

## **John Woodcock and Braziers**

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I feel honoured to have been asked to give this lecture which has been given the name of our founder, Norman Glaister. My subject now will be John Woodcock, a long-term Member of Braziers, the influences and experiences throughout his life and, in particular, how they affected his relationship with Braziers, which spanned over forty years. I believe this relationship to have been creative and developmental on both sides. Many of you will remember John, but for those who didn't, or who knew him only slightly, what was he like? What sort of person was he? What kind of life did he have?

Thinking about John, I am reminded of an old saying which I'm sure many people will know, and which I believe may be of some relevance here: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing". Most of us are foxes, living according to what life may throw at us: our own talents and preferences, our work, relationships, aspirations, and usefulness in the scheme of things. We may change tack, of course, go to live somewhere different, find new interests or retrieve some old interest from the distant past. We thrive on diversity, on the variety of life. True hedgehogs are different. At the back of their minds is the one big thing, still there, even if unfulfilled or apparently thwarted, and it may grow more insistent as they go on through life.

Thinking again about John Woodcock, one can see that in many ways he led the life of a fairly successful fox: he trained and started out as an engineer, served briefly in the Fleet Air Arm and learned to fly an aeroplane at the end of World War II. After the war, he was sent to Turkey by his company, G.N.Hayden, to work on the new parliament building in Ankara, for four years. Next, for twenty-five years, he modernised and ran A.E.Walker, his stepfather's family business, a manufacturing stationers' in London, with a workforce of 150 people. Then, after that family business suffered a hostile take-over, and he was made redundant, John first tried to help establish a small cooperative factory in Reading. When this endeavour proved impossible, he did something quite different, but very much in tune with his principles. He became the administrative head of an educational charity, the U.K. Teilhard de Chardin Centre in London, for the nine years up to his retirement from it in 1989. It was quite a varied life. He also got married and had two children, and, incidentally, I believe that we, as a family, benefited very much from our association with Braziers. Our children grew up with Glynn and Margaret Faithfull's children. John himself was a kind and compassionate man. He had many good friends and acquaintances. He seldom got angry, though someone has reminded me of one occasion when he did; these were rare. He had played rugby, and like watching television football. And he had a fairly fox-like hobby: building model railways. In retirement he'd spend hours in his "railway shed" in the garden, working on the very complicated layouts he'd devised for his little N gauge engines and trains, the smallest ones they make.

On the other hand, John showed many of the characteristics of the true hedgehog. He was not religious in any conventional sense, but his "one big thing", which had the

force of religion for him, was the idea of cosmic evolution. (At the end of his life he preferred to call it "emergence", following some cosmologists today.) The history of the cosmos is an emerging paradigm: the universe is as yet unfinished, from the so-called Big Bang, or "cosmic flare", as the cosmologist Brian Swimme prefers to call it, to the history of our planet Earth and all life on it. Cosmic development seems to occur in a series of stages, following a pattern of increasing complexity, and it seems that our human selves are part of this continuing process, "the process of which we are a part", as the summary of our aims and values here at Braziers says. It is our task to understand humanity's true place in this developing process, so that we may be able to play some part in facilitating it, for evolution is ongoing, not yet finished. If we are not aware of this continuing process, or if we just ignore it because it is not in any doubt from scientists, we fall short, and are stuck, John believed.

It really mattered to John that we should not be stuck, that we should not ignore evolution or deny our place in nature. Hence, at the end of his life, the Timewalk, a journey through cosmic evolution, which John set up in the Braziers estate with Ken Chiba's artwork and practical help from the house-team. John's Timewalk was not original; other people, notably Professor Chris Clarke and Michael and Erna Colebrook of Greenspirit, have created and led Timewalks in different parts of the country, one or two of which John and I took part in. These are country walks along the seashore or through woods and fields, great experiences, but not permanent in any way. They are scientifically exact, detailed and quite complicated for people to understand. John had learned the motto "adopt, adapt, improve", from the Round Table, a young businessmen's organisation he had belonged to. He wanted to make a simplified Timewalk which everyone could follow and internalise, even children, for he had learned that children at some Montessori schools were making timewalks and following them. John arranged a presentation about it from one Montessori teacher at a summer school here. He hoped that timewalks would become permanent, or semi-permanent, presentations, all over the place, perhaps but not necessarily out of doors, with structures, and artwork, like the one Braziers had, and like the one he tried, unsuccessfully, to introduce into his old school, Christ's Hospital.

According to what he has written, John's interest in evolution began even then, while he was still at school. He'd inherited from his father, who died when John was only eight years old, the family name "Wedgwood", and he discovered a very distant connection, way back, to Josiah Wedgwood and therefore to Charles Darwin, who married a Wedgwood. This somewhat tenuous family connection, he thought later, might have first aroused his interest in Darwinian evolution, that is, the evolution of life on this planet, for the evolution of the whole cosmos had not yet, in the 1930's and 40's, been verified by science. Certainly John has written that he felt that the theory of the evolution of life on this planet itself might offer some clues to the great philosophical question "how do we know what we should do?" He saw that traditional beliefs were to some extent being lost and not replaced, at least in the West. As a child he had not himself been indoctrinated into any firm religious belief. The extended family, presided over, very benignly, by his grandfather, and in which John lived for some years as a child, with his mother and older sister, was open and tolerant.

Living and working for four years in Turkey was important for John. As a young man, contact with a very different culture was important in itself; he made Turkish friends and directed a Turkish workforce. But Turkey also gave John more time for reflection and for reading, in spite of the usual ex-pat social life in Ankara. John also struck up a

lasting friendship with Hans Lundström, then an attaché at the Swedish Embassy. They went skiing together and also had long philosophical discussions. The friendship continued when they returned to their own countries. There were visits both ways over the years. Hans and his family visited Braziers, and his wife Eva came on the house-team one autumn in the late 70's. Hans died in the late 1990's, but friendship between the two families continues to this day.

John has written that, after he returned to London to take charge of the family business, he did not see where his philosophical enquiries could go, and he put them on hold, as it were. Work, friendships and social life took over. However, the breakthrough came in 1958, for, in that year, John discovered Braziers and met Norman Glaister. Alan Clark has written about how that meeting came about, and I am quoting from him here: "A letter, written by John Murrell to the **'Sunday Times'**, first brought Braziers to John's attention. The paper had published a series of articles on "The Destiny of Man" to which Julian Huxley contributed an evolutionary perspective, and John Murrell's letter drew attention to Braziers' practical interest in attempting to live out evolutionary insights through small groups and community".

John said that he first approached Braziers with some caution. What sort of place could it be? Going to Braziers was a step into the unknown for John. As we have seen, his family and his business background were extremely conventional, and he had never felt the need to become any sort of rebel. Only in his thinking was he truly unconventional, as would emerge later. I also remember that John had left school at sixteen, and after that had no background in academia or in education of any sort. That came later, and he was almost completely self-taught, a fact that he in no way deplored, since he felt that not having much schooling, and not going to university, had enabled him to think with more independence, and he seems to have been a natural, intuitive philosopher. Anyway, armed with the **'Sunday Times'** article and the Murrell letter, John drove from London to Braziers one afternoon, with three friends who had come for the ride. He was quite prepared to retreat, without going in, if he didn't like the look of the place. Fortunately John did go in, leaving his friends in the car.

Norman Glaister and other people met him in the hall, and that meeting was a turning point for John. He was thirty-four; Norman was about seventy-five, a father figure for John. They seemed to have hit it off immediately, Norman being delighted to have such an enquiry following the newspaper article and John Murrell's letter.

John Woodcock left, no doubt promising to return as soon as possible. Working in London, he became a very regular weekend visitor to Braziers, happily participating in everything: the courses that interested him, and all the chores in house and garden. He had a natural ability to fit in wherever he was. As everyone knows, Braziers had been purchased in 1950 but had no endowments. It was very Spartan in those days - and extremely cold in winter. No proper central heating was working then, and the food and accommodation were very basic. John didn't mind all that in the least. He had found the answer to the question "what do we need to do?"

Here was the link between theory and practice. At Braziers Norman Glaister and his colleagues introduced John to Wilfred Trotter's **"Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War"** and the idea of "sensory" as the complement to "resistive" or "executive". John came to believe, as did the founders of Braziers, that both are necessary for the truly successful continuation and, more importantly, for the development of any organisation or group, 'inter-thinking', as well as interacting, between people. Inter-

thinking was a term John used to describe the mutual and reciprocal sharing of thoughts and ideas. John also came to believe that the future of humanity, and therefore the future of this planet, and indeed of the cosmos itself, depends not on the human individual but on the human group; for humanity, with all its failings, is the only life form with developing consciousness. But it is clear that each human individual is incomplete; we need to come together, to share our talents and our insights, to be "persons in relation", as another of John's heroes, the philosopher John Macmurray, wrote. This may seem optimistic, but John was ever an optimist, and at Braziers he encountered a place founded in a spirit of idealism and optimism, in spite of the threat to the world posed then, in 1950, by the beginning of the Cold War.

In 1996 John himself was to give this Glaister Lecture, choosing as his title "Norman Glaister and Multimentality". He summed up what he had learned from Norman. John quoted from the early Braziers literature, the 1950 brochure in particular. Braziers is there described as a "centre from which, by the interpenetration of ideas and experience, fruitful relationships may be newly perceived or created, and new forms of thought emerge", an "adventure", in which we are all invited to participate. Moreover, Braziers had been founded, by Norman and his colleagues, "to study and to co-operate with the evolutionary process". Its long-term, very idealistic, aim, was "to pave the way", eventually, for what Norman called a "multimental organism" but which John preferred to name "multimentality", to avoid the limitation of the biological term. Towards the next stage in evolution, no less! Norman found, however, that few people could take this idealistic aim on board, and John said that he had heard him express regrets about this. However, unlike many idealists, Norman had a "means whereby". This was the "sociological aim", which people found more acceptable and understandable, and which Braziers has in fact followed to this day. Sensory meetings, no less, were to be the means whereby. It is significant that Norman had hoped, in founding Braziers as an experiment, to develop the "sensory" side of the organisation, that it might become a model for others. He had already, before that, tried to introduce sensory meetings into various organisations, such as the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry and Sir Richard Ackland's left wing political party Common Wealth, but with limited success. Sensory meetings, then, had been for Norman a "means whereby", towards, eventually, a real new development in human group thinking and living. An evolutionary development! John, in his lecture, said he felt he needed to refer to this idealistic long-term aim with some trepidation. He felt that it was then, back in the 1950's, and still is, in conflict with almost all the prevailing cultural norms.

John, however, throughout his life, was in agreement with Norman on both fronts, as it were. Following Norman, he encouraged Braziers to experiment with different kinds of sensory/executive differentiation, as well as with community living itself, and with techniques of dialogue. Braziers' long, fairly stable period, and the continuation of the community, under Glynn and Margaret, facilitated John's endeavours. (We have to remember that in Norman's day, in the 1950's, there had been more than one so-called "schism"; serious differences of opinion about what Braziers should be doing, and attempts to take it over in the interests of different factions.) As for the theory of evolutionary development and humanity's place in it, Norman, as I have said, had always had found scepticism when he put it forward, and John had the same problem. Any ideas about future human development go against all the prevailing cynicism and despair, which have increased, since Norman's day, and since John's, even, with the present environmental crisis. People like James Lovelock

and Jared Diamond are now thinking that we will destroy this planet and ourselves with it, before too long. But cosmic evolution itself, cosmogenesis, to use Teilhard de Chardin's word (and I shall come to him in a moment), has been increasingly verified by science, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and today. Evolution, or emergence, is now perceived by scientists as a cosmic event, not only biological, as Darwin had thought. "From the cosmic dust to the pulsating texture of the human mind", as a very early proponent of the theory, L.L. Whyte, another of John's - and Norman's - heroes, had written as long ago as the 1940's.

John's participation in Braziers was to continue and this relationship became, as Alan Clark has written, "central to the rest of his active and questing life". He served on the Committee of Management continuously from 1960 to 1996, at one time or another holding every formal place on it, except the Secretaryship, as Alan says. It is interesting that for many years he was typecast as an "executive", since he was clearly that in his working life, though not otherwise. In those days, following Wilfred Trotter, Braziers' thinking held it that an individual was either one or the other, 95% being "resistive", in other words "executive", and only 5% "sensory" - that is, I emphasise, according to Trotter. The Sensory Committee was thus confined to only a few long-serving individuals. John felt, however, that this particular idea of Trotter's needed revision; human beings are more complicated than that. He thought it was inaccurate, and too restrictive and elitist. So it was, that in the 70's and 80's John attempted to promote the "sensory extension", a monthly evening meeting of three small groups, open to all the house-team and to anyone else able to attend. This was the start of Braziers' experiments with a range of sensory meetings.

In 1960, after John had discovered Braziers, and with it an enthusiasm for the idea of community, he embarked on a new venture, a separate urban community in north London, "No. 14 Haslemere Road". This was a small group of people who had all met at Braziers. Two of them, Phyllis Jones and John himself, were able to purchase a big old house, and to set up a sort of intentional extended family. John himself had had a good experience of the extended family as a child, when he lived in his grandfather's house, after his father's death. The Haslemere Road community adopted the same organisation as Braziers, that is, separate sensory and executive committees, and, since there were only eight or nine residents, we all served on these. Democratic, then. One thing that John was very proud of was that Haslemere Road demonstrated also the fact that people could live well on very little money - if they lived in community. Unlike at Braziers, it was intended that most of the community should have outside jobs, to be "outworkers", to use an old Braziers term. There was no educational programme of courses, but open evenings were held for visitors, and those who wished could attend study evenings. One of the books John chose for these was Gerald Heard's "Training for a Life of Growth", which puts forward an optimistic scenario, if we are prepared to attempt self-understanding and self-development. Later, a second London community, nearby, was started by John and Ann Murrell and Gailean Davidson, with John Woodcock's financial assistance. Joint meetings took place, and also Saturday meetings, which included a contingent from Braziers itself, as well as other, outside, friends. Unlike Braziers, however, these small residential communities were only able to stay in being for a few years. Community is not easy, as we all know.

The early 60's were important for John in other ways also. Through one of the people at Haslemere Road, Bernard Stiles, John came into contact with the ideas of the psychologist C.G. Jung, and met P.W. Martin, a Jungian whose interest in dreams had

led him to set up a group of lay people to share their dreams and try to understand them. John joined this group, as I did myself later. He set up a dream-group, for those interested, at Haslemere Road itself, and later still he was able to convene other dream-groups, over the years. He believed, as I do, that dreams are a useful tool for self-understanding and that, especially with the help of a group, and when people can trust one another enough, understanding can grow. John also came to be particularly interested in Jung's concept of psychological types, later expanded by Myers and Briggs. This made sense to John, particularly as a tool for self- and mutual-understanding in a group. Later, we both attended weekends elsewhere, to explore it further. From the sixties onwards John began to convene weekends on Jung at Braziers, sometimes combining Jung's ideas with those of another great thinker, Teilhard de Chardin. Also on one occasion, at a Summer School, John and I explored Jung's theory of human types and its similarities with the Indian Yoga system of the Chakras.

Those years in the early 60's were important for the development of John's thinking in yet another way, also. Within a year or two of his arrival at Braziers, a new and important book had been published, Teilhard de Chardin's "**Le phénomène humain**" in its first English translation, "**The Phenomenon of Man**". Recently, a new and, I am told, much better translation, by the Canadian Sarah Appleton-Weber, has been published, with Teilhard's original title translated literally. But this first translation of the book was good enough for Norman, and for John. Teilhard, the French Jesuit priest and palaeontologist, had died in 1955. He had been suspected of heresy, and the Vatican had forbidden him to publish anything during his lifetime. After his death, one by one, his writings came out. The "Phenomenon" was the first of Teilhard's works to be published in English. Moreover, it had an introduction by one of the foremost scientists of the day, Julian Huxley, whose writings were already known at Braziers. Teilhard thought that new concepts needed new words: hence "cosmogogenesis", the coming into being and evolution of the cosmos: "biosphere" (the natural world), "noosphere" (the interthinking human layer) and many others. Teilhard very much confirmed and reinforced Braziers' thinking, and we were the first educational college to put on courses devoted to his scientific teachings.

After Norman's death in 1961 John and Glynn Faithfull collaborated in continuing and expanding these courses on Teilhard's cosmogogenesis. However, Teilhard had remained true to his Catholic faith, and in this vital aspect Norman, John and Glynn were unable to follow him. During the 1960's the Teilhard movement really took off, and centres for the study of his ideas were founded in many places globally, including one in London. People who were not necessarily traditional Christians joined. Indeed, Glynn himself was to become for a short time in the mid-1970's Chairman of the London Teilhard Centre, and John would become Administrative Secretary, as already mentioned.

I'll now continue the story of John, Braziers and the Teilhard Centre, and the fruitful collaboration between John and Glynn. The London Teilhard Centre, which John ran from 1981 to 1989, was an educational charity. It organised study groups, meetings, lectures and conferences. It had membership, and a reading room, office and library, which John had moved, very successfully, to an educational and pastoral centre in Kensington. The small staff was nearly all voluntary, as John and myself were. There was also an academic journal, "**The Teilhard Review**", described as "a journal of cosmic convergence, bridging science and religion". Most of the lectures and talks were published in it. John had charge of all of this, apart from the journal and the

annual conferences, which were not held in London. There was an annual lecture at the Centre in London, though, for which John was able to get prestigious people, like Paul Davies, Rupert Sheldrake and Henryk Skolimowski. He put on day conferences with three speakers, in which Glynn, and John himself, often took part. There were also weekends, usually at Braziers, run by John and Glynn, with outside people, like the author Danah Zohar and her husband Ian Marshall. We even had here, on two occasions, a Jesuit father, Richard Brüchsel. But usually, I suppose, John, as Secretary of the Teilhard Centre, however fair he might be, was tipping the balance in favour of the Teilhardian Cosmogogenesis, rather than Christogenesis and Teilhard's point Omega, the end of time with the coming of the Cosmic Christ. (Since John left, however, the balance has tipped the other way, and the Teilhard Association must, I think, now be wholly Christian.) John also had some problems, at home and abroad, with the fact that he was not an academic. Once, attending a conference in France on behalf of the Teilhard Centre, he was told by the organisers that he couldn't possibly be called "Mr" - they would call him "Dr", even though he had no claim to the title! John thought this quite amusing. However, the real problem was that, after an initial burst of fame for Teilhard and his ideas in the 1960's, interest had died down, and Teilhard got forgotten; he was no longer flavour of the month. People moved on, and Teilhardian membership fell away everywhere. Now all this had happened before Glynn, and John, arrived on the scene. Once more John, Braziers and the Zeitgeist continued not to be together, as it were. So it was with some frustration that John decided in 1989 to retire from the Teilhard Centre.

Throughout his long association with Braziers, John gave many courses, often collaborating with Glynn or with another convenor. He participated in summer schools, usually with Glynn, and several others. As well as the ideas of Teilhard and of Jung, with titles such as "**Teilhard de Chardin and the New Cosmology**", "**Learning from Jung and Teilhard**" and "**Learning from Our Dreams**", most of John's courses concerned developments of the basic teachings of Norman Glaister. There were titles like "Enquiry into Wellness" convened jointly with Norman himself, in the late 1950's, "Using the Sensory Method" in 1972, "Bridging Religion and Science" in 1993, and "Evolutionary Cosmology and the Future" (1997).

I should now say something about the methods John preferred. He was a great advocate of discussion in small groups of not more than eight or ten people. This is what he liked, even at conferences, when time allowed. He thought it more effective, more inclusive and democratic, than mere "questions from the floor", and better than the "buzz group" of pairs or a threesome, though he used all of these. After a lecture or talk with a larger audience, John would suggest that people split into these small groups for discussion, then come back, to report in. Time is needed, though, for this method. In weekend courses Braziers usually attracted only a few people anyway, so the small group happened automatically. Sometimes John, like other Braziers convenors, faced the fact that what seemed like a very good course did not attract any attenders at all, and had to be cancelled. Glynn, as Convenor of Studies, John, and other long-term Braziers people, supported every weekend they could, especially those concerning the "matter of Braziers", that is, its basic teachings. Still, some courses did not run, as we all know.

In the small group, of whatever subject, John preferred the "go-round" to other methods such as "creative listening". In the latter people hold an object when they speak, then return it to the centre, for the next speaker. I myself think that "creative listening" may be better for beginners new to methods of inter-thinking. Either way,

discipline is required. The free-for all, everyone talking at once, or one person holding the floor and going on too long, while others remained silent, was what he thought to be the least democratic and creative. He also thought that for many kinds of meeting it would be appropriate to begin with a silence, and even some silence between each contribution. These things, which we are so used to at Braziers, are not always found elsewhere.

I've mentioned John and the Sensory Extension at Braziers. John promoted "listening" and what he called, quoting Teilhard, "centre to centre" meetings, in other places. He started such a small group at the Teilhard Centre, and it continues in someone's house, and now in her flat, to this day. The core of this meeting is of course Teilhard and his thinking, but other meetings were started, by John, without any set agenda or subject matter, except the avoidance of triviality, he hoped! John had learned and adapted these methods, and his liking for silence, from the Braziers Quiet Meetings which were started by Dorothy Glaister, a Quaker, and a Member of Wallingford Meeting for many years. Dorothy described the Braziers half hour Quiet Meetings as being "after the manner of the Society of Friends" (rather quaint language, but explicit.) John was not a Quaker himself, but he had learned a lot from them. He liked there to be silence at the start of those meetings at which people could share thoughts and feelings. When the Sensory Committee in the late 1990's seemed to be overwhelmed by individual concerns, he and others experimented with a third meeting, the "Feelings Meetings". The aim was to give more time for just such individual sharing in the group, separating it from true "sensory" meetings. Sensory is intended, John believed, to concern group, more than purely individual, matters. But separate Feelings meetings, or whatever they may be called, did not take root at Braziers. This was yet another disappointment for John.

In the early 1990's Glynn's health was failing, and Hilda Salter, who had been an editor of "**Braziers' Research Communications**" with him for some years, was joined by John and myself in that task. The three of us edited "**Braziers Research Communications**" until 2001. For a time we managed to produce it once a year, for the Members' Weekend in the autumn. Before that it had appeared intermittently, Glynn, the chief editor, being very busy, of course. The Glaister lectures, begun in 1994, appeared there, along with interesting articles by Members and others, and, sadly, obituaries of several Braziers' people. We felt, I think, that it was a pity that Braziers being strapped for cash as always, something illustrated, in colour, and larger in format, could not be done - something similar in appearance to the journal "**Resurgence**", for example.

I've spoken about John and the Timewalk at Braziers, but I should perhaps mention that by the 1990's John had come to realise that one problem about his cosmological ideas was that they seemed exclusively intellectual and academic, remote from people's lives and experience. He realised that most of the established religions, all of them, really, in their different ways, depend on rituals, art, music, dancing, and participation in one form or another. Why should we not experience evolution/emergence, as well as understanding it intellectually? John saw the Timewalk as one possible method, but he tried to promote others. He and Glynn had the idea that Braziers should celebrate evolution at a special time and for several years they convened a "Festival of Evolution" on the August Bank Holiday. It took the form of a weekend course, but on the Sunday we had to eat special food, to remind us of humanity's long journey from hunter-gathering to the present day. There is a photograph of John on Braziers' terrace at the "evolutionary breakfast" in 1999. This

breakfast, representing the beginning of the journey, consisted only of fruit, nuts and vegetables, all uncooked, since fire hadn't been discovered then. To drink, water. The food was displayed on rhubarb leaves, which we were not meant to eat, of course! However, it was all a bit much for some people, who slunk off to the kitchen for a cup of coffee! In the evening came a splendid, celebratory, cooked meal, out of doors when weather permitted. John also attempted group evolutionary dances, and they were performed at Braziers, at several of the Summer Schools. He tried to encourage artists to be involved, illustrating evolution in different media, but found it difficult to interest some of them. However, one or two, like Ken and (outside Braziers) Michael Brand, did create pictures and artefacts, illustrating evolution for John. Also, when John went round the Timewalk with a group of people, Simon Nisbett accompanied our progress with music on his African illimba. John was not at all artistic or musical himself, but understood its importance for others.

There is a criticism to be made about John, at this present time in particular, and that is that he did not address environmental issues enough, in spite of the world crisis becoming more and more insistent towards the end of his life. The ecosphere is part of evolution, of course. But John did not join any environmental campaign specifically. Teilhard de Chardin had died in 1955 and Norman Glaister in 1961, so they pre-dated the crisis, though one could see that it was coming. Teilhardians in the 1970's were writing in the Teilhard Review about it. Leslie Reid, who had had a career in forestry, began an article in 1975: "We know today that we are exploiting the environment to the limits of its survival and therefore of our own...." John, of course, was a layman and had no scientific training, as we've seen. However, there was another reason. John, by temperament, did not have much emotional contact with nature himself, though he in no way criticised people who had. But places, and the countryside in particular, did not "turn him on". People did. He felt that human relationships were paramount. He thought, also, that we needed to start with ourselves, for our behaviour is the cause of the problem. (If you want to change the world, where do you start, with yourself or with other people?) He had invented a title, "Human Ecology", which, unfortunately, he never got to use. It's a good title, though.

I think John felt considerable disappointment and frustration at the end of his life, an experience that happens to many people, including to Teilhard himself, of course. My own view is that John's ideas, like those of other people I've mentioned, may perhaps have come too early. We can't choose the era in which we are born, or move from one era to another, like the Time Lords of science fiction! Not to end on too sad a note, though, I'll mention a few things I've come across lately which, I think, might have heartened John. One is the book by the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, published in 2002 (but written of course before 9/11). It is entitled **"The Dignity of Difference"**.

How to Avoid the Clash of Civilisations". We need to aim for "differentiated union", and to come together "centre to centre, and not anyhow", as Teilhard said. "Better to jaw, jaw, than to war, war", as Churchill said. That is how things should be, and that is Braziers at its best.

The second thing again concerns the Middle East, and it is the work done by the Jewish conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim, who, as I expect people know, has set up an orchestra of young musicians from both Palestine and Israel, playing together. He spoke about this in his recent Reith Lecture – I don't know if anyone has listened to them. The aim is participation in music to bring warring factions together, in spite of seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

Another, different, good sign, relevant for us, I think. I read the other day that now, among teenagers, it is considered "cool" to study philosophy! That is, at "A" level and university. Not only the very brightest are interested and involved, either. And as well as philosophical ideas from the past, these teenagers are given the opportunity to participate in the discussion of current philosophical concerns, and questioning too, in class with their friends. What a change! Philosophy had fallen out of favour in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one might say, certainly among young people, but perhaps now it is coming back. Young people are opting for the personal quest for meaning, and not alone, but with others. Not an easy option now, you'll agree, in an age of great pessimism. But John, I think, would have been pleased. As a young person, drawn to philosophy, but without any help from school or family, he questioned, and his search led him to optimism, to Norman Glaister and Braziers and the development of Braziers' ideas, and beyond. But one has to say that, looking at Braziers' history, it has been more successful in other fields: art, music, literature, personal creativity in many forms, indoor and out; plans for the upkeep of this beautiful place; and, within it, attempting the very difficult experiment of living in community. All these things are creative and important, and along with this, above all, human fellowship. Norman, however, founded Braziers with a philosophical aim, as well. But if young people are now turning to philosophy, perhaps there is hope for the future, and hope, too, for the survival and development of Braziers' ideas, and of "Braziers" in whatever shape or form, as an experiment in the search for meaning. Inter-thinking, that is. Philosophers need to come out of the closet!

At the end of his life, in a talk he gave here at Braziers, John told the old story of the peddler of Swaffham. This peddler, following a dream, journeyed all the way to London, only to be told to return home, to dig in his back garden, where he found a great treasure hidden. Our great treasure, John thought, has been here at Braziers all the time and we need to continue unearthing it. Maybe, if only we can do so, it is possible that more people will come to take part in our inter-thinking – and some of them may be these young people, too.

For those that are interested, the lively question and answer session which followed Evelyn's lecture will shortly be available from our online archives.  
[www.braziers.org.uk](http://www.braziers.org.uk)