

THE NEW GLADSTONE REVIEW

an occasional e-journal

December 2020

Issue No. 11

*Informal commentary, opinions, reviews, news, illustrations and poetry
for bookish people of philanthropic inclination*

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Editorial



Once again, with seemingly increasing rapidity as one grows older, the Festive Season is upon us. For most of us it will be a decidedly muted affair, and for many a time of unprecedented loneliness. I don't imagine this issue of the Review can do much to alleviate the situation, but I hope it can at least provide a minor diversion.

Gladstone Books is still in a state of suspension, but I am hopeful that in the early New Year I shall have prepared the first online catalogue, allowing people in the UK to order books to be sent by post. I shall alert people on my database to any developments, as well as advertising in the local press. Opportunities to visit the new book room, by prior arrangement only, will similarly be announced in due course.

I am most grateful to Penny Young for her typically engaging review of an amusing book about second hand bookselling, which may give some light relief from the gloom; and to my son, Jim, for an article on the rarely-appreciated social roles of conjuring, of which he is talented amateur exponent. My own articles are on Isaac Newton, a *local* man of such distinction that I realise I might have written of him earlier, older reference books, and a review of a recent book suggesting that the lives cats lead provide a model for our own lives.

I wish all readers of this Review a relaxing and stress-free period of recuperation from the arduous regime endured in 2020. It seems likely that medical advances will provide real hope that the pandemic can be contained. But readjusting to the post-pandemic era will again present significant challenges. We can only hope that 2021 will bring kinder ways out of the current global crises.

BM

2. The Last of the Sorcerers

insights into the life and beliefs of Isaac Newton

Regular readers of this Review may recall that over the years I have sought to draw attention to significant contributions made to the broader cultural scene (whether in literature, the arts or science) by people who were born, lived or had strong connections with the East Midlands. Some examples, among many others, are the polymath Erasmus Darwin, artist Laura Knight, publisher Arthur Mee, poet George Crabbe, historian Dorothy Hartley, Nobel Laureate scientist Godfrey Hounsfield, author Samuel Butler and politician William Gladstone. One notable omission is Isaac Newton – reputedly *the second most-influential person in history – after Mohammed and before Jesus Christ* ^{W1} Even so, apart from a falling apple being the stimulus for his discovery of the nature of the force of gravity (apparently, however, a fiction), I suspect few people, including myself, have known that much more about him – a suspicion that has recently led me to spend some time researching his life.¹

What soon became apparent was that his life presents us with an extraordinary enigma. For historian James Gleick, Newton has, justifiably, been claimed to be *‘the chief architect of the modern world, who answered the ancient philosophical riddles of light and motion...effectively discovered gravity ... showed how to predict the course of heavenly bodies and so established our place in the cosmos...made knowledge a thing of substance: quantitative and exact: and established principles, that are called his laws.’* But rather than being born into a family of wealth and privilege, as were so many men of that period who made significant scientific discoveries, Newton’s life began in *a world of darkness, obscurity and magic; in which he led a strangely pure and obsessive life, lacking parents, lovers or friends, quarrelled bitterly with great men who crossed his path, veered at least once to the brink of madness; cloaked his work in secrecy; and yet discovered more of the essential core of human knowledge than anyone before or after.*^{G1} My aim here is to throw some light on this enigma.



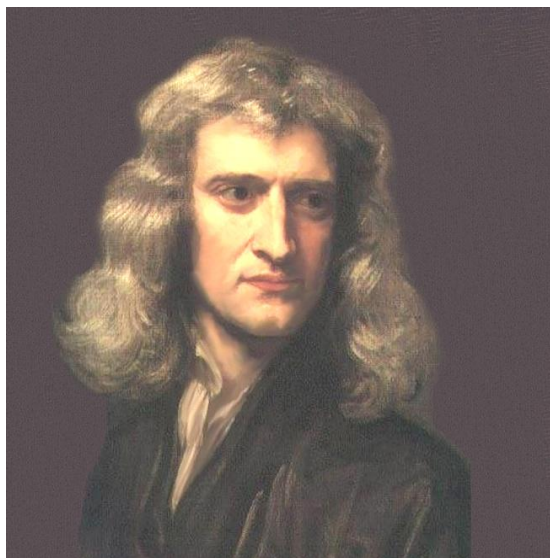
Woolsthorpe Manor, Lincolnshire

Born prematurely at Woolsthorpe Manor,² about 7 miles south of Grantham in 1642,(his yeoman father having died 3 months earlier) his mother Hannah said he could *‘fit inside a quart jug.’* When Isaac was just three, Hannah married a Reverend Smith, age 66, and moved to her new husband’s

¹ The main sources of reference, from my personal library, were: William Stukeley’s *Memoirs of Sir Isaac Newton’s Life* (1752: Taylor & Francis, 1936); J Reade’s *Through Alchemy to Chemistry* (G Bell, 1961); Michael White’s *Isaac Newton* (4th Estate, 1997) and James Gleick’s *Isaac Newton* (4th Estate, 2003). Citations are listed superscript as the initial letter of the author’s surname plus page number e.g. ‘White, page 1’ as ^{W1}

² This modest farm house acquired the title ‘manor’ because unlike most others in the hamlet, which were wooden, it was built of stone.

home, leaving Isaac in the care of grandparents at Woolsthorpe. Deeply resenting this separation, Isaac's enmity towards both mother and step father (who subsequently had three more children) was so great that his diary records that he wanted to '*burn their house down with them inside*'.^{W17}



From 12 -17 years he was a pupil at the Kings School in Grantham, a period when he lodged near the school in the house of an apothecary, Mr Clark and his family, where he dabbled in experiments with the many chemicals stocked. He also had the rare opportunity there to study books by Aristotle, Plato and Descartes – and, significantly, their relationship to the ‘science’ of *alchemy*.^{S38} At school he learnt Latin and Greek, but also had a good grounding in maths.

His step-father died when Isaac was 17, prompting his mother to remove him from school, with the plan that he should become a farmer and manage the Woolsthorpe estate – a prospect he scornfully rejected. But the headmaster, Henry Stokes, persuaded her to return him to the school, where he showed much enthusiasm for his studies and became the highest ranked student. He was also particularly adept at making mechanical models, such as a working windmill.

Hannah was barely literate, and sceptical of the worth of academic interests, but her brother, William Ayscough together with Henry Stokes, both graduates of Cambridge University, arranged for Isaac to enter Trinity College in 1661 to pursue his growing academic interests.³ Even so, Hannah, now a wealthy widow, begrudged supporting her son financially, so that he was consigned to the lowest level of undergraduate entrant. At that time Cambridge recognized students in three categories – *noblemen* (who dined at high table, wore ornate gowns and received their degrees with minimal examination), *pensioners*, who paid for their tuition; and *sizars*, who earned their keep by menial service to other students (such as waiting at meals, running errands and emptying others' chamber pots). Newton was enrolled as a *subsizar* (!), whose duties were so demanding that few could devote adequate time to their studies: but this didn't apply to the scholarly Newton.

Whether as a compensation for the harsh, loveless regime that had dominated his childhood, or the solitude which had given him ample time for reflection, by the time he went to Cambridge Isaac had developed a voracious appetite for learning: within weeks of arriving at Cambridge, he had cut himself off from the other sizars, and following the pattern he had adopted at school he began his studious, pious and lonely undergraduate career in virtual solitude.^{W48}

Partly, this isolation might have been due to the fact that, at nineteen, he was two years older than his class-mates, but probably of more significance were his Puritan ethics. According to biographer Michael White: *Newton was a good Puritan, but, craving learning for the greater glory of his God, he had dived into the murky, heretical pool of alchemy believing that there he could discover the secrets of Nature. Religious zeal was one of his prime motivators and like almost all other thinkers, as well as uneducated folk of his day, he lived and died believing wholeheartedly in divine guidance.*^{W149} In fact,

³ This was the year when Charles II was proclaimed King, following the execution in 1649 of his father Charles I. It marked the beginning of the period of the Restoration during which some order was established following the chaotic events of the Civil War, which involved replacing the English monarchy by the *Commonwealth of England* and the unification of the British Isles under the brief personal rule of Oliver Cromwell (1653–58).

it was only after his death that many of his hidden papers were discovered and it became evident that he was not only a secret alchemist,⁴ but *in the breadth of his knowledge and his experimentation, he was the peerless alchemist of Europe.*^{G101}

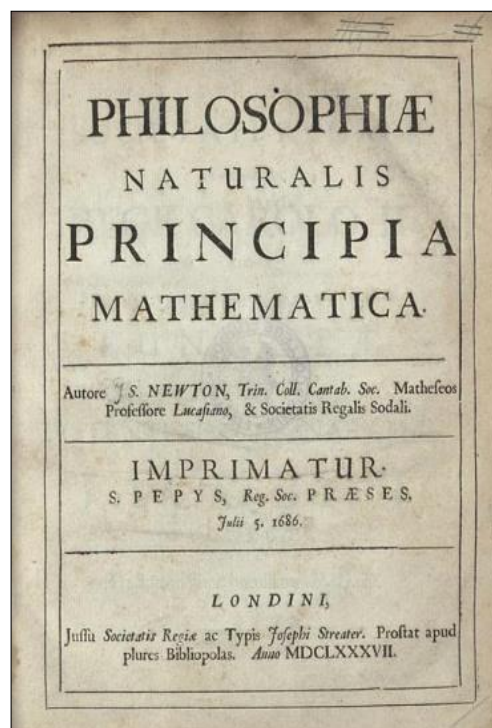
For some ‘scientists’ at that time (although the word only acquired its modern meaning in the 19th century) alchemy was simply ‘medieval chemistry.’ But for others it *was a grandiose philosophical system ... which aimed at harmonising the mysteries of creation and of life.* It is, however, important not to dismiss such beliefs out of hand, but to try to get inside the minds of educated thinkers at the time. While the 17th and 18th centuries are often considered as heralding a period of enlightenment and the emergence of an age of reason, such labels are only half-truths. For at that time, the boundaries of science and pseudo-science were ill-defined, and science could merge into metaphysics in a way most people now find unacceptable. Thus Newton could, on the one hand propound his revolutionary theory of gravitation, while on the other he was secretly engaged in experiments in alchemy and attempting to decipher the language in the Book of Daniel.

Newton believed in God, ‘*not as an obligation but as the warp and weft of his understanding of Nature.*’ Alchemy was central to his philosophy of science, because he was convinced that *matter was active, not passive; and vital, not inert.*^{G103} In the same way that living organisms develop and grow, inanimate material was subject a similar form of development – transmutation – of which chemical reactions were often a dramatic demonstration

One important alchemical belief concerned the *philosopher’s stone*, by which it was held that base metals, such as lead, could be turned (i.e. transmuted) into gold. Another property of the stone was that it could catalyse the formation of the *elixir of life* (i.e. the perfect panacea for all human ills).^{R14}

For Newton, God had ‘*established the rules by which the universe operates, a handiwork that humans must strive to know*’^{G110} and in both his theological beliefs and his alchemical enquiries he felt he was engaged in a quest for ancient truths that had been perverted in past centuries. In short, he believed he was doing God’s work, and that if one were one to discover the key to the way God had ordered the universe it would enable humans to employ this knowledge to great effect in promoting human health and wealth. In this belief he was greatly influenced by the Rosicrucian movement, a secret society whose members were claimed to *have spiritualised and refined the significance of alchemy.*^{W117}

Fearing that others might upstage them, this led those with alchemical beliefs (who included the scientist Robert Boyle – of the eponymous Law, and philosopher John Locke) to be very secretive about their discoveries and theories. But the fact is that, far from frustrating Newton in his quest to discover the fundamental laws governing the physical nature of matter, these mystical assumptions seem, ironically, to have provided the spur to Newton to solve previously inexplicable mysteries. And the rigour with which he pursued his enquiries led him to make the momentous discoveries about motion and light which he later published in ‘*Philosophiae mathematica*’ and many other volumes.



⁴ *Post mortem* analysis of Newton’s hair revealed high concentrations of mercury, which were undoubtedly due to its use in his alchemical research and may well have been the cause of his episodes of mental illness.

His important scientific discoveries were mostly made back at Woolsthorpe Manor, where in 1665 he sought refuge from the spread of the Plague, (i.e. the *bubonic plague*, a bacterial infection carried by fleas and lice). This led to the death of 100,000 people in London alone. Following his graduation at age 23 years, Woolsthorpe provided a quiet, peaceful environment that allowed him to immerse himself in the physics and mathematics that had first occupied him at Cambridge.

Firstly, he aimed to determine universal equations involving fluctuating quantities, and by 1666, he had effectively solved this problem with a series of papers on the rules of fluxions, subsequently



known as *calculus*. Then he turned his attention to the study of optics, which revealed that colours are not modifications of white light, but that white light comprises all components of the spectrum. Finally, this was the period, often associated with the (probably legendary) story of the falling apple striking him on the head, which led to the law of universal gravitation, namely, that gravitational forces are proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

By the Spring of 1667, the Plague had abated, thus paving the way for Newton to return to Cambridge, where he was soon appointed Lucasian Professor of Mathematics. There he was able to announce his theories and

demonstrate the unanticipated discoveries which he had made during the previous two years. They were discoveries that were to profoundly change, for all time, social life England, and subsequently the rest of the world, notably in making possible the Industrial Revolution.

Despite his frequently argumentative mood and gruff manner, Newton's genius was recognised and lauded in his life time. He was appointed President of the Royal Society (1703-1724) and was knighted in 1705. He was also the Member of Parliament for Cambridge University for two years, and appointed Master of the Royal Mint (1699-1707).

I believe this brief analysis shows that Newton's espousal of alchemy, and what others in a more sinister vein have called *sorcery*, did not inhibit his discovery of several fundamental features of the universe we inhabit. On the contrary, his belief that there are rational, immutable laws of nature (that seemed not incompatible with his theological and alchemical presumptions) was the driving force behind the momentous discovery of laws of physics.

The fact is that we *all* make certain unprovable assumptions. Some seem to work, others don't. I suspect that, intellectually, Newton was both a genius – and lucky. Even so, he was certainly not lucky in personal relationships, which one might speculate was largely due to his very unhappy childhood. Perhaps this early misery provided the stimulus for original thought – though few aspiring parents would presumably now aim to emulate the harsh upbringing he was exposed to.

3. Feline Philosophy: cats and the meaning of life by John Gray (Allen Lane, 2020): a review

A book with such a title, of only just over 100 pages, seemed like a good choice for Christmas, when reading tends to be interrupted by an unfamiliar routine. I reviewed one of his earlier books, *The Silence of Animals* in March, 2018 (Issue 1 of this Review) and found it stimulating in challenging much contemporary philosophy, which both he and I consider takes insufficient account of the biological fact that, whatever else we have become, humans are still animals. This book re-iterates many arguments advanced then, and indeed in other books such as his *Straw Dogs*.

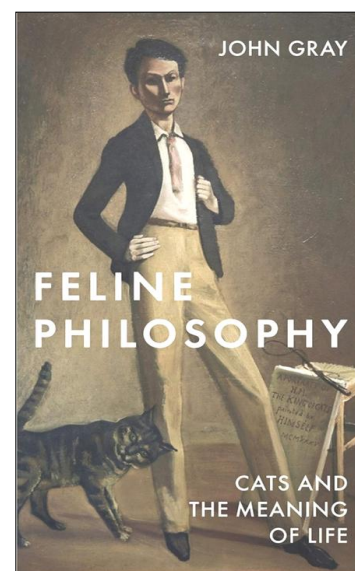
What the book invites us to do is compare our allegedly impoverished human condition - plagued by disappointments, frustration and misery, with the contented, essentially *amoral* lives of cats. In arguing his case he throws in a number of memorable one-liners, such as '*Whereas cats live by following their nature, humans live by suppressing theirs*' (p.22) and '*Philosophy has rarely been an open-ended inquiry: today it is the practice of elucidating the prejudices of middle-class academics.*' (p. 26) But anyone imagining this to be a bland, reassuring account for actual and prospective felinephiles (there *is* such a word) might well be disappointed.

Much of the book is about people, both in terms of their dislike of, or obsessive attachment to, cats (e.g. with graphic accounts of their brutal torture and execution in medieval times) - and with reference to the alleged delusions under which people seek to pursue lives guided by moral beliefs and practices. Chapter 2, *Why cats do not struggle to be Happy* and Chapter 3, *Feline Ethics* are both really about what Gray sees as our naivety in seeking happiness. Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Pascal, Montaigne, Hobbes, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer *et al*- all get a mention in a romp through history, but are all found wanting – to greater or lesser degree.

But in a more leisurely, reflective mood he provides touching biographical vignettes of some cat lovers, such as Dr Johnson and Hodge, theologian Nicholas Berdyaev and Muri – and, but less endearingly, the American novelist Patricia Highsmith, who vowed that if she found who had docked the tail of a local cat she would not hesitate to shoot '*and kill*' them! An impending *catastrophe*?

Having dismissed over 2000 years of earnest philosophical deliberation on 'the meaning of life,' by what seem to be remarkably perceptive insights Gray claims that he knows exactly what goes on in cats' minds –having kept four of them over a period of 30 years. These insights convince him that cats provide us with the real knowledge we all seek – that will enable us to live contentedly all our lives. I don't keep a cat, but family members and friends do, and I know they have strong bonds of attachment to them. A large part of their charm is surely due to the fact that they remain, largely, wild animals, with characters that are resistant to influences that affect more-domesticated animals.

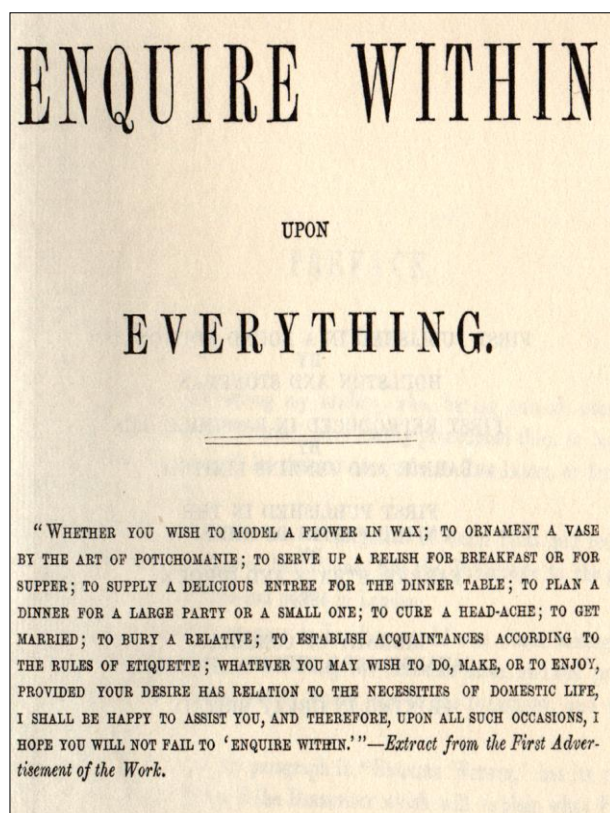
But if I have to choose between modelling my moral ideals on the wisdom, intelligence and sensitivity of certain 'saintly' people, many of whom have left written accounts of their beliefs, or aping the (of course, forgivable) egocentric amorality of cats, I think I'll continue to seek inspiration more from the former than the latter. Crucially for me, egocentricity and morality are totally incompatible. As philosopher J S Mill opined; '*Better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.*' Or, indeed, a cat.



4. Victorian Googling ?

Indisputably, the various branches of Google now permeate humanity's social and physical environments to an extent that would hardly be considered acceptable for other commercial activities. For it is now accessed in 90% of the world's countries and 3.5 billion Google searches are made every day. Unsurprisingly, the enormous power it exerts has been the subject of a number of legal challenges. For example, in July this year, along with other tech giants (Apple, Amazon and Facebook), Google was accused of maintaining harmful power and anti-competitive tactics to undermine potential competitors. Moreover, Google has been involved in a number of lawsuits resulting in its being one of four companies to pay out a US\$415 million settlement to employees.

Among people who reflect seriously on the impact of such a dominant means of information dissemination, at least some might well recall the old dictum '*power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely*' and fear that it applies with increasing force to these global companies. But was it ever so? For example did those who sought to satisfy people's hunger for facts and news in the Victorian era perform the same sort of service, albeit in a much less accessible manner?



This article provides an example of the sources of information available to middle class Britons in the mid-19th century – and, to bring the issue more into the time frame of some readers, it includes excerpts from a similar form of reference book, published in the immediately post war period.

The excerpts from the 1856 edition of *Enquire Within* (of which the title page is shown here) demonstrate that the authors were not just concerned with practicalities, like food, medicines, housework, handiwork and letter-writing but had a clear mission to provide what might be classed as 'moral guidance.' For although in the Preface the editor refers to *my readers*, he/she goes on to say that the 350 page, double-columned guide '*is peopled by thousands of ladies and gentlemen*, who have approved the plan of the work, and contributed to its store of useful information. The editor continues, in lyrical mode: *We must not*

separate the thought from the mind that gave it birth; we must not look upon these writings as we should upon the traces left by a snail upon a green leaf, having neither form nor meaning.'

The following three pages (e.g. beginning at paragraph 194) reveal norms of attitude and conduct then associated with marriage that surely have little parallel in today's world, 164 years later; not least because a patronising mood towards wives pervades the accounts. What might be surprising is the openness and candour expressed, from both male and female perspectives, in an era often characterised as prudish and tight-lipped. There's a clear sense of an 'Agony Aunt' at work in seeking to smooth out marital problems!

her of jealousy. A little concern on her part only proves her love for you, and you may enjoy your triumph without saying a word. Don't evince your weakness either, by complaining of every trifling neglect. What though her chair is not set so close to yours as it used to be, or though her knitting and crochet seem to absorb too large a share of her attention, depend upon it that, as her eyes watch the intertwinings of the threads, and the manœuvres of the needles as they dance in compliance to her delicate fingers, she is thinking of courting days, love-letters, smiles, tears, suspicions, and reconciliations, by which your two hearts became entwined together in the network of love, whose meshes you can neither of you unravel or escape.

194. HINTS FOR WIVES.—Never complain that your husband pores too much over the newspaper, to the exclusion of that pleasing converse which you formerly enjoyed with him. Don't hide the paper; don't give it to the children to tear; don't be sulky when the boy leaves it at the door; but take it in pleasantly, and lay it down before your spouse. Think what man would be without a newspaper; treat it as a great agent in the work of civilisation, which it assuredly is; and think how much good newspapers have done by exposing bad husbands and bad wives, by giving their errors to the eye of the public. But manage you in this way: when your husband is absent, instead of gossiping with neighbours, or looking into shop windows, sit down quietly, and look over that paper; run your eye over its home and foreign news; glance rapidly at the accidents and casualties; carefully scan the leading articles; and at tea-time, when your husband again takes up the paper, say, "My dear, what an awful state of things there seems to be in India;" or "what a terrible calamity at the Glasgow theatre;" or "trade appears to be flourishing in the north!" and depend upon it down will go the paper. If he has not read the information, he will

hear it all from your lips, and when you have done, he will ask, "Did you, my dear, read Simpson's letter upon the discovery of chloroform?" And whether you did or not, you will gradually get into as cosy a chat as you ever enjoyed; and you will soon discover that, rightly used, the newspaper is the wife's real friend, for it keeps the husband at home, and supplies capital topics for every-day table-talk.

195. HINTS FOR HUSBANDS.—You can hardly imagine how refreshing it is to occasionally call up the recollection of your courting days. How tediously the hours rolled away prior to the appointed time of meeting; how swift they seemed to fly, when met; how fond was the first greeting; how tender the last embrace; how fervent were your vows; how vivid your dreams of future happiness, when, returning to your home, you felt yourself secure in the confessed love of the object of your warm affections. Is your dream realised?—are you so happy as you expected? Why not? Consider whether as a husband you are as fervent and constant as you were when a lover. Remember that the wife's claims to your unremitting regard—great before marriage, are now exalted to a much higher degree. She has left the world for you—the home of her childhood, the fireside of her parents, their watchful care and sweet intercourse have all been yielded up for you. Look then most jealously upon all that may tend to attract you from home, and to weaken that union upon which your temporal happiness mainly depends; and believe that in the solemn relationship of husband is to be found one of the best guarantees for man's honour and happiness.

196. HINTS FOR WIVES.—Perchance you think that your husband's disposition is much changed; that he is no longer the sweet-tempered, ardent lover he used to be. This may be a mistake. Consider his struggles with the world—his everlasting race with the busy competition of trade. What is it makes

him so eager in the pursuit of gain—so energetic by day, so sleepless by night—but his love of home, wife, and children, and a dread that their respectability, according to the light in which he has conceived it, may be encroached upon by the strife of existence. This is the true secret of that silent care which preys upon the hearts of many men; and true it is, that when love is least apparent, it is nevertheless the active principle which animates the heart, though fears and disappointments make up a cloud which obscures the warmer element. As above the clouds there is glorious sunshine, while below are showers and gloom, so with the conduct of man—behind the gloom of anxiety is a bright fountain of high and noble feeling. Think of this in those moments when clouds seem to lower upon your domestic peace, and, by tempering your conduct accordingly, the gloom will soon pass away, and warmth and brightness take its place.

197. HINTS FOR HUSBANDS.—Summer is the season of love! Happy birds mate, and sing among the trees; fishes dart athwart the running streams, and leap from their element in resistless ecstasy; cattle group in peaceful nooks, by cooling streams; even the flowers seem to love as they twine their tender arms around each other, and throw their wild tresses about in beautiful profusion; the happy swain sits with his loved and loving mistress beneath the sheltering oak, whose arms spread out, as if to shield and sanctify their pure attachment. What shall the husband do now, when earth and heaven seem to meet in happy union? Must he still pore over the calculations of the counting-house, or ceaselessly pursue the toils of the work-room—sparing no moment to taste the joys which Heaven measures out so liberally? No! “Come, dear wife, let us once more breathe the fresh air of heaven, and look upon the beauties of earth. The summers are few we may dwell together; we will not give them all to Mammon. Again let our

hearts glow with emotions of renewed love—our feet shall again tread the green sward, and the music of the rustling trees shall mingle in our whisperings of love!”

198.—HINTS FOR WIVES.—“It was!” “It was not!” “It *was*!” “It was *not*!” “Ah!” “Ha!”—Now who’s the wiser or the better for this contention for the last word? Does obstinacy establish superiority, or elicit truth? Decidedly not! Woman has always been described as clamouring for the last word: actors, authors, preachers, and philosophers, have agreed in attributing this trait to her, and in censuring her for it. Yet why they should condemn her, unless they wish the matter reversed, and thus committed themselves to the error imputed to her, it were difficult to discover. However, so it is;—and it remains for some one of the sex, by an exhibition of noble example, to aid in sweeping away the unpleasant imputation. The wife who will establish the rule of allowing her husband to have the last word, will achieve for herself and her sex a great moral victory! Is he *right*?—it were a great error to oppose him. Is he *wrong*?—he will soon discover it, and applaud the self-command which bore unvexed his pertinacity. And gradually there will spring up such a happy fusion of feelings and ideas, that there will be no “last word” to contend about—but a steady and unruffled flow of generous sentiment.

199. HINTS FOR HUSBANDS.—When once a man has established a home, his most important duties have fairly begun. The errors of youth may be overlooked; want of purpose, and even of honour, in his earlier days may be forgotten. But from the moment of his marriage he begins to write his indelible history; not by pen and ink, but by actions—by which he must ever afterwards be reported and judged. His conduct at home; his solicitude for his family; the training of his children; his devotion to his wife; his regard for the great interests of eter-

nity; these are the tests by which his worth will ever afterwards be estimated by all who think or care about him. These will determine his position while living, and influence his memory when dead. He uses well or ill the brief space allotted to him, out of all eternity, to build up a fame founded upon the most solid of all foundations—private worth; and God will judge him, and man judge of him, accordingly.

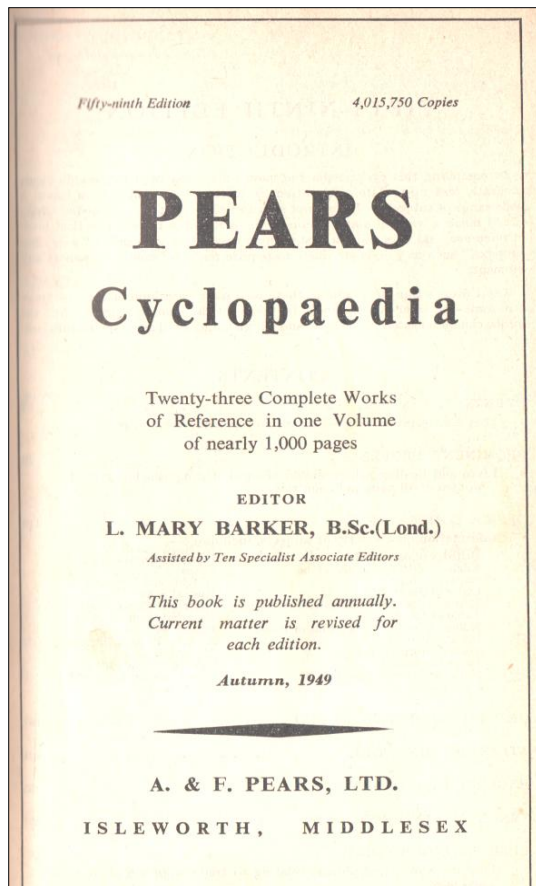
200. HINTS FOR WIVES.—Don't imagine when you have obtained a husband, that your attention to personal neatness and deportment may be relaxed. Now, in reality, is the time for you to exhibit superior taste and excellence in the cultivation of your address, and the becoming elegance of your appearance. If it required some little care to foster the admiration of a lover—how much more is requisite to keep yourself lovely in the eyes of him, to whom there is now no privacy or disguise—your hourly companion? And if it was due to your lover that you should always present to him, who *proposed* to wed and cherish you, a neat and lady-like aspect; how much more is he entitled to a similar mark of respect, who has *kept his promise with honourable fidelity*, and linked all his hopes of future happiness with yours? If you can manage these matters without appearing to study them, so much the better. Some husbands are impatient of the routine of the toilette, and not unreasonably so—they possess active and energetic spirits, sorely disturbed by any waste of time. Some wives have discovered an admirable facility in dealing with this difficulty; and it is a secret which, having been discovered by some, may be known to all—and is well worth the finding out.

201. HINTS FOR HUSBANDS.—Custom entitles you to be considered the “lord and master” over your household. But don't assume the *master* and sink the *lord*. Remember that noble generosity, forbearance, amiability, and integrity, are among the more lordly attributes of man. As a husband,

therefore, exhibit the true nobility of man, and seek to govern your own household by the display of high moral excellence. A domineering spirit—a fault-finding petulance—impatience of trifling delays—and the exhibition of unworthy passions at the slightest provocation, can add no laurel to your own “lordly” brow, impart no sweetness to home, and call forth no respect from those by whom you may be surrounded. It is one thing to be a *master*—another thing to be a *man*. The latter should be the husband's aspiration; for he who cannot govern himself is ill-qualified to govern another.

202. HINTS TO WIVES.—It is astonishing how much the cheerfulness of a wife contributes to the happiness of home. She is the sun—the centre of a domestic system, and her children are like planets around her, reflecting her rays. How merry the little ones look when the mother is joyous and good-tempered; and how easily and pleasantly her household labours are overcome! Her cheerfulness is reflected everywhere: it is seen in the neatness of her toilette, the order of her table, and even the seasoning of her dishes. We remember hearing a husband say that he could always gauge the temper of his wife by the quality of her cooking: good temper even influenced the seasoning of her soups, and the lightness and delicacy of her pastry. When ill-temper pervades, the pepper is dashed in as a cloud; perchance the top of the pepper-box is included, as a kind of diminutive thunderbolt; the salt is all in lumps; and the spices seem to betake themselves all to one spot in a pudding, as if dreading the frowning face above them. If there be a husband who could abuse the smiles of a really good-tempered wife, we should like to look at him! No, no, such a phenomenon does not exist. Among elements of domestic happiness, the amiability of the wife and mother is of the utmost importance—it is one of the best securities for THE HAPPINESS OF HOME.

Pears Cyclopaedia Almost a century later, in 1949, the 59th edition of this reference book was published by the company manufacturing Pears Soap. It proudly displayed Sir John Millais' *Bubbles* painting, which the company owned.



This 1000 page guide was more clearly utilitarian in its objectives, as indicated by its list of contents:

<p>Events</p> <p>Prominent people</p> <p>Office Compendium</p> <p>Gazetteer of the World</p> <p>Atlas of the World</p> <p>English Dictionary</p> <p>Synonyms and Antonyms</p> <p>Business Compendium</p> <p>General information</p> <p>Classical Mythology</p> <p>Student Compendium</p> <p>Radio, Television, Radar</p>	<p>Health and Beauty</p> <p>Cookery</p> <p>Medical</p> <p>Baby's First Year</p> <p>Gardening</p> <p>Photography</p> <p>Sports and Pastimes</p> <p>Poultry, Cage Birds etc</p> <p>Domestic Pets</p> <p>A Citizen's Guide</p> <p>Ready Reckoner</p>	<p>Keeping this up-to-date – a more feasible task then, than now - was even so a formidable challenge. But it is not difficult to understand that it provided a mine of useful information for a wide range of people, at work, study and recreation.</p> <p>Of course, modern technology can often provide more up-to-date information and more</p>
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quickly. But for people who are not in a hurry, but who enjoy discovering things they weren't expressly looking for – as I do in writing this Review – the printed word, and often the style of writing revealed, are pleasures it would be a great pity to lose.

5. 'Confessions of a Bookseller': a review by Penny Young

'He handled the books with the reverence of a minister opening the pulpit bible. I had polished the leather that morning till it gleamed like silk, and Mr Pumpherston's finger-tips rested upon it as if they were butterflies alighting on a choice flower.'

Shaun Bythell opens his *Confessions*, the second account of his life as a bookseller, by quoting from the spoof diary written by Augustus Muir, *The Intimate Thoughts of John Baxter, Bookseller* which was published by Methuen & Co in 1942. The quotation conjures up that frisson known to booklovers everywhere, and each chapter (i.e. month – it's written in diary form) begins with a quotation which evokes the highlights and lowlights of being a bookshop owner. Shaun's first book, *The Diary of a Bookseller*, similarly takes George Orwell's 'Bookshop Memories' as the introduction to each chapter.

Just recently I've taken to reading books about books – and about bookshops and libraries; and those by Shaun Bythell who runs the aptly if indistinguishably named The Bookshop in Wigtown, Scotland, are the most entertaining. His first books placed him and his shop firmly on the map, and this year he's followed them up with *Seven Kinds of People You Find in Bookshops*, an extended essay on observations made in the first two. At just 137 pages, the ratio of laugh-out-loud moments to number of pages is that much higher.



Shaun has developed a fine line in laconic humour and self-deprecation which overlays 20 years of experience and his own erudition. Most second-hand/antiquarian booksellers, I know, appear to enjoy (if that's the right word) a love-hate relationship with their chosen occupation, but in Shaun Bythell's case I'm convinced it's a totally love-love affair, which he hides well. He appears not unhappy with the reputation he's acquired for being grumpy, indeed being quite ready on occasion to live up to this, conveying the impression of a man who thinks the whole world is out to do him down, which one can well understand if the following exchanges are anything to go by (and they are):

At 2 p.m. a customer came to the counter with a beautifully illustrated book on salmon fishing from the 1920s . . . It was unpriced. He asked how much it was, and – feeling generous – I said, 'You can have it for £2.50.' He walked out muttering, 'I'll get it for less on Amazon.' [It was £22 on Amazon.]

Just before lunch a customer offered £10 for a book that we have priced at £80. I told him that if he asked politely he could have £10 off. He slammed the book down on the counter and walked out in 'disgust', at which point I decided that escapism from customers was the order of the day, and found a new book to read and hid in the office with Kidnapped – a fate I would quite happily have seen befall that last customer.

A bookseller's everyday existence may not seem terribly dramatic to write about, but Shaun's life is anything but monotonous. Apart from trying to keep recalcitrant staff in order, he has the mostly unalloyed pleasure of being at the hub of the annual Wigtown Book Festival when his life is overrun

by a maelstrom of organisers, writers, artists and others contributing to the success of events – caterers, people running bars, arranging flowers, moving furniture, sorting out the electricians and other handymen appearing at various crisis points, some of the participants occupying as house guests every spare inch of the shop's live-in accommodation:

Awoke at about 7.30 a.m. to the sound of doors slamming shut and someone talking very loudly. Got up to discover Eliot stomping about the place on the phone to his wife. Granny [her nickname] was in the kitchen, silently drinking her coffee and trying to read. As I put the kettle on, Eliot marched in and



sat down, and continued his telephone conversation while riffling through some papers on the table, which included my life insurance policy, a letter from Anna and some overdue invoices. I caught Granny's eye. She looked furious. I went back to bed with a cup of tea and tripped over Eliot's shoes, which he'd kicked off and deposited in the doorway. Managed to salvage about a third of the tea; the rest went over the carpet.

At other times the shop becomes a thoroughfare when rooms upstairs are used by various groups, some less noisy than others. On top of which distractions, there are times when he spends hours, days even, working as builder's/plumber's/electrician's mate, even converting one of the shop's underused rooms into accommodation for a member of staff hired for the summer – work which eventually gets finished after she's left!

Surprisingly, Shaun also finds time to go climbing or swimming with friends, fishing with his father, and socialising until the early hours. Also being collared by customers who think he has all the time in the world to listen to their life story and views on life, usually unacceptable ones to do with politics and religion. And then there's his mother, who likes to drop in to while away an hour or two.

In this more sparsely populated part of the British isles, he often drives miles to value people's collections that they're hoping to sell – and drive home again without them when his valuation falls short of the £££s the hopeful owners feel they're entitled to. To compensate, there is the occasional joy when he comes across rare and valuable editions, or some interesting snippet of publishing history – for example, when he happened to pick up 'an unprepossessing paperback copy of Patricia Wentworth's *Lonesome Road*' with its cover showing a box of chocolates with a syringe on top of it. The owner commented that the book was extremely rare and quite valuable, as Thorntons, the chocolate people, had objected to the cover because of the implied association of poison with chocolates, so that edition was quickly pulped and another cover designed.

You can google Shaun Bythell and The Bookshop and watch videos that he and various aides and abettors have produced. One of my favourites is 'Twas the Night Before Christmas' read by shop assistant Nicky, who I was surprised to see looked quite normal after Shaun's depiction of her throughout his books. If you watch it, look out for the black cat with wings!

Penny is the former editor of Folio, the quarterly arts magazine produced in Southwell

6. Christmas Crackers

Some, less-than-discreet, conversations

An exchange overheard between two distinguished Oxbridge philosophers

Prof Elizabeth Anscombe to Prof Alfred J Ayer:

If you didn't talk so fast people wouldn't think you were so intelligent.

Prof Alfred J Ayer to Prof Elizabeth Anscombe:

If you didn't talk so slowly people wouldn't think you were so profound.

An exchange overheard between monks of two orders

Brother A: Of course, we are famous for our skills in biblical exegesis.

Brother B: Bless you, but we are tops in humility.

An exchange between a nervous 20 year old student in a viva voce examination by an external examiner from Oxford University

Me (the student): Um, I would say thatwell, it all depends on....

Professor Whitteridge:

(well known, for his acerbic manner, as *a man of high IQ and low pH!*)

Come, come sir, it's a hot day, but do pull yourself together!

A Reader's novel Clerihew

Sir Isaac Newton's

Penchant for lunch was soup and croutons

But the Laws of Gravity guaranteed the galling habit

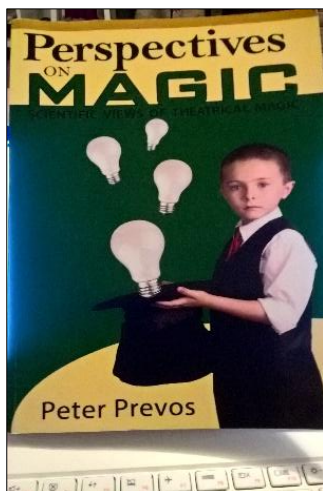
Of copious crumbs cascading to his lap, so he usually had rabbit.

(A timely response to my earlier invitation for innovations in this verse form)



7 Review of *Perspectives on Magic* by Peter Prevos (*Third Hemisphere*, 2013)

For many years, I've had an interest in the, rather unusual, combination of philosophy and conjuring – so Peter Prevos' book was quite a discovery. In this book, Prevos is keen to distance himself from much of contemporary magic, which he regards as 'frivolous,' 'egocentric,' 'mundane trickery' and 'cliqued entertainment'. He argues that his main interest in magic stems from '*the fact that magic is inherently philosophical*' and he is interested in '*what it can teach us about ourselves and the world around us*'



Failing to find a universally accepted definition of magic, Prevos opts to locate the roots of magic in both Science and Art. Contemporary magic is no longer about the mystical or the occult, nor is it '*used to predict the weather or heal the sick*'. Magic, he says, draws upon the principles of science (magnets, mirrors, mechanics, chemical reactions etc) but also the Arts (as a theatrical performance, designed to entertain, amuse, provoke and puzzle spectators).

But does magic have any real purpose? It is easy to think that in modern day life, roles performed by '*miracle workers and alchemists*' have been replaced by doctors, scientists and entertainers. Is there, then, any practical use for conjuring? Prevos' thorough research lists many examples of magic tricks used in society today to help, as well as entertain, people. Occupational therapists are increasingly using magic – card, coin, rope tricks etc- as part of patient therapy, helping patients manage their disabilities, improve dexterity and fine tune motor skills. In schools and prisons, magic tricks have been successfully taught to children and adults to improve their confidence, self-esteem and reasoning and critical thinking skills. (But escapology is one branch that is *not* taught!)

In my own school, at least a couple of times a year, I set aside my role as head teacher and perform a trick for the whole school. I invite the children to use their reasoning skills to infer and deduce how it might have been done. The signed note that disappears in flames, only to appear again inside a lemon within a locked box, is a favourite of mine! Tricks have been used in many schools as a stimulus for learning during lessons in literacy, drama and science and maths investigations. The Magic Society of Great Britain currently delivers magical performances in Primary Schools to accompany moral messages on topics ranging from the importance of good attendance, protecting the environment and on bullying, internet safety and. child protection. Some university research indicates that magic tricks have been used successfully to reduce anxiety in dental patients, and tricks have also been used, in the fields of psychology and psychotherapy, to support the recovery of hospital patients.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter of the book is entitled 'How can we so easily be deceived?' Here Prevos really provoked and stimulated my thinking. He discusses research undertaken by psychologists and sociologists into techniques employed by successful magicians, the reactions of audiences and examples of how the mind is easily deceived by words, actions, misdirection and sleight of hand. Perhaps good magicians today are doing much more than trying to fool us or entertain us. Indeed, it could be argued that they are trying to show us how easy it is to deceive people. Magic might lead us to question in what other ways we are being deceived. Do we know what is real and what is fake (news)? How do we know that what we see around is not actually some kind of illusion?

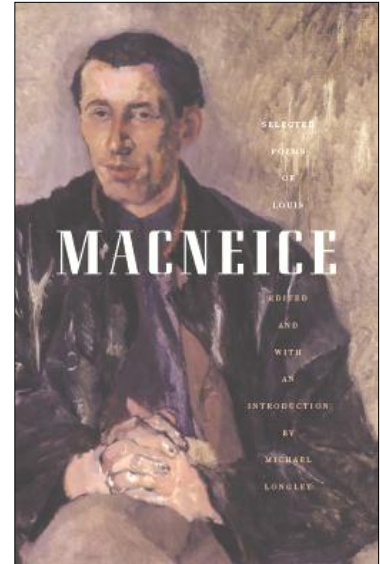
Perhaps, then, in a small way, these questions about magic, shadow some of the bigger philosophical themes of perception, knowledge, reality and existence. I think this is what Prevos is really hinting at! *Perspectives on Magic* helps us, both young and old, to think more deeply about magic. It makes us reflect, makes us question and makes us wonder. Maybe, this is the real point of magic.

Jim Mephram is the Head Teacher of a South Gloucestershire Primary School

8. A Seasonal Reflection

Five years ago, when I started this e journal – then with the modest title ‘*The Gladstone Books Newsletter*’ – I concluded it with a poem by the Irish poet Louis MacNeice, who was a contemporary and friend of W H Auden. Given the difficult times we are all now going through, it seems not inappropriate to reproduce it again here. Apart from ‘85’ years, the italicized comments are as written then.

Each year, the Christmas season’s customary rituals, many of which date back only to the Dickensian era, seem to begin progressively earlier; a process doubtless driven by powerful consumerist influences. But in contrast, being followed so soon by the New Year, Christmas often elicits an uncommon depth of reflection as we look both backwards and to the future, with a sense of hope coupled with apprehension.



The following excerpts from a poem written 85 years ago by Louis MacNeice are a reminder of a similarly sombre mood that pervaded society then. But it is a mood that was perhaps assuaged, in the final lines, - which he acknowledged are open to personal forms of interpretation - by the poet's intimations of humanity's indomitable sense of hope.

An Eclogue for Christmas

A. I meet you in an evil time.

B. The evil bells put out of our heads, I think, the thought of everything else.

A. The jaded calendar revolves

Its nuts need oil, carbon chokes the valves.

The excess sugar of a diabetic culture

Rotting the nerve of life and literature;

Therefore when we bring out the old tinsel and frills

To announce that Christ is born among the barbarous hills

I turn to you whom a morose routine

Saves from the mad vertigo of being what has been

The poem concludes 5 pages later, as follows:

A. Let the saxophones and the xylophones

And the cult of every technical excellence, the miles of canvas in the galleries

And the canvas of the rich man’s yacht snapping and tacking on the seas

And the perfection of a grilled steak ...

B. Let all these so ephemeral things

Be somehow permanent like the swallow's tangent wings:

Goodbye to you, this day remember is Christmas, this morn

They say, interpret it your own way, Christ is born.

Louis MacNeice (1935)