

What I believe in

People don't usually make this sort of statement, but I thought it necessary so that people can understand me, because sometimes I am in the position of being a 'public person'.

The main way I look at things socially can be put in the French slogan 'liberty, equality, fraternity'.

I believe in accepting people from all religions, cultures, beliefs, mental capacity, sexuality, philosophies, class, wealth, political parties (not the extreme right), and in most ways age, but as people grow older they change and there are different strengths and weaknesses that go with different stages of life, and that needs to be recognised.

I uphold issues surrounding freedom, so that people feel they can make choices, and they are not discriminated having made a choice, and they feel supported in doing so.

In particular I oppose actions to increase state intrusion, which is often driven by technology and money. People who make up the state are not superior to the general population, and there have been situations in history where the state is essentially evil. It is unacceptable that intrusion should be in the hands of a select group where the society has not had time to put in place laws to counterbalance it with rights.

In terms of fraternity, there is the important issue of where community ends and individual rights and actions begin. There are a number of things to be said about this.

In the first place, there is what I call the philosophy of AND. Some things are presented as opposites when they are not. An example of debate in UK politics in the 20th century was whether you should have low inflation and high unemployment or the reverse. In fact it is possible to have low inflation and high employment (and also the negative of these) – they are not opposites. Another example is whether we have public space (like parks, a public health service, community services) or whether we leave things to individuals. In fact you can have both (or neither).

In the second place is the type of 'game' we play as representatives or individuals within our groups. There are three types of game – positive (win/win), zero (one side wins and the other side loses, or there is a draw) and negative (all participants lose). In my personal objectives I try and encourage a win/win game.

For our society there is the distinction between the collective and the personal, sometimes in topic areas like economics or politics. A related issue is between what I call the *local* and the *global*. I assert that what I am trying to promote is community behaviour. I also think that since about half the population thinks in terms of maximising their own benefit, and the other half thinks in terms of community services and action, that there has to be room for both points of view and ways of working in our society.

The environment is an example. Do we promote collective behaviour to reverse ecological damage and climate change, or do we leave things up to individuals? I think I have already given my answer: we do *both*.

I believe in democracy, and I know some people don't. This is because the collective wisdom of the group is wider than that of individuals within it.

I also state that democracy isn't a *project-in-itself*, it is a means to an end: that of making decisions and acting in the world. So often I talk about *effective democracy*, and many of you realise that what we have got in Transition Brighton & Hove (unusually, for any organisation) is the *reverse*. We have *paralysis*.

I have come to the late realisation that what is necessary as the basis for collective action and implementation is not just timeliness, schedules, logistics, social structures and organisation, the basis of collective action is *relationships*. If the relationships aren't there, you can write up plans which would otherwise be effective in getting humans on Mars, but you can be in the situation of not being able to persuade anyone to get a cabbage for you from the local greengrocer. So Martin Grimshaw is right in seeing it all in terms of social networking. What I am saying is we need to AND it with logistics and social organisation plans and schedules.

The last thing I want to say, and some politicians think this is alienating, is to talk about religion, not only as supportive structures for our life in the world, but also in the way we see ourselves as placed (miraculously!) on this planet, as active human beings within it, and trying to understand our world and our place in it.

I think there are two areas here: *ethics* and a *view of the world*.

Ethics, I think, is a way of looking outside of ourselves, seeing ourselves as in the same or similar situations to others, and responding to that. In ethics we sometimes do, and sometimes do not, have a *dilemma*. Should I help myself, or should I help others? It is part of our personality and our choice as to which route we take. What I state ethics is about is the specific role: how do I help others? We are not forced to act ethically. It is my assertion, in which I sometimes fail in practice, that my motivation is ethical.

Describing how I view the world, I have said much on my website: www.jimhadams.com. What I want to conclude with is the assertion that there is one truth and it is present everywhere. We may have many ways of representing the world, but the world is not *text*, it is objective and independent of text. The world is true in many aspects which will never be explained in any text, even never observed by any person. But it is *there*.

Lastly, I wish to make a rallying call against logical positivism in science. Mathematical descriptions may describe observations, but the central core of theories of the world is not based on the assertion that everything that is observed exists, and if no person or thing observes it, it does not exist. The description of the world is simpler (and I would assert *correct*) if we assume the world is constructed of things or schemes which are not necessarily observed directly. The world exists as a *thing-in-itself*. It has a correct description even if we never find it. Observations are the *consequence* and not the *basis* of that scheme.

JIM ADAMS 20th January 2011