

Gloucestershire Philosophical Society

Leckhampton Seminar, 26 October 2011

*The Bazarov Equation*

In Turgenev's *Fathers & Sons*, the nihilist Bazarov states that 'A decent chemist is worth twenty poets' – a neat summary of the hard-line, utilitarian standpoint. In our own times the dread word 'relevant' is employed as a curricular litmus test, a criterion for the distribution of educational and research resources, or a standard for the GCSE 'English Bacc'. Nothing new here: Alfred Marshall, olympian mind of classical economics distinguished between 'productive' and 'non productive' labour (steelworkers in the first category; ballet dancers (or poets, or philosophers?) in the second.

On the other hand, Schopenhauer thought that aesthetic contemplation was the sole escape from, or means of transcending the determinist world of the Will in which we exist and suffer.

Must the arts (literary, representational, dramatic, etc) justify their place in the sun by virtue of their usefulness, or do they offer crucial relief from everyday practical imperatives, or insights into them? Or what? And do they need to justify their existence, if so – to whom?

Come to the Norwood Arms, Leckhampton, (coffee 10.30am) on Wednesday 26 October 2011 to unravel the issues raised by Bazarov – or even to escape from them.

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