thing? Could it point to the possibility that there are an awful lot of

people actually quite angry about their experiences at school and/or work?

This article was written quite a few years ago – at that time I was mainly using short booklets – 20-25 pages usually.

ARTICLE 18

A GOOD FORGETERY

Having ‘a good forgetery’ was how a piano teacher of mine, who was in her seventies then, described her bad memory.

Some of us have better memories than others, of course. I have a very bad memory for details.

What I would like to say is that I do not believe what is often taken for granted in psychotherapeutic circles – that all our past experiences are ‘recorded’ somewhere in our unconscious. The idea that we only have to find the right technique, and any experience

from the past can be ‘brought back’ into our consciousness.

I believe we really do forget things, and once forgotten, they cannot be brought back.

Techniques such as hypnosis may well appear to ‘bring back the past’, but my belief is that it may just as likely be ‘an imagined past’, rather than the actual one, however competent the hypnotist appears to be.

To conclude, we really do have ‘a good forgetery’.

ARTICLE 19

BECOME AN EXPERT IN SOMETHING

I believe one of the best ways of finding fulfilment is through learning – specialised learning – becoming an expert in something.

Most peoples ‘interests’ do not come into this category.

A lot of people are interested in gardening, for instance. But very few will really find fulfilment through gardening because very few are really expert at it.

You are only expert at something (this is my definition) if you know more about it than 99% of the population does.

An expert in gardening, for instance wouldn't just need to know the names of most popular flowers and plants, and how to tend them successfully. He would have to have entire shelves in his bookcase full of books on gardening, and to have studied them assiduously.

Why? Because so many people know a great deal about gardening. To be in the top 1% as regards 'knowledge of gardening' one would really need to know an awful lot about it.

The same is true of all the very popular interests and sports e.g. football, cookery etc

Anyone who chooses anything like this as their field in which to find fulfilment will need to have a very great capacity for acquiring knowledge, because the competition is so great.

Just imagine how 'word perfect' you'd need to be about football, for instance, to be in the top 1% as

regards expertise about it. So many people spend such a lot of time thinking and reading about it (and presumably they learn a great deal).

Most of us, if we are to find fulfilment, must choose something that is much more of a minority interest.

ARTICLE 20

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TWO WEEK COOLING OFF PERIOD – AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

We all know about the two week (or is it a 10 day) cooling off period for certain contracts e.g. life insurance. However, I am talking about something different here.

Basically I am talking about what is necessary after something (or somebody) has made us very angry.

I expect you've heard the advice – when you get angry about something count to 10 before you take any action.

My feeling is that more appropriate advice might often be to 'count to two weeks'.

I have written elsewhere about a type of anger that I believe normally requires a 2 week cooling off period. That was about a situation with just an acquaintance - obviously I wasn't living with her.

Now I'll speculate a bit about the situation where a couple are living together.

John Gray says a lot about this in his book '*Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*' (and its sequels) and I recommend you read it.

It seems to me that if a couple are ‘truly living’ they could not help but fall out from time to time. The only way a couple could go through years and years of married life, for instance, and only extremely rarely have arguments or fall out, is if they repress a lot of their feelings as a matter of course.

I happen to believe that a lot of couples do do this – see below.

But assume then, that the couple we are talking about don’t repress too many of their own feelings. I would argue that they must have arguments, must fall out, from time to time. What happens then?

In the book referred to above (*Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*), John Gray talks about the man 'going into his cave'.

Obviously Gray doesn't mean this literally – few people have caves to go to, do they?

I don't think he means it even semi-literally, in the sense of the husband going away for a few days, or something like that.

What he seems to mean is that the husband becomes more 'distant' in an emotional sense, and less communicative. While he is 'in his cave', it is not a good time for the wife to start intimate discussions, for example.

Gray suggests that the man goes into his cave during times of stress, and when he needs to 'sort things out'.

My feeling is, though, that if a husband and wife don't repress their feelings, the negative ones will occasionally be so strong that simply to go through an 'uncommunicative' spell of a few hours, or even two or three days, won't really be enough.

I would suggest that if a couple aren't going to resign themselves to a life of repressing their feelings about each other to a certain extent, actual separation – occasionally for a week or a fortnight perhaps – will sometimes be necessary.

What I'm saying is that in 90% of marriages (or couples living together), where it is very much the exception rather than the rule that one of the partners sometimes goes off alone for a

while (i.e. at least a few days), there must be considerable repression of feelings.

I don't really think that the 'norm' should be that a husband and wife sleep together in the same bed for virtually every night of their marriage – or even under the same roof.

Something has occurred to me that may be evidence that very many couples living together, either married or 'as if married' are indeed repressing huge amounts of feeling.

This is that so many of them seem to be happy with a life consisting, each day, of the following:-

Eight hours work (often soul destroying), eight hours sleep, and in the other third of the day,

a few chores, an evening meal, and about five hours in front of the television.

It is my belief that anyone who can be happy with an existence like that must be repressing great amounts of feeling.

I suppose It's true to say I've been quite a moody person. But, probably because of this, I've 'developed' or 'discovered' 2 or 3 techniques for dealing with (overcoming) bad moods. The most useful one of them I've called 'generalised insight therapy'.

ARTICLE 21

GENERALISED INSIGHT THERAPY

It is well recognised, by writers such as Anthony Storr, that there is a relationship between creativity and aggression. And our language has phrases which point to this. For example, we talk about “getting our teeth into a problem”.

Suppose something has caused great anger (either repressed or “at or near the surface”). The therapeutic method I have discovered is to use that experience to create “a bit of knowledge” - some idea or theory relating to the particular problem, which adds to our understanding of human nature in some way (or appears to have potential for doing so). It should be something that is not specific to yourself and the particular situation that caused the anger, but can be seen as having a relevance to a range of difficulties which many other people may face, and is able to help them. i.e. it is a generalised bit of knowledge.

Another way of putting it is as follows:-

If you “use” (what you learn from) a nasty

experience to tackle (and find a solution to) a wider, more generalised problem, there will be healing (from the effects of that unpleasant experience – e.g. any anger, whether it is repressed or not).

Here is an example of how I have used generalised insight therapy.

I did something which was very stupid and which, I believed, had hurt someone considerably (emotionally, not physically), as well as unnecessarily promising to make a part of my life miserable for the foreseeable future.

This made me furious with myself, and I was in grave danger of repressing this anger, which would have greatly affected my emotional health. In fact, for most of a day, it did just that

- I felt “emotionally dead” and for example, when someone stopped their car by me, and asked me for directions, their reaction to me told me that I wasn't in a very good state.

This was a bad experience, and things probably wouldn't have improved, perhaps for a long time, if it hadn't been for my use of the new technique, which I had recently discovered.

This was as follows:-

After being “hit” by this, during the day I had two or three drinks to relax me a bit, and then, at about 5.30, went down to a local pub (but not one I usually frequent), for two lagers (as it turned out).

There was a very friendly, vivacious and

attractive barmaid, and a few customers (men) who were humorously bantering with her. Although I didn't join in, I appreciated the atmosphere. At the same time my mind was working overtime. And then afterwards, on the way home, I came up with the following “generalised insight”.

If you are very angry with yourself about something, it is very important to be able to forgive yourself.

This should be done, if possible, by recognising that there were extenuating circumstances; and also by congratulating oneself on the positive things one has done in the recent (or even not so recent) past, hopefully with the conclusion that there have been more “positives” than “negatives”. (If there are no extenuating circumstances, or if

there aren't more positives than negatives, I'm not sure how to proceed, in fact.)

On the other hand, I feel that “forgiveness” of others when they have wronged you is often less healthy. Often when people ‘decide’ that they have forgiven someone for something, and act accordingly, especially if it is something serious, what they actually do is repress their anger. This can cause great emotional damage.

When someone wrongs you badly, what is actually required is to sort of sum up the “positives” and “negatives” of that relationship. (This is a largely unconscious process, of course.) Obviously a serious “negative” has just entered into the equation, but provided the “balance” is more positive than negative, which will usually be the case

in a good relationship or friendship, there is obviously no reason to finish it. And the thing that caused the anger should be forgotten (i.e. filed in the “no action taken” file – except, perhaps, to make the other person aware how he/she has made you feel.)

In the meantime, the negative emotion needs to be dissipated in as healthy and socially acceptable way as possible. For example, some people go for a long walk or dig the garden.

End of “generalised insight”.

After this was composed, it was clear to me that the vexation surrounding the incident had gone.

This technique has been effective at

eradicating quite a few of my bad moods.

[This next part is an addition to the original text. It is about another technique for overcoming bad moods. I doubt if it will be nearly so commonly used as the other one, but think it's worth including.]

Defining the problem

Einstein, among others, was fond of saying that it was more difficult to “define a problem”, than to then go ahead and solve it.

I have discovered that if you can use an experience which has made you very angry to, in some sense, define a problem, there will be complete relief from that anger. It is, I believe, an even more powerful technique than generalised insight therapy (because defining

a problem is more difficult than solving it).

For various reasons, I do not want to give an example of its use. (I have only used it once and it is not appropriate to describe that.)]

Guilt

Guilt and anger at yourself are the same thing. They are equivalent.

Therefore generalised insight therapy (which fights against anger), is very appropriate to be used to combat guilt.

For example, a recent “generalised insight” relating to something I felt very guilty about, was simply:-

“It's okay to make mistakes.” (Sometimes – as

on this occasion – I had found it difficult to forgive myself when I made mistakes.)

Incompetence

Incompetence is sometimes a sin (wrong). In fact it can be one of the worst.

When it is a sin, it is appropriate to feel guilty about it. And therefore generalised insight therapy can be used to deal with this too.

You may be surprised to hear me say that incompetence is sometimes a sin. Surely it either is, or isn't.

I believe this is not so. It is as if, at certain times in our life, we choose what we are going to be good at, and also what to be bad at.

For example, one of the “choices” I have made is to be bad at D.I.Y. That decision is helped by a complete lack of aptitude. And I know that I would have been hopeless as an engineer. Anything connected with “engineering” goes right over my head.

So anyway, we select the things to be bad at, and good at. Hopefully we decide to be good at what we have an aptitude for, and likewise what to be bad at by noting a lack of ability. (But I suppose that doesn't always follow.)

Now, if we are incompetent at what we have chosen to be good at, that is a sin.

But if we make mistakes relating to things we have “decided” to be bad at, that is not a sin.

Therefore I can laugh at my incompetent

attempts at D.I.Y. because they are not sins. But I can get very upset at incompetence at what I'm supposed to be good at.

Incidentally, I'm sure we can't "choose" to be a bad parent, or certain other things e.g. not to be safety conscious. It's just not allowed.

ARTICLE 22

CHOOSE HOBBIES THAT ARE 'UNISEX'

You are presumably going to choose possibly about 2 interests to make your major hobbies, and I think it makes real sense to choose ones that appeal to both sexes.

Therefore if you are a man, don't make chess your hobby (for some reason hardly any women are interested in that), but I would recommend something like photography or sailing.

Both men and women enjoy these greatly and that person you meet will probably be really

pleased if they find one (or both) of them are ones that they can become interested in too.

Of course, if you can afford your own boat (and I'm not talking about a 30 foot yacht – just a sailing dinghy even, perhaps), and join a sailing club on the coast, a lot of people would jump at the chance of going with you – for this reason I'd recommend getting a boat that can be sailed by 2 or 3 people, not one that is very much a one person effort. (And for this same reason, I'd recommend “proper” sailing, rather than windsurfing.)

ARTICLE 23

THE HEALING POWER OF 'LIVE' MUSIC

Written in about 2012

I suppose the story starts about 4 years ago. I thought that as Shakespeare was regarded as easily our greatest writer, it was foolish not to make some attempt to find out what he had said – he surely would have put some of his secrets of “living” into his writing. However, I hadn't concentrated that hard in English literature lessons at school and I didn't feel like suddenly becoming a literature student and seriously studying a lot of his plays.

So I did the next best thing: As I suspected, in the “*Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*” there were a lot of “quotations” by Shakespeare (actually mostly extracts from his plays) – there were many more pages devoted to Shakespeare than for any other person. I thought that even just reading these out of context (of the rest of the play) could well produce dividends. So I spent half an hour a day for about a week reading through these, in the library.

One of the main things, I thought, was that Shakespeare seemed to think that music had a magical property – that it could really have a “good effect” on us. There were quite a few quotations where music, or something related to music, was mentioned (just about always in a positive way) – and I remember getting that distinct impression.

There may have been other reasons as well, but about this time I started to buy quite a few music CDs, mostly from the top 100 album chart. I was regularly buying the “Now That's What I Call Music” compilation CD, and would buy the CD by an artist if I liked their track on this. Over a few months I built up a bit of a collection.

Now, a lot of people will say, quite rightly I suppose, that you don't need Shakespeare to tell you that music is “good”. That it is quite self-evident. And most people work it out for themselves. I accept all that of course. It's just that in my case, it was reading those Shakespeare comments about music that was the catalyst – if you want to put it like that. And at that time I did change my “behaviour pattern” - from buying CDs just

occasionally, to getting them very regularly, perhaps 2 or 3 a week, for quite a few months. And I was playing them for 2 or 3 hours a day, hoping for this “magic effect” to hit me.

But to be honest I was a bit disappointed. They didn't seem to help lift a depression which was attacking me a bit. In fact, after a while I bought CDs more occasionally again.

[Changing the subject]

My mother owns a caravan in Selsea, West Sussex, and about 3 times a year I would go with her there for 4 or 5 days – my brother would drive us as I don't have a car (neither does my mother).

The caravan is on a very large site (Bunn Leisure), which is divided into 3 sections, and

each section has club facilities – a large clubhouse and bar, for instance. Every weekend evening (and every night during the high season) they have entertainment at these clubhouses. This is very often a band. In fact at the largest of the three clubhouses they have entertainment every night for most of the season.

Most evenings when we were down there we would go into the bar and sometimes the clubhouse for a drink, but we usually didn't see much of the band because my mother goes back to the caravan about 9 to have her usual early night (also she usually found the band's music a bit loud for her taste). And for a long time I didn't feel like continuing drinking alone (on these occasions), so I went back to the caravan then too.

But in April 2009, when we went for the first time of the year, for 2 evenings running – a Saturday and a Sunday – I did stay to watch the bands – their complete performance.

The first was a group which had been famous when I was a youth, back in the early 70s – Mungo Jerry. Mungo Jerry himself, the band's singer, looked much younger than he must in fact be – his most famous hit, “*In the summertime*”, came out in 1970. I remembered quite a few of their songs, and had a really enjoyable evening. (There was a support group of 2 girl singers called *Honey*, who were also very good – they sang a lot of hits of the last 15 years or so.)

Then on the Sunday, having enjoyed the previous evening so much, I went to the other clubhouse (the Embassy) where they had

another group. It was called *Now 90s* – obviously it played hits from the 90s. Again a very enjoyable evening.

But the best part was to come. After this weekend, I found that a stress-related ailment* I had been suffering from had dramatically improved.

Of course, I thought it must have been because I had seen those 3 groups over the weekend. However, we had to go home on the Monday. But I resolved to come back down to the caravan as often as possible over the next few months, and see as much “live” music as I could.

It was fortunate that the nature of my work meant that I could do it wherever I pleased; and my mother agreed that I could use the

caravan every other week (for 4 or 5 days) during May and June anyway.

In one of the clubhouses (though not the nearest one to our caravan – it involved a short bus journey) – they had live musical entertainment practically every night of the week, so I was confident that I could devote a lot of time to that, and see if that initial beneficial effect was a coincidence or not. The stress-related ailment had greatly improved, but wasn't completely better. I wanted to see if seeing lots of live music would get it completely better.

Anyway, I continued going to Selsea for 4 or 5 days every 2 or 3 weeks throughout the season, and also when I was back in Basingstoke I saw quite a bit of live music, at “*The Anvil*” (and also in pubs). And my stress-

related ailment continued to improve. This article is mainly about the “healing effect” of listening to live music. I am talking about “emotional healing” here of course, or to put it another way “healing from stress-related ailments”.

Now, when we think of what we can see / hear at theatres / entertainment complexes / concert halls it seems to me there are 3 “biggies” - we can watch a play, we can listen to music or we can see a comedian (and of course some plays are comedies and there is even musical comedy).

And I've said how our greatest thinker, Shakespeare, praised music to the skies and wrote a lot about the “good effect” music can have on us. (And I've given one example of the “healing effect” of music in my own life.)

But when we come to the other 2 “biggies” - watching a play or seeing a comedian, although Shakespeare didn't directly “praise those things to the skies” in his writing, as he did with music, he was actually intimately involved with both of them. That is, he wrote plays (some of which were comedies), he was even fond of having characters who were comedians (e.g. Feste in Twelfth Night), and he even put “bits of comedy” in his more serious plays (e.g. King Henry IV part 1). And he was an actor too.

So you could say his being intimately involved with these two other “biggies” is (indirectly) even greater praise than the way he praised music (directly) in his writing.

So (after thinking these things through) I then

had another hypothesis to test. That watching plays, or seeing comedians, may have just as great “emotional healing power” as listening to live music.

[And incidentally, just as I believe seeing bands play “live” has greater “healing power” than listening to CDs, I was quite expecting to find that watching a play has greater power than watching television, and seeing a comedian live has much more power than looking at a DVD of that comedian.]

And so my next task was to start seeing plays and comedy performances (as well as continuing to see the live music).

So I began seeing plays – at *Chichester Festival Theatre* when I was staying at Selsea, and usually at the *Haymarket*, the *Mayflower*

theatre or the *Salisbury Playhouse* when back home (and also saw comedy performances). And I was pleased to discover that I felt so much better after I had done so – as far as I was concerned my hypothesis that “emotional healing” would also result from seeing plays and watching comedy has been proved true.

** This ‘stress related ailment’ was actually a slight recurrence of a voice problem, which I had originally had many years previously – I had been almost unable to speak.*

SECTION 2 - EDUCATION

ARTICLE 24

ON EDUCATION (1)

Note: Some of the comments in this article are a bit ‘tongue in cheek’, I suppose – for instance I don’t think I’m seriously suggesting that we don’t study history.

When you think about it, secondary education has been based for years on studying about 8 to 10 subjects at a ‘moderate’ level (GCSE) and usually three subjects at advanced level, if the pupil stays on for the 6th form.

In particular, the 8 -10 subjects at GCSE level were, for many years, virtually the same for everyone, with very little difference between syllabuses.

I do not think there is anything wrong with that as such. It's just that for ages schools have been teaching the wrong things.

It is a standing joke that whenever a school child comes home from school, their mother or father asks them what they have been doing at school today, the child always replies “oh nothing much”.

I think it has always been thought that that was because secondary school years were sort of ‘uncommunicative’ years.

But what if, when a child says “nothing much”, he or she actually means more or less that – or rather, “nothing much that is relevant to me” – nothing much that I can talk about to you, or my friends, or anyone.

If you listen to school children talking amongst themselves, how often do you hear them talking about what they have learnt during their lessons at school?

Hardly ever, I'd say.

But there is no reason why this should be so. I think it ought to be possible to make lessons at school interesting enough so that pupils want to and do talk about what they have learnt at school, amongst themselves.

For example, for over 100 years I'm sure, probably quite a significant part of the English curriculum has been poetry. I suppose some people are interested in this, but almost certainly very few.

Consider this. As a regular pub goer, it is impossible to avoid going to karaoke sometimes – though I haven't sung at them. But I often look at the screen, and I am always amazed at how wonderful the lyrics are to many of the songs. (I am not exaggerating at all. I very often think the lyrics are almost incredible.) Yet I never felt that about the poetry we were told to read at school.

So why not, just as an instance, instead of studying the poetry the latest poet laureate has written, that practically no one except the “elite” can make head nor tail of – why not

instead study (or analyse, or whatever you do), the lyrics of the latest pop tunes?

I'm sure that is what kids would be delighted to do, and they would talk about what they learnt when they socialised together too.

And isn't that what education is really for?

Surely this is where democracy is really valuable. Educationists shouldn't be saying to the kids "this is what you will learn", but "what would you really like to learn about?" - and when they find out, they should try to teach them that.

Okay, in this instance it may mean retiring off a few English teachers, who are only interested in John Betjemen and his ilk - and

haven't got a clue what's in the top 40 – but that's life.

What I'm saying is that it really wouldn't matter if everyone did learn more or less the same things, as long as they were considered relevant, and which they really wanted to learn.

It was this sort of reasoning (but which I hadn't conceptualised at the time), that made me very interested in the Radical school movement while I was a student. Schools like Summer Hill – does it still exist? Apparently they just told the kids, “oh go and do what you like today” – and that happened every day. (And sometimes some of the kids chose to read a few books!)

It sounds a joke, but I wouldn't be surprised if some of them did quite well in the end.

I'm not recommending anything that radical for the English state school system, by the way. But examining things and the sort of movement towards 'relevance' – that I have exemplified by suggesting studying the lyrics of pop tunes, rather than traditional poetry.

Maybe I will say a little bit more.

It is one of the 'fundamentals' of British law that, when it comes to being charged, prosecuted or whatever, ignorance (of the law), is apparently no defence. Therefore I think it absolutely crazy that (certainly until recently – I'm not sure what the situation is now) nothing about the law is usually taught

in schools. I don't think we all need to know much about criminal law, contract law or whatever. But, for instance, when you go to the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the people you see are usually just ordinary people, usually with other jobs, I believe. I shouldn't think their training is that extensive (time wise). Surely it would be a good idea for virtually everyone to learn more or less what they learn – it probably wouldn't be the equivalent of more than one or two GCSE's.

Certainly, I think we should all be reasonably knowledgeable about, for instance, the Consumer Credit Act and the Sale of Goods Act. Surely we need to know about things like that, just to go shopping?

What we should not learn.

It's a nice idea that everyone should be able to speak French, but it just doesn't work, does it? It must just be too bloody hard once you are over 5 or something.

I was in the "A" stream in a grammar school, and had about 5 French lessons a week, for 5 years. And at the end of it, hardly anyone could speak French at all fluently, or understand a real French person speaking French unless they slowed down to about a fifth of the normal speed.

I know everyone goes abroad these days (except me). But (isn't it true?), everyone goes to hotels where all the staff – even the cleaners probably – speak English.

We have never really been very well liked by the French. And those few who decide to be

‘cultured’ and drive round the villages of France, and have a few bebies in the local with the regulars, probably, if the truth be known, aren’t usually very welcome. (Especially if they try out their pidgin French.)

And history as well.

In pubs and cafes, I never hear anyone talking about the younger Pitt, or even Admiral Nelson, except possibly as part of a 1 liner – that goes over most peoples’ heads.

And is it worth it just for that? I know it’s nice to think that our great men and women from a few centuries ago will never be forgotten, but anyway some of them weren’t all that nice.

The Victorians, for instance: a lot of them had religious views that were so extreme, they

wouldn't be out of place in some of those fundamentalist sects you read about these days, sometimes.

For those who are so keen that the past shouldn't be forgotten, there is some hope.

I think it likely that a few figures from the past may be 'resurrected' as being the 'acknowledged master' in a certain area of life, and studied because of that, for ages.

For example, I read that Julius Caesar and others of the period were expert orators, and generally superb at 'giving a performance' – maybe people can dig up his (their) secrets in that field.

There is an expression in computing called 'garbage in – garbage out'. It means that if you

feed nonsensical information into a computer you can't expect to get anything but rubbish out of it.

Maybe in education, we should think 'something in – something else out'.

That is, if we learn something, we should realise that something else (we previously learnt) might well be forgotten.

I read once that Einstein deliberately didn't remember his own telephone number – he always looked it up in the telephone directory – surely it must have been on that principle!

So – we should make sure that what we learn is of considerable value to us.

ARTICLE 25

ON EDUCATION (2)

One aspect of authoritarianism, in our schools – we get used to it at a young age!

I spent 13 years at school, and during that time (apart from the first two years*), in virtually all the lessons, the teacher was talking for most of the time. (Except that the teacher might ask quite a few questions – and if you knew the answer you were expected to raise your hand, and if you were chosen by the teacher you could (briefly) give your answer to the question.)

Talk about giving all the power to the Executive!

I don't know if the situation has changed much in the time since I was at school, or not. But I was planning to go to teachers training college much more recently, and spent several days in a comprehensive school as a 'trial' situation – to see if I might like being a teacher – and I have to say that at that time, nothing much had changed.

** In the first two years I was at school, I remember the teacher spent a great deal of time listening to the children read.*

ARTICLE 26

ON EDUCATION (3)

Now I will say a little about higher education – I'll say why I think there's a lot wrong with that.

When I was in my final year at university, most students worried more about the looming final exams than the employment situation. But of course the time when you would be going for interviews was the same time effectively that you might be preparing for exams – which really took the whole of the last two terms (out of 3) of the final year.

But we were advised not to apply for more than 3 or 4 jobs. We were told it was almost

certain you would get a couple of offers if you applied for the 3 or 4, so it was pointless 'spreading your net too wide' - it would only leave you too many choices - and you might not get such a good degree. (This was over 35 years ago, by the way – the situation probably isn't so rosy these days.)

Also for most jobs it didn't matter what degree you had done. Most people who went in for accountancy, for instance, would have done nothing like that at university. It was only really engineering, and of course medicine, that you had to have done the specialised subjects.

Also, of course, you got a reasonable grant, and no-one I knew did any paid work during term time – it would have been thought ridiculous.

How things have changed, haven't they?

I haven't had much connection with recent graduates these last few years, but from what I have, it seems to me that:-

a) If you get a poor degree you're on the scrap heap no matter what subject it is.

b) If you do 'the wrong degree' (i.e. a non-vocational one) you are on the scrap heap even if you get a first. (I know someone who recently got a first in anthropology from a very reputable university – and she could do no better than work effectively as a care assistant.)

Anything like anthropology or history seems to be a waste of time these days.

Not only that, but I believe the finances are such that you not only have to pay large amounts back after you graduate, but you are also expected to take paid work for 12-15 hours a week while a student to make ends meet too (during term time even).

All this is totally crazy.

Apparently the idea is that 50% of teenagers go to university. I think this is pretty ridiculous. A lot of people just haven't got the aptitude for that amount of studying. And what's the point anyway, if you're only going to get quite a menial job, probably near the minimum wage, at the end of it?

(When I was that age people wouldn't do some jobs that you now apparently need a degree for, if they had a couple of O - Levels!)

I'll now talk about teaching at universities (and research).

It seems to be universal all over the world that academics spend some of their time (maybe half) doing research, and the rest of their time teaching.

Yet to me I don't see the logic in this at all. They seem to be completely unrelated jobs – nothing in common really. It's like – I don't know – saying that all professional footballers also have to be professional mathematicians.

Many of these academics also write books. I think there's no question that if someone is trying to do research and teaching, and at the same time is writing a book – then he or she is grossly overworked.