

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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WHEN death removed Albert Einstein from our world we lost more than a mathematical physicist of surpassing genius—though that, being his first claim to renown, is something by which posterity will chiefly remember him. We lost, also, one who all his life was a champion of the rights of man, a lover of human liberty and enlightenment, a labourer in the cause of world peace, a hater of militarism and jingoism, and a campaigner against all regimentation of mind and conscience.

Apart from his writings propounding Relativity, Einstein was the author, or part-author, of books on Zionism, on war from the pacifist angle, on the evolution of physics, and on his own philosophy—although his published works are few in number. Characteristically modest, Einstein did not consider himself a man of letters. Somewhere he praises Emery Reves's *Anatomy of Peace*, whose impassioned plea for world government aroused considerable but, alas, short-lived enthusiasm when published in 1946; at the same time he confesses that he ever lacked the power to express himself with similarly vivid and arresting clarity. Yet his own writing is not without persuasiveness and force.

## His Concern for Human Welfare

In Einstein's two publications, *The World as I see it* and *Out of my Later Years*, we have a collection of miscellaneous articles, letters, and addresses scattered over the years. They are of especial significance to any who would understand something of the richness of his personality, the depth of his moral fervour, and the intensity of his interest in the great problems of our age. Many were the subjects on which Einstein at various times felt the urge to express himself. And running through all he wrote of a general non-technical nature, there is his abiding concern for the welfare of humanity and the progress of civilisation, and his profound desire to see war, as an instrument of international policy, abolished for ever. Fittingly, one of his last acts, a week or so before his death, was to put his signature to an appeal by a group of world scientists, imploring the leaders of all nations once and for all to outlaw war, which in this atomic era might well spell the crash of civilisation.

## His Hatred of Militarism

An ardent pacifist throughout his life, Einstein detested military force and all associated with it. It was for him astonishing that a man could find pleasure in marching in formation to the strains of a band. Such a man had, he said, "only been given his big brain by mistake; a backbone was all he needed." He lamented how, in the space of a week or two, the masses can be worked up by the newspapers into such a state of excited fury that men are prepared to "put on uniform and kill and be killed for the sake of a few interested parties." To him compulsory military service always appeared repellent, a grave symptom of "that deficiency in personal dignity from which civilised

mankind is suffering today." He expressed his abhorrence of what he called "heroism by order, senseless violence, and all the pestilent nonsense that goes by the name of patriotism." War was a "mean, contemptible thing," and he would die rather than take part in it.

With his convictions, he was most concerned that the right to be a conscientious objector in time of hostility should be internationally recognised and respected. But he did not fool himself into imagining that this would be likely

to come about except on a planet organised for peace and for the satisfaction of primary human needs. He believed that a properly constituted world government was a vital pre-condition of world law and order, and never abandoned the hope that sooner or later means would be found of bringing

it into being. Then, but not till then, could science constructively applied yield its full and marvellous fruit, and make possible a universal lightening of men's toil.

## Why he left Germany

The last twenty-two years of the great physicist's life were spent in America. The Germany of 1933 under Nazi rule was no place for one who held that the State exists to protect the individual and afford him opportunity to develop into a creative personality, and who believed that "the man who regards his own life and that of his fellow-creatures as meaningless is not merely unfortunate, but almost disqualified for life." And so it was in that year, before leaving for America, that he declared that, so long as the choice was his, he would only stay in a country where there existed political liberty, toleration, and equality of all citizens before the law.

Supreme specialist as Einstein necessarily was, he never fell into the error common amongst scientists of failing to relate his work to that of the community and world at large. He thought that the development of general ability for independent thinking should always be placed first and foremost—not the acquisition of special knowledge. His own independent thinking took him into a number of heterodox channels and made him a lifelong agnostic in regard to religious faith. "A man who is thoroughly convinced of the universal operation of the law of causation," he wrote, "cannot for a moment entertain the idea of a Being who interferes in the course of events . . . He has no use for a religion of fear, and little for social and moral religion. A God who rewards and punishes is inconceivable to him. A man's ethical behaviour should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties."

## Einstein Rejects the Christian God

This was one of Einstein's earlier pronouncements; but that which follows, written in the closing years of his life, shows that his attitude had nowise changed. "In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God—that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of the priests. In their

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## The Outlook of Albert Einstein

—By G. I. BENNETT—



labours they will have to avail themselves of those forces which are capable of cultivating the good, the true, and the beautiful in humanity itself. This is, to be sure, a more difficult but an incomparably more worthy task."

But Einstein was not without a sense of mystery and awe in the contemplation of the universe. Such a sense of mystery he thought one of the most lovely things we could experience, being the source of all true art and science; and he considered that he who could no longer pause to wonder was as good as dead. In this respect, and in this alone, he professed himself a religious man. At certain moments he seems to have felt in some way that the universe—to use his own words—"reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection." But quasi-theological as this language almost is, it stops there. Einstein had no belief in a power in the least anthropomorphic standing in a personal and special relationship to man, and found the idea of an individual's survival of physical death beyond comprehension.

#### The Life of the Individual

Enough has already been said to make it clear that Einstein set a high value on individual human worth, and

felt that every man had the inalienable right to make of his own mind and personality what he would and could, uninfluenced by prevailing prejudices and conventional standards. He looked only for a social orientation of one's thoughts and actions, as witness these words of his: "The life of the individual has meaning only in so far as it aids in making the life of every living thing nobler and more beautiful." Or these: "What an extraordinary situation is that of us mortals! Each of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he knows not, though he sometimes thinks he feels it. But from the point of view of daily life . . . we exist for our fellow men—in the first place for those on whose smiles and welfare all our happiness depends; and next for all those unknown to us personally with whose destinies we are bound up by the tie of sympathy. A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labours of every man, living and dead, and that I must exert myself to give in the same measure as I have received and am still receiving . . ."

Here in perfect fullness we have revealed, not Einstein the physicist, but Einstein the man—and verily, a man as great in spirit as in mind.

### FACTS FOR FREETHINKERS

## Christianity and Medicine

Christianity shewed violent antipathy to this branch of science and allowed the researches of the great physicians of antiquity to fall into neglect. Science had to fight for its life against superstition, and the victory of knowledge was won with incredible slowness. A Scriptural text was a higher authority than the conclusions of experimental science. The bones of a dead saint were more efficacious remedies for disease than the skill (such as it was) of the physician. Prayers were safer than drugs. The relations of cause and effect were unknown, and nobody dared to investigate them. The teachings of Galen and Hippocrates were forgotten or scorned, and the Christian world readily swallowed the most absurd and impossible legends. St. Augustine had said: "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons; chiefly do they torment fresh-baptized Christians, yea, even the guiltless new-born infants." St. Bernard warned against the impiety of seeking medical relief against disease, and the canon law adopted that view. Municipal as well as ecclesiastical bodies became wealthy by the traffic in relics of particular sanctity and commercial value. The bones of St. Rosalia at Palermo had for ages cured disease and averted epidemics. Prof. Buckland found they were the bones of a deceased goat, but this discovery caused no diminution of the popular faith in their efficacy.

In a credulous Christian world the practice of surgery was forbidden by many Church Councils; monarchs were unable to have a surgical operation performed, and in such dishonour was the science held that the best men withdrew from it and left it to wandering quacks. Physicians were forbidden by the Lateran Council in the 13th-century to give medical treatment except under ecclesiastical advice, and over two hundred years later doctors were ordered, under penalties, to consult a "physician of the soul" to supplement their services. There was, in fact, little need for doctoring when relics were plentiful, their wonderful cures known to all, and Divine authority readily obtainable from the priest. Did not the Saviour cast out demons and St. Paul recognise their reality, and did not St. James consider prayer and anointing better than any medical treatment?

It was generally thought that the human body contained a bone which was the nucleus of the resurrection body; for, of course, everyone then was quite sure that the body would come to life again at that indeterminate time, the "Last Day"—or possibly earlier. It was found by Vesalius, the founder of anatomical science, that no such bone existed in the body, and also that the male skeleton was not short of a rib, as believers in the Bible story of the creation of Eve had supposed. Vesalius incurred a dangerous unpopularity.

The world was convinced that smallpox was a punishment inflicted by God for human sin, and all medical remedies were denounced as inventions of the Devil. That such a belief predisposed people to fall victims to the disease was of no consequence. In the nineteenth century Sir James Young Simpson aroused a storm of clerical opposition by advocating the use of anaesthetics in surgical operations and obstetrics, the "primal curse" on Eve being thought a really good argument. Sir James neatly retorted by quoting the first surgical operation from Genesis (Chapter 2).

In discussing these mental aberrations it is to be borne in mind that all men did not exhibit them. The freethinking Emperor, Frederick II., allowed the dissection for scientific purposes of dead bodies. The famous Gerbert, afterwards Pope Sylvester II., who showed a friendly disposition towards medical research in the tenth century, was suspected of sorcery, though perhaps his exalted position saved him from a formal charge. Later Popes—Alexander III., John XXII., Eugene IV., Julius II., and Adrian VI.—issued bulls enjoining terrible severities against sorcerers and witches, thus stimulating the activities of the Inquisition and nearly stifling at birth the reviving spirit of medical science.

The modern thinker finds in the terrible plagues and other diseases which afflicted the Middle Ages nothing more remarkable than neglect of the most ordinary sanitary precautions. In an intensely ignorant and credulous epoch these outbreaks were regarded by all as visitations of God's wrath against human sin. The Church as a whole did nothing but stimulate the popular belief in "inscrutable providences." When, in the nineteenth century, scientific hygiene began to make its way the enormous death-rate was greatly diminished. What was thought to be God's work proved to be disastrous. The work of man was successful.



## William Watson

By ELLA TWYNAM

OFTEN original, always fearless and outspoken, William Watson was a great poet. He was an avowed Agnostic and a strong Individualist. Even his acceptance of a Knighthood in 1917 in no wise curtailed his courageous advocacy of unpopular causes :

"Give me the Liberalism that guards for Man  
His right to think his thought and say his say."

He was a convinced Materialist with no airy transcendental illusions :

"— Let me learn  
On this world no more  
To cast ignoble slight,  
Counting it but the door  
Of other worlds more bright.

*Here, where I fail or conquer, here is my concern."*

That noble poem "The Hope of the World," is prefixed by an explanatory note:—"The argument is this—that the Evolution of Man, such as we see him, from some inferior form of animal life, after immeasurable ages during which there is reason to think that the inferior form remained unprogressive and stationary, has very much the appearance of a splendid accident ; that the occurrence of such a splendid accident on this planet affords no ground from which to infer the occurrence of similar splendid accidents in the experience of other inhabited orbs ; that in the absence of any ground for such an inference, the theory of an upward movement or meliorative tendency as operating throughout nature generally, lacks support. The heroic course is rather to reject than to welcome the solace of an optimism which apparently rests upon no securer foundation than that of instinctive hope alone." Later, in the Collected Edition of his Works, prepared shortly before his death, the poet found it necessary to add another note :—

"In connection with this poem there is one thing for which I feel that I ought to express regret ; and that thing is my own want of foresight in not realising from the first that many would misunderstand its title, 'taking the hope of the world'—the human world—to mean the hope of continued spiritual existence after bodily dissolution. I now perceive how natural it was for some persons thus to misapprehend the title before reading the poem, though why they should have persevered in such an error after reading it—or professing to have read it—is still rather incomprehensible.

"The poem is, as I think any intelligent and attentive reader will have recognised, an attempt to examine, within the doubtless too brief limits imposed upon himself by the author, the grounds of that largest and noblest hope of all—the quite disinterested and unselfish hope that the whole universe, and all existence whatsoever, are ultimately not only a progression but an ascension. The degree of confidence with which that hope can be maintained will naturally continue to vary with individual temperament, but there is surely something akin to cowardice, something unworthy of the adventurous human intellect, in blankly refusing to face whatever evidence it may be possible to adduce in the court of reason, whether it tend to fortify the hope here spoken of or to deject and weaken it."

In another less known poem, "The Unknown God," the poet writes of

A God of kindred seed and line,  
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine,  
O streaming worlds, O crowded sky,  
O Life, and my own soul's abyss,

Myself am scarce so small that I  
Should bow to Deity like this !  
This my Begetter ? This was what  
Man in his own crude youth begot."

In a Sonnet to Aubrey de Vere, Watson writes

"Not mine your mystic creed ; not mine in prayer  
And worship, at the ensanguined Cross to kneel."

Among "Epigrams" is this on "The Church to-day"

"Outwardly splendid as of old—  
Inwardly sparkless, void and cold—  
Her force and fire all spent and gone  
Like the dead moon, she still shines on."

And here is another *multum in parvo* :—

"I wandered far into the wold,  
And after the heat and glare,  
I came at eve to a churchyard old ;  
The yew trees seemed at prayer.  
And around me was dust in dust,  
And the fleeting light, and Repose ;  
And the infinite pathos of human trust  
In a God whom no man knows."

Watson had great ambition and yearning to excel, but was not, nor did he aim to be a popular poet. He wrote for *thinkers*.

"Tired of eternal barren brawl,  
An hour with silence we prefer,  
Where statelier rise the woods than all  
Yon towers of talk at Westminster.  
Let this man prate and that man plot,  
On fame or place or title bent ;  
The Votes of veering crowds are not  
The things that are more excellent.

So far as I have been able to ascertain, no biography of Watson has been written, but an American work on Twentieth Century Authors gives a good account of his life and works. It explains his unpopularity thus—dating from "the publication of *The Purple East* in 1896—a passionate attack on Turkey and defence of the Armenian victims of Turkish tyranny, which was directly opposed to British official policy. One phrase from this volume—"Abdul the Damned"—stuck in popular memory as the permanent epithet of the Sultan Abdul Hamid, but the powerful quatrains which embodied that epithet was ignored and forgotten. He offended still more when, a life-long Anti-Imperialist and Liberal, he bitterly opposed the Boer War and said so in scathing poems which stamped him as "Pro-Boer." The consequence was that he was *three times* deprived of an honour to which he was the legitimate aspirant—the laureateship. The first time on Tennyson's death in 1892—the egregious Alfred Austin was named in his stead. On Austin's death, he had not only his Turkish and Boer poems against him but also that terrible attack on Margot Asquith—"the Woman with the Serpent's Tongue." And by the time Robert Bridges died Watson was practically forgotten, an old man nobody thought of, and John Masefield was appointed laureate.

Our American compiler suggests Watson was knighted in 1917 "perhaps thankfully for his not opposing the World War as he had done the Boer War, but this honour carried expenses not income with it." Throughout his long life he suffered great poverty but he was lucky in being mated to a worthy woman to whom his loveliest lyrics are addressed. After his death, she brought out a selection of his poems. He died, aged 77, at Rottingdean in Sussex, on 11th August, 1935.



## This Believing World

That "enfant terrible" of Spiritualism, Mr. Shaw Desmond (who once told us that Materialism was fighting in its last ditch and who no doubt is discovering that it is more alive than ever in history) now admits that "the Queen Victorias, Gladstones, Beaconsfields, Napoleons, Paganinis, Chopins, and Adelina Pattis, were all impersonations or fakes" at the seances he had "faithfully attended". In fact, "some of the mediums were also fakes." We really must admire the noble way he admits our claims, though we naturally do not accept the claim that only "some of the mediums" are fakes. Why not the lot?

It took Mr. Desmond years before he got "reliable" information. "Reliable" here has got exactly the same authority as his belief that "some" mediums are genuine. How reliable Mr. Desmond can be is seen from his reference to Lola Montez whom he heard singing from the Spirit World, and who (he tells us) lived "a century or two ago". She actually died in 1861.

The favourite trick of present day believers—and, of course, of reverent Rationalists—is loudly to proclaim that the nineteenth century attack on religion is quite out of date, that a new conception of the Universe has arisen, and that even scientists are obliged to admit that the "mysteries" in it point to some Controlling Force or Power or Mind or Spirit. The word "God" is happily shunted so as to prevent "confusion."

In putting forward an article on these lines our premier national journal, the *Times*, jauntily follows the crowd, and points out "that the contemporary trend of Biblical scholarship is strongly opposed to that favoured by the liberal and scientific theologians of the late nineteenth century . . . This approach . . . is almost as dead as the earlier Fundamentalism." It has been supplanted by the view that those who gave us the Gospels "believed that they were preaching a supernatural religion." And that of course proves that "Christ behaved as God and man"!

For sheer unadulterated rubbish this would be hard to beat—and it comes from a highly paid journalist who ought to know better. Not only Bradlaugh, but G. W. Foote in particular, never ceased pointing out that the early Christians believed in the supernatural, that Jesus Christ was God, and that, as the *Times* writer insists, "he was capable of suspending the laws of nature." Week in and week out, we have said the same thing in these columns; and far from it being a new conception, we claim it as old as the Gospels. Where we differ from both the early and the later Christians is that we don't believe a word of it. There is not a scrap of evidence whatever to support the Christian conception of Miracles, Angels, Devils, and Hell. Or of the existence of Jesus Christ either.

Alas, the hearts of the Lord's Day Observance Society are very sad—its members cannot contemplate the Duke of Edinburgh playing polo on a Sunday without tears welling up and pious misery taking possession of many souls who once went about full of Christian happiness, except on Sundays. On that day, they share with God Almighty terrible grief at the open way in which so-called Christians go about enjoying themselves. Mr. Legerton, its joyless Secretary, is quite in despair because politicians and actors

play cricket on Sundays, and "our beloved Queen" even helps by her attendance. However, all might still be well, Mr. Legerton has promised to pray for all the Royal Family, as well as for all desecrators of the Lord's Day—Heaven will be so pleased.

## A Century of Fossil Finds

By G. H. TAYLOR

(concluded from page 298)

### AFRICA

1920—24. At Taungs in Transvaal were found, at various times, partial skulls, and one complete, in limestone deposits. (*Australopithecus africanus*.) Dart (the discoverer) and Broom regarded this as practically the missing link, 1922 *Rhodesian Man*. This relic has been the subject of much controversy, some anthropologists speculating as to a survival of the Neanderthals, driven south by the European Ice Age, others being of opinion that here we have evidence of an earlier race. Bonarelli suggested his unity with Heidelberg Man as *Palaeanthropus*. There is a bigger forebrain, of great significance in learning, than in the Neanderthal type, but the same low ridges. The skull is poised erect on the backbone and the teeth are quite human, but an ape-like face is indicated.

1931. At Kanam in Kenya a fragment of jaw was found, and 1931—33 at Kanjera in Kenya, skull fragment.

The former is of early, the latter of middle, Pleistocene. Mandibular fragments led the discoverer, Dr. Leakey (whose T.V. series may be remembered) to the conclusion that here (*Homo Kanamensis*) is actually a direct ancestor to ourselves, "the oldest fragment of a real ancestor yet discovered" (*Adam's Ancestors*). There was a Cambridge sitting which provisionally classed this creature as *homo sapiens*.

1936. At sterfontein (Transvaal) was an almost perfect skull with some teeth, in deposits about 1,200,000 years old (*Plesianthropus*, "Near Man"). 1938. At Kromdraai (Transvaal), of approximately the same age, was an almost complete skull with teeth. The Kromdraai ape-man (*Paranthropus robustus*) has with the passing of time come to be regarded as one of the most probable contenders for the title of missing link. 1946 to date. South Africa has continued to be a field of first importance to anthropologists, with remains at Swartkrans, Saldanha and elsewhere, and though work in Palestine, Egypt and other lands has yielded interesting results, it may well be that South Africa will finally show the complete answer to the riddle of man's birthplace.

1952. Cyrenaica. A female jaw fragment and other relics were found, and their age ascertained by tests (in America) of the amount of natural radioactivity present. These preliminary discoveries were enough to stimulate further exploration in the general area.

1955. A Cambridge archaeological expedition to Cyrenaica has brought to light various relics which include a human lower jawbone, probably 40,000 years old. There were accompanying food bones near hearths, a sign of cannibalism. Flint instruments were found of a hitherto unknown variant of the Mousterian culture (the name given in cave chronology to the epoch characterised by Neanderthal Man). The excavations continue, and may reveal the date and culture of the earliest neolithic farming communities in the area, indicative of the extinction of Neanderthal and his replacement by *Homo Sapiens*.



# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

A. PARKES.—(1) Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* was translated into 24 foreign languages. 140,000 copies of the German editions were printed before 1918. (2) Ingersoll's attack on vivisection was first published in THE FREETHINKER, from which it was copied elsewhere.

L. PERCY (Mrs.).—It was Tennyson who called Omar Khayyâm "a large infidel."

A. B. (West Ham Branch).—Glad to see the letter on Meredith in *The Observer*. Foote, as you know, was a great admirer of Meredith, and was justifiably angry at the religious funeral, at which Lord Morley and John Burns were present, "respectfully listening to the mouthings of two clergymen." (FREETHINKER, May 30, 1909.)

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, WHARRAD, NEWTON, SHEPPARD and MURPHY.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, 3 p.m., Platt Fields: 7.30 p.m., St. Mary's Blitzed Site: Speakers, Messrs. MCCALL, MILLS, or WOODCOCK. Every weekday, Deansgate Blitzed Site, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday and Sunday at 8 p.m. Messrs. PARRY, THOMPSON, and other speakers.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Saturday, October 1st, 6.30 p.m.: Messrs. MORRELL, ELSMERE and MOSLEY.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and WOOD. *The Freethinker* on sale at Marble Arch.

### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 2; 11 a.m. S. K. RATCLIFFE, "Good Behaviour in History."

Bradford N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, October 2, 6.45 p.m. COLIN MCCALL, "The Secular Basis of Culture."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 4, 7 p.m. RITCHIE CALDER, "International Relations and World Power Resources;—a General Survey."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 2, 6.30 p.m. Musical Evening by the Moonrakers Variety Group.

The unfortunate thing is that comparatively few people have a lively and intelligent sense of social responsibility. They praise or curse with the crowd, support or denounce with the crowd, cheer with equal enthusiasm a cinema star and the King, and would flock in equal numbers to witness a coronation or a public execution. It is a greater sense of individual responsibility combined with a greater courage in defying the opinion of a majority that evince the highest type of character, whether the opinion formed be right or wrong.—CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £943 0s. 10d.; Miss R. Dumont, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; C. Cain, 10s.; S. C. Merrifield, 5s. Total to date, £944, 16s. 10d.

## Notes and News

On Sunday, September 4, towards the end of the British Association Conference, members attended the Bristol Cathedral, where the Bishop preached to them. Later in the day, at a public meeting in the Kingsley Hall, the Bishop's sermon came in for some criticism from Dr. J. Bronowski, who said (according to the *Bristol Evening Post*): "The notion that the British Association shall meet on Sunday in order to hear edifying sermons to prove that religion and science are not at odds is already a fossilized part of the British Association's history." The Bishop, he continued, had said that Science now had the ability to turn out miracles every day of the week. No more profound misunderstanding was possible. Scientists, he said, were working commonplaces and it took a great deal of effort to find out what was commonplace in nature.

Prof. Julian Huxley also spoke, his subject being "Science and God; a naturalistic approach." He said, "I would prophesy that soon by historical standards and certainly by biological standards, it will be as impossible for a man who claims to be educated to believe in a god as it is now for him to believe in a flat earth or that death is always due to witchcraft, or that illness is always a punishment."

The meeting, organised by the R.P.A., was packed to overflowing, some four hundred being present according to our Bristol correspondent. The Chairman was Prof. A. E. Heath, and Mr. Ritchie Calder was also on the platform. The speeches of Huxley and Bronowski were enthusiastically applauded, and Ritchie Calder, in a few brief remarks, said that he considered the meeting a most significant event in the light of the whole conference. It is hoped that the Bristol Humanist group, consisting of Ethical Union, R.P.A. and N.S.S. members, will be strengthened as a result.

Dr. F. H. Crick of Cambridge told a science conference a few weeks ago, that British scientists were working on experiments which would enable them to take apart the substance deoxyribo nucleic acid, purify the various substances of which it is composed, and then reassemble it in a test tube as living matter. The artificial production of life has, of course, been the confident prediction of twentieth century biochemists. No doubt there will be the usual religious opposition to such experiments, which follow the scientific practice of pushing the "hand of God" further and further out of the way.

In Australia the annual Social Justice Statement for 1955, signed by twenty-nine Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Australia, says that "the crowding of population into the six Australian capital cities (54% according to the 1954 census) has produced a decline in religious belief and practice, and a lower birth rate."

NEXT WEEK

TREATING RELIGION GENTLY

By G. H. TAYLOR



## The Late T. A. Jackson

By F. A. RIDLEY

With the recent death of Mr. T. A. Jackson, the advanced movements of this country have lost a walking encyclopaedia of knowledge and a picturesque and colourful figure. In his later years, Tommy, as everyone called him, was chiefly known as a leading propagandist of Communism and particularly as the always witty and informative contributor to our contemporary, the *Daily Worker*, to which journal and its readers the passing of T. A. Jackson will be a great blow. However, T. A. Jackson was too big a man to be absolutely identified with any one party or paper. In the course of a fairly long and extremely active life, he was associated with many movements, and wrote and spoke on many subjects.

The present writer knew him fairly well in the 30's and received a most cordial letter from him on the occasion of Mr. P. A. Hornibrook's review of Jackson's autobiography, *Solo Trumpet*. Incidentally, I hope that prior to his death, its author had been able to complete the promised second part of his fascinating narrative of his life and varied studies and activities. What struck anyone who talked for any length of time with Tommy was his varied and encyclopaedic knowledge, which ranged from military science to Irish history and from English literature to comparative Religion; besides his, as one might style them, professional studies as one of the most learned Marxist scholars of his generation. In his conversation Tommy was a walking encyclopaedia, besides being an extremely witty one, nor was he a "yes man." His private opinion of, say, the "Red Dean" of Canterbury, as expressed to fellow unbelievers, including the present writer, would, I imagine, have upset some of the more conventional adherents of the current "party line." He had his limitations; whilst one of the wittiest speakers on the leftish platform, he lacked the oratorical magic of James Maxton or the deadly logic of his own colleague, Harry Pollitt. Similarly, with the written word; whilst Jackson was one of the most brilliant journalists of his day, I did not think that he always displayed his vast knowledge to the best advantage in his books. His knowledge sometimes obscured his presentation of it. There was perhaps, some truth in the criticism that his *magnum opus* on *Dialectics* sometimes demonstrated, not only the famous transformation of quantity into quality, but, equally, the reverse process. However, he was certainly one of the most versatile and learned men of his generation, an original, a self-taught man, who owed nothing to formal education, but who probably had a more universal knowledge and a greater power of expression than most of the professional scholars who have been churned out of the official scholastic curriculum.

Mr. Jackson was always interested in ideas, from the days of his distant youth, when he caught a fleeting glimpse of Charles Bradlaugh walking down Fleet Street, down to his last articles in the *Daily Worker*. In his day he adhered to many movements. It would be a pity to spoil the story told in *Solo Trumpet* with such inimitable gusto, if these paragraphs send my readers to that fascinating autobiography, so fittingly praised for its forthright honesty by Mr. Hornibrook in his review. Like most of the great pioneers in the English Radical tradition, he combined Freethought with Socialism in his open-air propaganda. Perhaps the happiest days in his life were the years before the first world war when as a free lance, street corner "soap box orator," Jackson held forth nightly in the public squares of Leeds. It was during this far off period that he associated with the gentleman then usually referred to in the "respectable" press, as "That notorious blasphemer, J. W. Gott." On

several occasions Tommy was charged with "profanity" in Leeds police courts, and he has told us, in *Solo Trumpet*, how he courted, but did not obtain, a big public trial for Blasphemy.

Altogether he had an interesting, if exciting time. If not a prosperous one in the material sense, for Tommy lacked most of the typical bourgeois virtues, including the most fundamental of all, the ability to "make money"! Jackson lived and died a poor man like most of his predecessors in the English tradition of revolutionary thought; as he points out himself, no one ever offered him a peerage. By profession a printer, Tommy always appears to have been more proficient at writing himself, rather than at printing what others had written. He was a striking looking man who, with his glasses, big black hat, and outstretched finger on the public platform, in fact at times rather resembled a caricature of a Bolshevick agitator by a *Daily Mail* cartoonist. But I do not think that he would have liked working in a factory in England or Russia.

Tommy Jackson was the last, or nearly the last, of a remarkable body of men, to whose often self-sacrificing labour, and to whose considerable influence on human progress, no adequate recognition has ever been afforded; the radical agitators of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, who went out into the market place and preached their revolutionary message in the highways and by-ways, though unrecognized by official "History," were the salt of the earth, the creators of public opinion. Their lives were often hard and penurious, and they lie in forgotten graves. But Humanity and human progress owe them an incalculable debt, and the world would have been a different and vastly more unpleasant place without them.

Thomas Alfred Jackson was one of the last and most brilliant of this generation of propagandists by word and pen. He spoke the truth as he saw it, without fear or favour, and no man can do more. He was an original personality and a bold pioneer.

### BRANCH LINE

#### Dagenham

Members of the newly-formed Dagenham Branch of the N.S.S. have already made their presence felt, and their opinions known, in the local *Post* and *Guardian*. The latest to hand of quite a number of letters which they had published is from Miss J. B. Warner, who follows the practice of advertising the name of the society with her signature. Defending "morals without religion" against the Rev. D. Hailey, she writes:

The new-born baby has no conscience: it does not feel that there are certain actions it ought or ought not to do. It cries out for its every need until trained to request its comforts in a more convenient manner. This is a first lesson in morality; and, of course, is not in the remotest sense related to gods, Bibles, religions or rituals, as the Rev. D. Hailey would have us believe. We learn morality from our association with others; a completely immoral community could never survive.—One other consideration: if religion meant morality there would be no such office as prison chaplain.

Congratulations to the youngest member of the youngest branch. Meanwhile another branch member, Mr. P. V. Morris, recently made one of his periodical excursions into the august columns of the *Telegraph*, again on the subject of morality and religion.



## "Category Mistake": How to Understand It

By GREGORY S. SMELTERS

What is a category-mistake? Let us first make some preliminary distinctions. There are two logical types or categories: (1) names that are used to refer to individuals, like proper names (John, Mary, etc.), and (2) generic (common, class) names that are used to refer to characteristics or properties, to represent a class (man, etc.). And a class contains particular individuals or members of a set, or constituent parts of a whole. Ultimately, all proper names are a sub-class of common names, since, e.g., "Mr. Smith" is a collective name for a number of chronological occurrences from birth to death. Although characteristics are not separable from individuals in fact, but only in abstract thought, it is very important to keep clear this double reference of words (e.g., Prof. Susan Stebbing, *Modern Elementary Logic*, p.100; also A. J. Ayer, *Occam's Razor and Modern Philosophy, Listener*, December 8, 1949). The failure to distinguish names for individuals from names for characteristics and *vice versa* is called the category-mistake.

The principle underlying it may be expressed thus: "There exists, in addition to the set of individuals or objects, and the property defining them as a class, no one extra individual (or member) of the same type which is the class" (Stebbing, *Modern Introduction to Logic*, pp.141, 455). In other words, there exists no one extra member called X over and above all the members of a class called x. According to Prof. Gilbert Ryle, we commit a category-mistake when we represent a certain word as if it belonged to one logical type or category when it actually belongs to another; as if that word stood for an extra member of the class of which the other things are members (*Concept of Mind*, p.16). Anticipating the explanation below, we can say that the abstract monotheists (believers in one "God") commit a category-mistake by allocating "God" to the category of proper names when "God" actually belongs to the category of generic names. In other words, they imply, by their usage, that God is an extra member of the class of which the other gods Yahweh, Hadad, Chemosh, etc., are members. Actually, "God" is not a proper name of another god as they perhaps unwittingly, imply, but a generic name, wrongly written with a capital initial, a plain god. There is thus no one extra god over and above all gods.

The American theologian J. L. Adams of Chicago University, whose specific contribution to Christian theology is summarized in the sentence "God is the Lord and the Life, of the Universe" (*Hibbert Journal*, January, 1955), provides an excellent specimen of the moronic Jrivel poured forth from pulpits under the verbal illusion that "God" denotes an extra god, and is not just another label for the label "Yahweh."

How did the name "category-mistake" originate? — "Category-mistake" as the term for a vicious and widespread fallacy seems to have come into popular philosophic usage with the appearance of Prof. G. Ryle's (Oxford) book, *Concept of Mind*, in 1949, of which a reviewer, in 1954, wrote the following outstanding appraisal: "The most important and the most discussed book of the five past years, Prof. Ryle's *Concept of Mind*, clearly betrays the influence not only of Logical Positivist modes of thinking, but also of Logical Positivist methods of writing. In fact its effectiveness is in part due to the judicious exercise of these methods, and demonstrates that the work of the past 25 years has elaborated a new philosophical technique." By

analysing "mind" to be a collective term for a category of human behaviour, Prof. Ryle destroyed the religious meaning of mind as a ghost in man, and so soul and immortality were buried along with the ghost of "mind" in the churchyard of superstitions.

How can the "category-mistake" technique be useful to Freethought? As Freethought is principally concerned with the effort to remove God-belief as an ancient illusion and a silly obstacle to happy and honest human relations with its insane threat to burn alive, here or hereafter, all logical reasoners, the introduction of category-mistake argument for atheism will make available, to militant freethinkers, a revolutionary weapon of debunking "God" as a misuse of language, a weapon abreast of our atomic age and possibly as destructive as an atom bomb for exploding not this but "the other world" (another colossal category-mistake). It is, however, a pity that the British freethinkers seem to have taken, so far, little notice of this revolutionary methodical weapon of the modern atheistic philosophy of analysis of Wittgenstein, B. Russell, G. Ryle, etc., of their own country, leaving to antipodal foreigners like myself the awkward job of introducing this semantical technique to Freethought.

How can we demonstrate the category-mistake? For instructional reasons, let us distinguish three levels. First, at the child's level, you start with a simple test. Let your youngster collect some apples. Tell him to make a paper label with the word "apple" for each of the apples and place each label opposite each apple. This will be the apparatus for understanding the basic triadic relation of signifying; impress on him that there are always the labeller or the interpreter, the label or the (written) word and what is labelled, the thing. Explain also that all the apples seen together are called the set of apples. Now remove all the apples, leaving the labels and ask him what remains. The labels, of course. And where is the set of apples? Gone, too, because the set is all apples together, not anything besides the apples. Now remove the labels, too, asking what remains. Emphasise by voice "Apples, apples, labels, labels, are gone." Well, what remains is the sound, the spoken word, "apples." Impress the correlation of the label or sign and the thing labelled or symbolised. Finally explain that there are, in English, some labels, but the things exist no more (like the extinct animals). Suggest also that there are some labels that have never had the things, like fairies, elves, goblins, devils, gods. Now comes the corollary of the test in form of a rule: "Always look beyond the written or spoken label to the thing labelled! Always inquire what is the thing beyond the label, and whether the label has an opposite thing at all!" Let your youngster memorise this rule, and see to it that it sinks into the child's understanding, so that his teacher (of religion) may not easily befuddle him with the thing-less labels.

At the adolescent level, you repeat the child test, and explain in addition that there are labels not only of things, but also higher labels for sets of lower labels (like "fruit" for: "apple" and "pear"; "human being" for man, woman, boy, girl). There are even some higher labels for some lower labels that never had any things (like the label "supernatural beings" for the labels "fairies" and "devils" and "gods," etc.). Then proceed as follows: We know now that after the removal of the set of things, there remains only the label. But suppose somebody says: "I



don't believe that any fairy exists, but I feel there must exist a one and only Fairy." Remind him of the correlation of the label and the thing labelled; then ask: This person assumes, by using "Fairy" as a *proper* name, that there must exist a thing corresponding to "Fairy"—what is it then? Of course, another fairy. What is then this unique fairy called? Of course, the *fairy* called Fairy. Now what about his admission that he disbelieves in *any and all* fairies? Of course, he is contradicting himself. By removing the whole set of fairies, he has automatically denied his present assertion of another fairy called Fairy. Where is his mistake? It lies in his ignoring the fact that the label "fairy" cannot label an *extra* thing besides the set of all fairies. And writing "fairy" with a capital initial letter does not help to create another fairy out of nothing. In other words, he knew that "fairy" does not label anything, and he deludes himself by imagining that writing "fairy" with a capital initial will both create and label an extra fairy! What is this then? A hopeless mistake of magic and contradictions, of course, due solely to his allocating "Fairy" to the category of proper names when it remained a common name, a label for *any* (but non-existing) fairy.

(To be concluded)

### DO IT NOW

If with pleasure you are viewing  
Any work a man is doing;  
If you like him or you love him  
Tell him now.  
Don't withhold your approbation  
Till the parson makes oration,  
As he lies with snowy lillies o'er his brow,  
For no matter how you shout it  
He wont really care about it,  
He wont know how many tear drops you have shed.  
If you think some praise is due him  
Now's the time to slip it to him,  
For he cannot read his tombstone  
When he's dead.

More than fame and more than money  
Is the comment kind and sunny;  
And the hearty warm approval of a friend,  
For it gives to life a savor,  
And it makes you stronger, braver,  
And it gives you heart and spirit to the end.  
If he earns your praise, bestow it,  
If you like him let him know it,  
Let the words of true encouragement be said,  
Do not wait till life is over  
And he's underneath the clover,  
For he cannot read his tombstone  
When he's dead.  
He wont know how many tear drops you have shed.  
(Dipped from the Stream.)

## Correspondence

### THE RISING GENERATION

If it will stimulate others to do likewise may I say that, without any difficulty, I got Mrs. Knight's *Morals Without Religion* into Darlington Public Library in July. I am myself a keen Atheist and reader of THE FREETHINKER.

My grandfather is Mr. Ainsley, who has read (and is still doing so) THE FREETHINKER for over 50 years, after reading Mr. Foote's fine defence of Paine and Ingersoll in Batchford's *Clarion*.

Yours in freethinking,  
M. D. GRIEVESON (aged 16).

### MIND READER ?

This summer U.S. television viewers are getting a glimpse of Dunninger, the Mentalist, on his so-called "mind reading show" every Saturday.

Here is a man who is obsessed by a mania to equal Houdini.

He claims to have developed the power to read other people's minds, but it seems strange that such a capability should develop in a person who has spent much of his life as a magician. He is a competent magician to be sure, and is expertly skilled in deception.

Telepathy, in my opinion, can never be established as a fact because the possibility of collaboration cannot be adequately discounted.

U.S.A.

FRANK HALLAGHER.

[But does not Dunninger admit his "mentalism" is pure conjuring?—Ed.]

### DEMOCRACIES: MR. CLARK REPLIES

Re the letters in this week's issue, may I make the following comments:

(1) "Democracy" describes a form of government; it is not determined by the amount of public ownership, or nationalisation, in a country.

(2) "People collectively" is an empty term unless the people really have a voice in the choice of their representatives, which requires the right of opposition parties freely to propagate their views, and to receive votes in a secret ballot.

It is most important that we should not be misled by catchwords ("the people," or "the workers" to be popular with those whose candidates were all rejected by the people at the last General Election), or the fact that our own society is not perfect. May I suggest a reading of, say, *Under Two Dictators* (Margaret Buber) and *Vorkuta* (W. Scholmer).

G. W. CLARK.

### MAN BUNGLES GOD

To you I say "Bravo!" Your paper is extremely welcome in this world where gods abide in such profusion.

Nevertheless, in spite of my antipathy toward Gods, it does seem that man could have done a better job in this area. You'll excuse me, gentlemen, if I express sympathy for the fictitious character which man has created as a monument to his own weakness. It is rather an unfortunate characterization with which poor God has been endowed by his creator. For if man created God in his own image then God is not only a grotesque figure but a rather foolish one.

Up to this point I have read your FREETHINKER over the shoulder of a friend. However, as a tentative historian I realize that your paper holds valuable information. It is certainly educational.

U.S.A.

(Miss) C. M. PEARSON.

### POINTS FROM LETTERS

Human nature is not so poor or helpless as religious leaders would have us believe. To put up a mythical being as a basis for morality is an insult to the intelligence.—E. O'LEARY.

When a rich man dies, high fee is paid for high mass, but when a poor man dies, low fee is paid for low mass. Going to heaven reminds me of an opera house where you pay your money and take your seat accordingly.—A. EZE.

It is a foolish position to believe social affairs can be righted while leaving religion severely alone.—SEAN DONE.

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