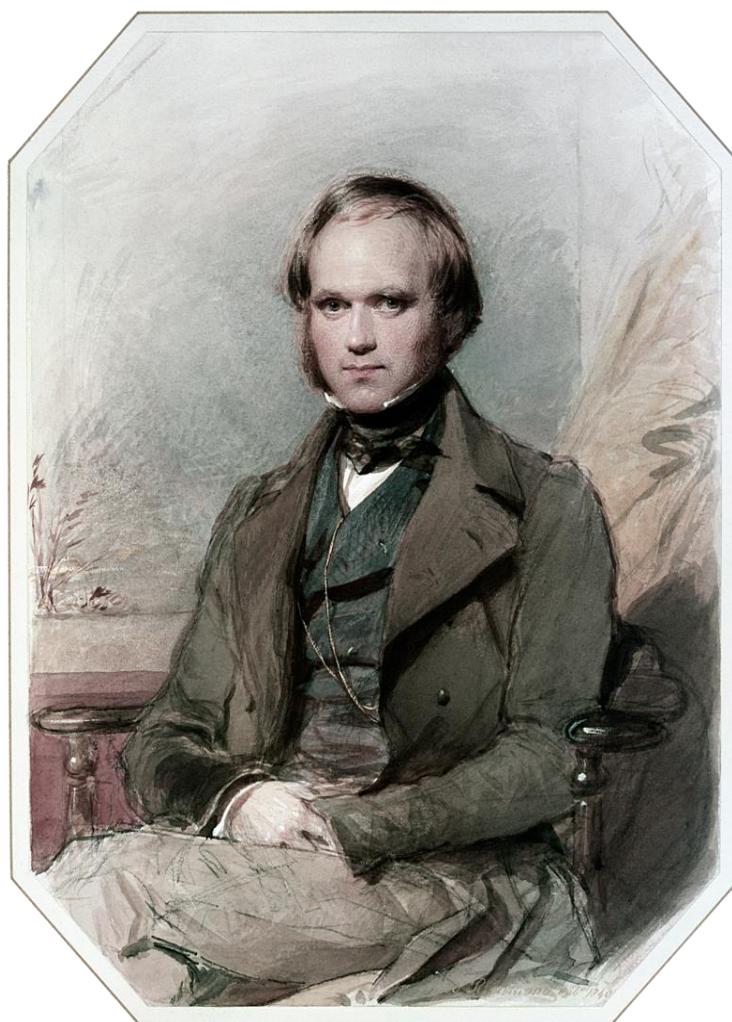


**UNIVERSITA' POPOLARE MESTRE**  
**CONVERSAZIONI IN LINGUA INGLESE**  
Talks by Michael Gluckstern at  
**Centro Culturale Candiani, Sala Seminariale, 1° piano**  
**Mercoledì 20 novembre 2019, ore 17,30**

**Per il ciclo *Momentous times for Britain***

**1859, Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and the melancholy thoughts of poets Edward FitzGerald and A.E. Housman.**

**1859, la pubblicazione dell'*Origin of Species* di Charles Darwin e la melancolia delle opere dei poeti Edward FitzGerald e A.E. Housman.**



*Charles Darwin in his early thirties after his return from his voyage on HMS Beagle*

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## SUBSEQUENT TALKS

### Momentous times for Britain

#### *Tempi di capovolgimento nel Regno Unito*

<p>1886, Gladstone introduces the Irish Home Rule Bill which does not pass and splits the Liberal Party. And what happened in Ireland afterwards.</p> <p><i>1886, il Primo Ministro Gladstone propone un disegno di legge per l'autogoverno irlandese, che non viene approvato e spacca il partito Liberale. E quello che è accaduto dopo in Irlanda.</i></p>	Mercoledì 18 dicembre 2019
<p>Late 19th and early 20th centuries, drumbeats of war – but who was the enemy to be? Like the other sleepwalkers, Britain goes to war.</p> <p><i>Tamburi di guerra nel tardo ottocento e primo novecento – ma chi sarebbe stato il nemico? Come gli altri sonnambuli, il Regno Unito entra in guerra.</i></p>	Mercoledì 12 febbraio 2020
<p>From the late 1940s to the 1960s, Britain gives her colonies their freedom, not without problems.</p> <p><i>Dalla fine degli anni 40 agli anni 60 il Regno Unito lascia libere le sue colonie, non senza problemi.</i></p>	Mercoledì 11 marzo 2020
<p>The 1960s, the Swinging London phenomenon, how it came about, what some of its manifestations were and what effects it had.</p> <p><i>Il novecento: gli anni 60, con i fenomeni di Swinging London, come è sorto, quali sono state alcune delle sue manifestazioni e quali sono stati i suoi effetti.</i></p>	Mercoledì 8 aprile 2020

**Acknowledgement: Darwin by Adrian Desmond and James Moore, Penguin, 1991.**

1. Desmond and Moore's biography begins by presenting us with a young scientist who, in the year 1839, has a secret notebook in which his theory of evolution is contained. 20 years were to pass before this theory fully entered the public domain.

*"It is 1839. England is tumbling<sup>1</sup> towards anarchy, with countrywide unrest and riots<sup>2</sup>. The gutter presses are fizzing<sup>3</sup>, fire-bombs flying. The shout in the streets is for revolution. Red evolutionists – visionaries who see life marching inexorably upward, powered<sup>4</sup> from below – denounce the props<sup>5</sup> of an old static society: priestly privilege, wage exploitation and the workhouses<sup>6</sup>. A million socialists are castigating marriage, capitalism and the fat, corrupt Established Church<sup>7</sup>. Radical Christians join them, hymn-singing Dissenters<sup>8</sup> who condemn the 'fornicating' Church as a 'harlot'<sup>9</sup> in bed with the State.*

*"Even Science must be purged<sup>10</sup>: for the gutter atheists<sup>11</sup>, material atoms are all that exist, and like the 'social atoms' – people – they are self-organizing. Spirits and souls<sup>12</sup> are a delusion, part of the gentry's cruel deceit<sup>13</sup> to subjugate working people. The science of life – biology – lies ruined, prostrated, turned into a Creationist citadel by the clergy<sup>14</sup>. Britain now stands teetering on the brink of collapse<sup>15</sup> - or so it seems to the gentry, who close ranks<sup>16</sup> to protect their privileges.*

*"At this moment, how could an ambitious thirty-year-old gentleman open a secret notebook and, with a devil-may-care sweep<sup>17</sup>, suggest that headless hermaphrodite molluscs were the ancestors of mankind?"*

2. In 1837 Darwin sees an orang-outang in the zoo for the first time. He describes the scene when the keeper shows her an apple.

*"... the keeper showed her an apple, but would not give it to her, whereupon she threw herself on her back, kicked & cried, precisely like a naughty child. She then looked very sulky<sup>18</sup> & after two or three fits<sup>19</sup> of passion, the keeper said, 'Jenny if you will stop bawling<sup>20</sup> & be a good girl, I will give you the apple.' ... She certainly understood every word of his, &, though like a child, she had*

<sup>1</sup> si sta precipitando

<sup>2</sup> agitazione e sommosse

<sup>3</sup> la stampa scandalistica è in subbuglio

<sup>4</sup> alimentata

<sup>5</sup> attrezzeria

<sup>6</sup> sfruttamento con salari bassi e ospizi per i poveri

<sup>7</sup> chiesa di stato

<sup>8</sup> Protestant sects dissenting from the Anglican Church

<sup>9</sup> puttana

<sup>10</sup> depurata

<sup>11</sup> atei dei marciapiedi, i.e. atheists without scientific knowledge in this context

<sup>12</sup> anime

<sup>13</sup> il crudele inganno del ceto alto

<sup>14</sup> il clero

<sup>15</sup> barcollando e sul punto di crollare

<sup>16</sup> serrano i ranghi

<sup>17</sup> un gesto ampio e avventato

<sup>18</sup> imbronciata

<sup>19</sup> accessi

<sup>20</sup> urlare

great work to stop whining<sup>21</sup>, she at last succeeded, & then got the apple, with which she jumped into an arm chair and began eating it, with the most contented countenance<sup>22</sup> imaginable.”

**Extracts 3 and 4 are from poems by Edward FitGerald and A.E. Housman. They are not proposed as direct consequences of Darwin's concepts but as examples in poetry of thought regarding the existence of a Divinity which became especially widespread (*diffuso*) starting in England in the late 17th century and is usually referred to as freethinking. One can enjoy the extracts for their eloquence and pathos independently of one's personal beliefs.**

3. Some verses from the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883), a writer of independent means who lived in the country with a circle of literary friends, also interested in music and flowers. This long poem, inspired by the poem of the Persian mathematician, astronomer and philosopher, was published as an anonymous pamphlet in 1859 and in a revised, large circulation edition in 1868.

<i>And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door. You know how little while we have to stay, And, once departed, may return no more."</i>	<i>E al momento che il Gallo cantò, quelli che stavano davanti alla Taverna gridarono – “Allora aprite la Porta. Sapete quanto poco tempo abbiamo per stare qui, E, una volta partiti, non possiamo più tornare.”</i>
***	
<i>Alike for those who for TO-DAY prepare, And those that after a TO-MORROW stare, A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries</i>	<i>Sia per quelli che si preparano per OGGI, Che per quelli che scrutano un DOMANI, Un Muezzin strilla dalla Torre dell'Oscurità</i>
<i>"Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There."</i>	<i>“Scemi! il vostro Premio non è né Qui né Lì.”</i>
***	
<i>Myself when young did eagerly frequent Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument About it and about: but evermore Came out by the same Door as in I went.</i>	<i>Io, quando giovane, frequentavo con entusiasmo Studiosi e Santi, e sentivo un gran Discutere Sempre intorno ad esso: ma sempre Me ne uscivo dalla stessa Porta da cui ero entrato.</i>
***	
<i>Into this Universe, and why not knowing, Nor whence, like Water willy-nilly flowing: And out of it, as Wind along the Waste, I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.</i>	<i>[arriviamo] In questo Universo, e non sapendo il perché, Né da dove, come Acqua che scorre volente o nolente: E fuori da esso, come il Vento nel deserto, Non so verso quale luogo, spinto volente o nolente.</i>
***	

<sup>21</sup> come una bambina avesse molto difficoltà a smettere di piagnucolare

<sup>22</sup> espressione del viso

<i>What, without asking, hither hurried whence?</i>	<i>Che! senza chiedercelo, verso questo luogo mandati in tutta fretta, e da dove?</i>
<i>And, without asking, whither hurried hence!</i>	<i>E, senza chiedercelo, verso quale luogo mandati?</i>
<i>Another and another Cup to drown</i>	<i>Un'altra Coppa, e poi una ancora per annegare</i>
<i>The Memory of this Impertinence!</i>	<i>Il Ricordo di questa Impertinenza!</i>
***	
<i>The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,</i>	<i>Il Dito che Scorre scrive; e dopo che esso ha scritto,</i>
<i>Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit</i>	<i>Prosegue: e né tutta la tua Devozione, né tutta la tua Intelligenza</i>
<i>Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,</i>	<i>Lo persuaderà a cancellare neanche mezza Riga,</i>
<i>Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.</i>	<i>Né tutte le tue Lacrime ne toglierà una Parola.</i>
<i>And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,</i>	<i>E quella Bacinella capovolta che noi chiamiamo Il Cielo,</i>
<i>Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,</i>	<i>Sotto il quale strisciamo, rinchiusi, viviamo e moriamo,</i>
<i>Lift not thy hands to IT for help—for It</i>	<i>Non alzare le tua mani ad ESSO chiedendo aiuto – poiché Esso</i>
<i>Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.</i>	<i>Gira impotente, come Te o Me.</i>

4. A poem by Alfred Edward Housman (1859-1936) (usually referred to as A.E. Housman), an illustrious professor of Latin literature, bitterly railing (*che si scaglia*) against Providence with great lyrical power.

<i>The chestnut casts his flambeaux, and the flowers</i>	<i>Il castagno perde le sue cupole ed i fiori</i>
<i>Stream from the hawthorn on the wind away,</i>	<i>Del biancospino fuggono sospinti dal vento,</i>
<i>The doors clap to, the pane is blind with showers.</i>	<i>Le porte sbattono, il vetro è oscurato dagli acquazzoni.</i>
<i>Pass me the can, lad; there's an end of May.</i>	<i>Passami il boccale, amico mio, ecco finito maggio.</i>
<i>There's one spoilt spring to scant our mortal lot,</i>	<i>Un'altra primavera guastata da sottrarre dal nostro destino di mortali,</i>
<i>One season ruined of our little store.</i>	<i>Un'altra stagione rovinata tolta dalla nostra piccola scorta.</i>
<i>May will be fine next year as like as not:</i>	<i>Il mese di maggio, verosimilmente, sarà bello l'anno prossimo:</i>
<i>Oh ay, but then we shall be twenty-four.</i>	<i>Certo, ma avremo ventiquattro anni.</i>

<i>It is in truth iniquity on high To cheat our sentenced souls of aught they crave,</i>	<i>Veramente è somma iniquità Frodare le nostre anime condannate di qualsiasi cosa che bramano,</i>
<i>And mar the merriment as you and I Fare on our long fool's-errand to the grave.</i>	<i>E guastare l'allegria mentre tu ed io Nella nostra impresa inutile, viaggiamo verso la fossa.</i>
<i>Iniquity it is; but pass the can. My lad, no pair of kings our mothers bore;</i>	<i>Si, è iniquo; ma passa il boccale. Amico mio, le nostre madri non hanno generato due monarchi;</i>
<i>Our only portion is the estate of man: We want the moon, but we shall get no more.</i>	<i>L'unica nostra eredità è la condizione umana: Vogliamo la luna, ma non otterremo più di quanto abbiamo.</i>
<i>If here to-day the cloud of thunder lours To-morrow it will hie on far behests;</i>	<i>Anche se oggi le nuvole del tuono incombono Domani saranno impegnate altrove;</i>
<i>The flesh will grieve on other bones than ours Soon, and the soul will mourn in other breasts.</i>	<i>La carne si affliggerà su altre ossa Fra poco, e l'anima piangerà nel petto di altri.</i>
<i>The troubles of our proud and angry dust Are from eternity, and shall not fail.</i>	<i>I guai della nostra polvere orgogliosa e arrabiata Provengono dall'eternità, e non mancheranno mai.</i>
<i>Bear them we can, and if we can we must. Shoulder the sky, my lad, and drink your ale.</i>	<i>Sopportarli possiamo, e se possiamo, dobbiamo. Sostieni il cielo, amico mio, e bevi la tua birra.</i>