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DEFINITIONS

THE INVITATION to readers to submit a Definition of Humanism in not more than 150 words produced a bumper response. Unfortunately although all contributions have been much appreciated, it was not possible to publish them all. One thing is clear; it is *not* easy to sum up modern Humanism so that a newcomer sees at once how our convictions differ from those of religious people. Readers will have made up their own minds as to which definition was the best. It would be invidious to pick a "prize winner", especially when there is no prize. The basic points have been covered, if not perhaps by any one person. Our reliance on the scientific method as a means of ascertaining and weighing up facts; our rejection of doctrines, dogmas and absolutes; our belief in "human endeavour" which must surely be qualified by adding "for the happiness, welfare and self-realisation of the human individual in the context of the world community".

In his *An Atheist's Values* Richard Robinson wrote: "We should not let the distressing results of some thinking seduce us into inventing the myth of reason as a special faculty alongside intuition and faith and the rest. There are no such special faculties. Reason, in the sense of a mental power other than the general power to think, is a fiction, a dummy set up to be knocked down by those who favour not thinking about certain matters. The human mind is not a box of tools from which you can select. It has only one tool, thought. And our only choice is whether to use it badly or well, and whether to inquire and learn how to use it well . . ."

Can we, then, talk about "the supremacy of reason"? Certainly we have to indicate that Humanism "must constantly enrich itself with the growth and progress of scientific knowledge" and admit when it has been wrong. This is something which those who believe in an absolute truth cannot do without the most devious intellectual contortions.

Some of the definitions we received were about the sort of people *Humanists* are; but Christians, too, seem to ask more often "what must I believe to be a Christian?" than "what is Christianity?" According to the Archbishop of Canterbury, to be a Christian (ie, an Anglican) you have to believe in the resurrection of Christ, "without which there would be no Christianity". And of course without a historical Jesus there would have been no resurrection.

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However, Dr Allegro's idea about Jesus being only a myth is (says Dr Ramsey) "a hypothesis so remote that it isn't worth considering . . ."; he would have been more honest to have said "so alarming for Christians that they dare not consider it". As I have pointed out before, the Archbishop insists that he, too, is a Humanist.

Corliss Lamont writes in his excellent *The Philosophy of Humanism*:

"Humanism assigns to man nothing less than the task of being his own saviour and redeemer" and he elaborates this with—

"Humanism is a philosophy for mature people and grows increasingly influential with the maturity of the race . . . It is honest and realistic in holding that man cannot romantically expect that his story is necessarily going to have a happy ending, it is tough-minded and firm-hearted in teaching that we should not unsportingly demand any advance promise of ultimate victory." Mr Lamont goes on, "Humanism is convinced that man 'has the ability and intelligence and courage to win through'."

This gets us away from the rather blind optimism of some of the Victorian agnostics, and the claim made by Emile Zola that "Civilisation will thrive when the last stone of the last church falls on the last priest". Anyone who wants to know more about our beliefs would do well to get hold of Mr Lamont's book*, which is a gold mine of information and discussion. We have been proud to welcome him into our own Letter Column, and he develops his theme on Freewill and Determinism, certainly to my satisfaction.

The purpose of a definition is to explain. To define is to "settle limits of" or "make clear", or "set forth essence of". Those of us who are at all English and broadminded could, if we were just being literal, call ourselves "Anglo-Catholics", but this would only serve to confuse. As do Christians when they call themselves Humanists. On the other hand the Renaissance meaning of "Humanism" did not exclude Christian and indeed Roman Catholic beliefs, so if Christians insist on using the word in this manner, we must make it clear that *we* do not.

Newcomers to our organisations and ideas should not imagine that by "settling the limits" of our Humanism we are setting up the sort of sectarian barriers Christendom takes for granted, and which in the context of "absolute truth" or a "One True Faith or Church" are ludicrous. Our definitions of Humanism ("scientific", "naturalistic", "evolutionary", "ethical" and so on) merely indicate where we put our stress; that's all. We are not all giving a different interpretation of one so-called "Truth". Nor should outsiders be led to imagine that the British *Humanist* Association has some umbrella-patent on the word, or can decide alone what is or what is not "Humanist"! The *Rationalist* Press Association and the National *Secular* Society were busy putting non-Christian Humanism into practice before the founders of the BHA were born.

And those of us who call ourselves *Secular-Humanists* are just making it clear that we are not religious and that we, the clergy and the churches are not necessarily even "good friends" . . .

How is this for another definition of Humanism on a Postcard:

" . . . its central idea is free, not lawless thought, and it considers scepticism to be scrutiny. It advocates liberty of action without injury to others. It is not against Christianity, but independent of it. Its standard is utilitarian; it is the religion of the present life only; teaching men to seek mortality in nature, and happiness in duty . . ."

You think that Humanism *should* be against Christianity? You don't like the use of the word "religion"? I agree, but where did it come from? Well, it is an extract from Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates and Universal Information*, published in 1876, which begins like this:

"**SECULARISM**, a name given to the principles advocated by G. J. and Austin Holyoake, about 1846, and since Mr Bradlaugh."

G. J. Holyoake (1817-1906), at one time imprisoned for blasphemy, was the virtual "father" of the Co-operative Movement, a pioneer in the struggle for a free press and the emancipation of women. McCabe writes

" . . . he contributed materially to the rapid progress of advanced thought in Great Britain, his high character and wide range of reform-interests doing much to remove the violent prejudice against Freethinkers".

Holyoake was the first chairman of the Rationalist Press Association. Nearly twenty years before T. H. Huxley coined the word "Agnostic", Holyoake used "Secularist" and "Secularism" to "express the extension of Freethought to Ethics". He felt that the words had a positive meaning, indicating that the rejection of religious faith was accom-

panied by humanitarian feeling and endeavour, and so was preferable to the words in current use such as "Atheist", "Infidel" and "Freethinker".

The situation regarding religion in this country is changing fast. It is intriguing to be reminded so frequently how anxious Christians are to call themselves "humanists", whereas we were never so anxious *not* to be taken for Christians! But this is exactly what does happen when we call ourselves just "Humanists" and refer to our beliefs as just "Humanism". Fortunately no one would ever suggest today that Secularism is any sort of a religion. We don't have to live that one down. Would we do better now gracefully to relinquish "Humanism" to the Christians and more generally to call ourselves "Secularists", making it clear that, unlike many atheists, Secularists do not condone any sort of totalitarian forms of government? It is a label to which Christians have no claim whatsoever, and which even they are unlikely to adopt in order to cash in on our growing influence, to the general confusion of the public.

The beginning of a new year is not a bad time for re-viewing the field of battle for freethought, and a secular open society, and deciding where we belong on it.

My own position is this: the title of my book on *Humanism* was chosen by the director of the *Rationalist Press Association*. I am a member of the RPA and the *National Secular Society* and must get this in quickly while I am still editor of the *FREETHINKER*. The one thing I have never claimed to be is ethical . . .

* *The Philosophy of Humanism* by Corliss Lamont (Fifth edition, revised and enlarged), Barrie & Rockliff in association with Pemberton Publishing Co. Ltd. (1965).

WHAT IS WRONG WITH DETENTION CENTRES?

Mary Iles

AS THE RESULT of writing the article against Detention Centres (*FREETHINKER*, July 29), I was invited by the Board of Visitors to be shown round Buckley Hall Detention Centre, Rochdale. I accepted on condition that I was given the right to interview boys out of hearing of staff or officers. Each interview lasted between half and three-quarters of an hour; nearly one tenth of the boys were interviewed. The Report begins with a transcript of typical comments and replies to questions about the boys' experience, their assessments of the Centre, their relationships with the officers, etc. Where any doubt was felt as to the truthfulness of the speaker, his contribution has not been included. The boys were interviewed separately and had no opportunity to discuss the interview with each other beforehand, so that the similarity of their replies is certainly significant. This visit, followed by a visit with the Howard League Group to Latchmere House Detention Centre, Richmond, confirmed my opposition to the D/C system.

"It's very hard for you at first. You're shaky, . . . one lad started to shake all the time . . . and you get pushed around a lot: 'Do it this way; do it that way.' . . . The officers sometimes do the haircuts without waiting for the barber. I suppose it's a bit of spite, to make you feel uncomfortable."

"The most stupid thing is the Parade in boots and gaiters."

"Here it's like you have to ask permission to stand up or sit down. I got a crack—a belt on the face—for falling out to go to the lavatory."

"There's Punishment PE . . . This officer said: 'Because of one or two of you, the whole group will suffer.' The Punishment was crouch-hopping round the gym for between three-quarters of an hour and an hour."

"PUNCHING IS COMMON—AN OFFICER WILL PUNCH A LAD IN THE STOMACH IN THE GYM. THESE THINGS

HAPPEN ALL THE TIME."

"An officer punished a lad for calling out. Then he punched the lad standing next to him: 'That's for nothing. Think what you'll get if you do something.'"

"You get knocked about a bit; hit round the head; clouted; sometimes hit in the stomach. Some officers just seem to like it."

"There's a lot of belting here."

"The boys don't think of complaining. They think it is all part of the system."

"When my Probation Officer came to see me, I told him there was a lot of belting going on, but he didn't say anything. He seemed to know already" . . . "It's much worse here than Borstal for your self-respect and independence. It makes you feel full of hatred at times."

The purpose of the Centre is punishment

Whatever double-think and double-talk there may be before outsiders, it is very clear to anyone *inside* that "deter" means "punish", and that punishment, including physical punishment, is the motive and mainspring of the régime. The boys must be pushed to the attainment of physical prowess through a harsh military discipline. This Punishment will make a man of them. Where one may legally push the offender "to the limit of his ability" (Home Office, 1964) there is obviously a danger that some officers will push beyond it. I have evidence of this from many D/Cs, particularly Medomsley and Usk.

One of the shocks to a visitor admitted within the high wire enclosure is that the standards of good character and behaviour which apply outside have no relevance here. Everything must be re-adjusted to the military model. Inducements to conformity are *FATIGUES* of up to two hours in any one day; *de-GRADING*; and the *DETENTION CELL*, which also means working longer hours.

The Home Office 1964 Handbook mentions "ONE" hour's physical training per day. A newcomer will certainly be treated to a lot more than this. His day will include:—

Physical training (0630—0645 or 0700).

Four parades. PE (one hour).

Extra squad drill (half an hour).

Possibly extra remedial PE (half an hour). At some Detention Centres—*an hour*.

Possibly punishment PE. This is set especially for those who have not managed to satisfy the PE instructors.

These are likely to be newcomers.

Possibly fatigues ("*not more than two hours in any one day*").

Once a week: evening circuit training—half an hour.

Newcomers: labouring, which requires intensive physical effort.

An ex-army officer, who witnessed D/C PE said that he found it "a frightening display of energy, even to one who has been on a war-time assault course. It reminded me more of a factory with machines going round, than of human beings".

Does anyone seriously doubt that this programme is devised and executed in such a way as to break down the mental fibre of a new conscript so that he will conform, along with those who are already broken? **The rigid and traditional army discipline had one main purpose, to train men to obey and to kill. Is this really the most suitable modern training for producing an integrated social human being?** Modern reformist thought is now very wary of institutionalising boys. Such conformist prisoners have been found to behave with unpredictable irresponsibility outside.

Many D/C boys have already come under strong discipline: for example Catholic school with strictly disciplinarian teachers who administered corporal punishment; Approved School; Borstal; the Merchant Navy and the army. "Training" only confirms their long experience of intolerant Authority and deepens their hostility towards it.

The whole emphasis of the régime is on conformity, and Detention Camps still accept the hypocrisy of *compulsory* religious service, something which even the army now rejects. On Sundays, the Latchmere House Warden told us, there is also Morning Parade which he himself takes for 15 minutes; he also inspects all the kit which must be laid out on the beds army style. "One can have a few words as one inspects", he said, "for instance *if a boy's mother has died*".

The punitive, military aims remain central, the "positive" additions are, and are only intended to be, peripheral. If EDUCATION, WELFARE, PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, were really to become, and were meant to become, an *integral* part of the system, all its present values would have to be replaced; its purpose and framework re-aligned; and staff with a positive outlook found to run it.

Evening classes

Evening Classes are, as in prison, only an added-on extra, one and a half hours in duration, at the end of the day. The teachers may be ready to recognise the boys as rather normal ex-secondary school boys; young, immature, friendly, rather confused in their ideas, strong in their emotions, very sensitive and responsive; they may feel anxious to develop their talents and qualities, but, just as when teaching in prison, they will be frustrated all the time by never being able to make much headway with their endeavours—because the whole air and atmosphere of the

institution is against them. As a teacher of English and Liberal Studies it seems to me obvious that a Detention Centre environment would be the worst possible one. If one did succeed in developing the qualities required for these subjects: originality, independent thought and expression, and artistic creativity, *one would have succeeded also in developing rebels against the Detention Centre system.*

Any benefit from the evening classes must be recognised as belonging to evening classes alone. It has nothing whatever to do with the merit or de-merit of Detention Centres.

The woman Welfare Worker

The Welfare Worker is concerned mainly with family problems outside the Centre, and with After-Care settlement. Two women Welfare Workers I spoke to had completely identified themselves with the Detention Centre system. And indeed anyone who stood out against it would soon get the sack.

Work

The labouring work, as at Buckley Hall D/C, fulfills one Home Office requirement in that it certainly demands "consistent effort" as anyone who has laboured on the formation of concrete blocks will agree. Where the dividing line comes between that and "drudgery", is less clear, especially as the MAXIMUM *weekly pay* for a "full working week of 44 hours" (Handbook, 1964) is TWO SHILLINGS and SIXPENCE.

At Latchmere House the only big workshop is the Cable-stripping Shop. It's hard, dirty work, requiring no brain. The cables are covered in oil and grease, and the boys have to hack away with hammers to strip them. It is very noisy, very monotonous, drudgery. Such work gives no sense of achievement: it is merely regarded as part of the punishment.

"The staff are trained and encouraged to take a personal interest in the individual offender" (Handbook, 1964): this is rather misleading. In fact the staff are ordinary uniformed prison officers, usually ex-army. All the boys emphasised that it was never possible to have any personal relationships with the officers, nor even to have any conversation or discussion with them.

"There's very little opportunity to talk to them. You must always stand to attention when you speak."

The attitude towards most officers is one of hostility and the brutality of certain individuals has a very big and oppressive influence on the emotional atmosphere of the Centre.

The Board of Visitors and the right of complaint to them

The Chairman of the Board of Visitors and another member of the Board, *both Magistrates*, whom we met at Buckley Hall, told us that they almost never receive complaints. Why not?

(1) The right to complain is worded in such official language that it is incomprehensible.

(2) The Boards of Visitors are mainly composed of magistrates, and

(3) Finally there is the very real fear, felt by all the boys, that if anyone complained *the officer would take it out on them afterwards.*

"I don't think anyone dare complain. They'd be watching out for themselves after."

Conclusions

Is this the régime that a Home Office, which is meant to be reform-minded, considers as suitable for all young offenders who are sentenced to custodial treatment? Lord Stonham, in his opening address to the Howard League (September, 1966) Congress, declared that prison sentences

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NEWS AND NOTES

QUOTES from the *Tablet* (Dec. 10) (not, as some wit remarked, to be renamed the *Pill*). Referring to the recent interview by David Frost of the Archbishop of Canterbury:

"... there have been precedents in this age of television that archbishops, and cardinals for that matter, face the questionings of the young and sceptical. Yet the scepticism has seldom been pushed to the untenable length of questioning the existence of the Founder of the Christian faith... It can be argued that the Church should not pander to the television programme builders, who are working themselves into the position of being able to summon anyone to their presence, to question them and then dismiss them, in the manner of Oriental despots."... "There are a good many indications of a growing aggressiveness by secular Humanists. (The adjective is important, for we Christians are also Humanists, and its humanist tradition is a special glory of the Catholic Church.) The Western world today is full of these secular Humanists, who feel that they have been mealy-mouthed for too long, pulling their punches out of a misplaced respect for the deep feelings of Christians. They now consider that, as these deep feelings issue in convictions and attitudes on public policy that are holding up the forward march of mankind, they must be disregarded.... We must be prepared for a much more openly avowed and full-scale challenge to the Christian revelation and its claims to be a historical religion centred on events in the first century."

We couldn't put it better ourselves. The anonymous writer goes on to suggest that legislation about marriage, divorce, abortion and euthanasia "based on Humanist premises" (he should have said *secular* Humanist) "is urged on the country, on the assumption that it is no longer a Christian country, as is shown by the small minority which on every Sunday attends a Christian place of worship". The *Tablet* is concerned because the vital question as to the truth or falsehood of Christianity, while it has been "handled reasonably carefully so far",... "will be more and more openly canvassed for its viewing or readership value". It doesn't seem to occur that many people really do resent being fooled, even some of the time, and that the value of truth and integrity cannot be valued too highly. Of course, if the falsehood of Christianity rather than its truth be proved, the "viewing", "readership" and every other sort of value of the Christian scriptures, priesthood, organisations and rituals, slumps. The *Tablet* points out that whereas worshipping Christians cannot claim to be a majority in the country, nor can committed secularists, and that in between the two groups

"there is a vast body of non-church going people who have not got any of the Humanistic animus against Christian bodies for their continual influence on the legislation and social customs of the country. The majority are in an attitude of benevolent neutrality, agreeable that their children should be baptised, and that in the early years of infancy they should learn to say their prayers, even if it is not expected that in their teens they will continue with the religion of their childhood. It is in this curious sort of no-man's land of mind and emotions that the Christian and the Humanist battle will have to be fought".

Not a bad reminder for 1967.

Refugee from a system

PROMINENT ("leading", "liberal") Theologian Father Charles Davis, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Heythrop College, has renounced his priesthood, is leaving the Church of Rome, and is to be married. "Being a Christian" (he said on the television Frost Programme) "means being concerned for truth and people", and the Roman Catholic Church's concern is for authority at the expense of truth. For instance, the Pope (in order to save authority) recently said that there was "no state of doubt" on the subject of birth control; this is demonstrably untrue. The Church's approach to truth is political; at all costs the front must be kept intact. Human relationships are distorted by a

system which comes before the needs and concerns of human beings.

Within the Roman Church there is, said Charles Davis, "a multiplicity of suffering". The system which crushes personal needs, is a hangover from the past, when religion and politics were closely united. Now it is fossilised and hindering true Christian witness, life, and action. Charles Davis admitted that the whole framework of his life is shattered and he must rebuild. He hopes to do this through the personal love which enabled him to seek liberation. Although he is still a Christian, ex-Father Davis does not propose joining any other church. He believes that the world has need of what he calls a "Christian presence", and, like so many other religious refugees who are as yet without the security of a philosophical home, he hopes and trusts that Christianity will find a way of making contact again with reality and human experience. And so we are back again at the vital starting point; can human hopes and courage be fostered and developed, if based on a fairy tale? If not, then mustn't Christianity itself be allowed (encouraged) to crumble away, even as the religious systems and the faith of man in those systems is crumbling? We wish Charles Davis well in his new life. It won't be easy; the Church has made sure of that. Father Brocard Sewell, O.Carm., of the Aylesford Priory, lost no time in writing to the *Guardian*, insisting that the consequences of Charles Davies' action will be less "earth-shaking" than we might expect. However the day after the announcement a local would-be convert to Rome was having very serious second thoughts. He may well have cause to be grateful to this courageous ex-priest.

About housing

IN THE CHRISTMAS issue I mentioned the organisation SHELTER; I now hear that Jeremy Sandford (author of the moving *Cathie Come Home* television play) is deeply concerned with an organisation LEND A HAND which was formed three and a half years ago by a small group of voluntary workers. Help (from Toys to fortunes) is urgently required, and those interested should write to 22 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1, or 45 Fitzroy Street, London, W1. Jeremy Sandford is now working on a script about the unmarried mother and her child. If this is anything like as good as his *Cathie Come Home*, it will make an invaluable contribution to understanding.

"Unmarried mothers and society"

THIS IS the heading of an article in the *Catholic Herald* (Dec. 16) which is all part of the campaign on the part of Catholics to spotlight what is being done to help unwanted children while trying to obstruct reform of the law of abortion. And the facts are not easy for RCs to face; with the details about the unmarried pregnancies of so many Irish girls, the paper admits that

"Although a proportion of the girls are only nominally Catholic, even the most expensive convent education will not necessarily preserve them".

The reason of course for the wretched situation is nearly always a tragic ignorance about the basic facts of sex and birth, and, of course, about contraception. "Cure is better than prevention," is the Catholic motto.

Curious choice?

IN THE Sunday Times book "Choice of the year" Anthony Storr suggests *The Flight from Women* by Karl Stern, the German Roman Catholic psychiatrist, which was quite the most anti-feminist book I had the misfortune to read in 1966, and which Madeleine Simms reviewed so well for this paper on August 5th. For those who reject the myths about Jesus the Man and the God, the myths about Woman still seem to linger on...

BE BRAVE AND ANGRY (Part 1)

ELISE OTTESEN-JENSEN is a household name for anyone concerned with the health of mothers and children and with the world's population problems, and even more so for all members of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, as she was its president. In Sweden, where she has lived for most of her life, she is simply known as "Ottar". Her pioneering work has become a legend in her own lifetime. She is 80 this year, she is an Hon. MD, she has just published the first part of her memoirs—called *And Life Wrote*—and she has promised that they will be continued. This book ends with the outbreak of World War II. It has been enthusiastically received and reviewed, not only for its literary merits, but for its warm humanity, its understanding, its optimism, strength and fighting spirit, never ever faltering whatever the obstacles and however strong the prejudice. She was, and she is, indomitable. As we meet her in the book we begin to understand why.

Odd one out . . .

She was born in a vicarage in West Norway, the last but one of 18 children, of whom 11 lived. Father was the dominating figure of the family, a patriarch with no obvious gifts of forgiving or forgetting. Still, Elise paints his portrait with love and admiration. He bullies and punishes her for being able to think for herself. She grows up in an atmosphere of religious narrow-mindedness and bigotry. Father more or less kills her younger sister for having a child out of wedlock. Earlier, father burns a beautiful doll that Elise wins at a lottery and means to give to her little sister for Christmas—because it was discovered that the penny for the ticket was stolen. Elise is the one who forgives. She remembers a happy family life and the wonderful fact that she and her brothers and sisters were allowed to laugh on Sundays—which shocked their neighbours! Mother is warm, but quiet to the point of self-effacement, worn out by bearing and giving birth to so many children. There is a lovely and touching scene in the book between mother and daughter—the one and only occasion when they were really close together without intrusion. With such an exceptionally hard life behind her, mother quietly counts her blessings! Elise listens and learns. Father is adventure, gaiety, the life and soul of any party, loving his children even through the thunderstorms. But he is not used to opposition or argument. Because Elise cannot agree with every dogma, she is left with the feeling of being the odd one out, of not belonging to the family—even with the fear of being a foundling. Like all "upper-class" children in those days, the vicar's children led a double life—the secure and on the whole happy existence with father and mother, with simple rules about right or wrong, and the dark unknown outside, where ghosts and evils, satan and hell live through the horror tales told by maids. There is also the unmarried Marta who carries the water to the vicarage from the river and who has a boy whom everyone calls "bastard". What does it all mean?

Elise forms a friendship with the local miller who one day poses the terrible question: "Do you *really* believe that your father means all he says when preaching?" From then on her double life takes on a new aspect; she lives in a turmoil of doubt, she reads leftwing newspapers, and comes out of it all with a complete new set of values. She acquires the sense of justice and the social pathos that will never again leave her—already she possesses strength

Kerstin Simon London

and courage. Soon and unexpectedly she will require both: an explosion damages her hands and she loses both thumbs. By that time she was in the middle of her training to be a dentist—she wanted to be a doctor, but that would have been too expensive. The accident stops her piano playing as well. Her talent was obviously great and much time and money had been spent on her music, which meant a lot to her, and was a bond with her mother.

The lifelong fight begins

A long period of agony is followed by readjustment. Elise Ottesen becomes a shorthand-typist qualified for parliamentary work, but not surprisingly she soon finds herself writing for the radical press. The shocking conditions of women textile workers get her involved in canvassing for effective trade unions. She speaks at meetings, she gets followers and an enormous mail—to her surprise not about her favourite topics such as women's wages and pacifism—but putting the simple question: "What do rich wives do to avoid having so many children?" Now the pattern is set. She starts her life-long fight against prejudice, ignorance, convention, stubborn law and morality which has so little to do with the real facts of life for the poor. She is spat at in the trams. She marries a Swede, Albert Jensen, as fearless as herself and fighting for freedom and peace to the point of clashing with the police and being jailed from time to time.

The couple set up home in Copenhagen and during the years of World War I they again quite naturally gather around them the revolutionary refugees, not only from Russia, but from all the stricken countries in Europe. Both catch the "Spanish 'flu". A baby boy is born, but soon dies. Elise is very ill.

Before that she learns the whole tragedy of her younger sister's life, as it happened after Elise herself had left home and Magnhild had been left alone with her parents. Sixteen years of age and very lonely, she fell in love and became pregnant. The boy panicked and disappeared. Magnhild had to face father's wrath and tears without even knowing what had happened to her. She was sent away to Denmark, and until the day of her child's birth she did not know when to expect it. Every day from the fourth month she kept wondering when terrible things would start to happen, and she did not dare to ask the woman who had so "kindly" taken care of her, and who was a midwife! As Magnhild's stomach got bigger she believed that she would finally burst and that was how the child would come out. When the baby girl was born she was taken away to be adopted by strangers. The young mother wanted to be a nurse, but as she was a fallen woman and the fact that she had borne a child out of wedlock was forever stamped on her identification papers, she could not be accepted for proper training. (The child's birth certificate said "illegitimate".) Still, Magnhild could get night watch work at a mental hospital as there was a shortage of staff. After years of useless fighting to get her child back, she took her own life, by then a patient at the same hospital. After her death Elise found a suitcase full of clothes that Magnhild had knitted and sewn for her little girl; all new beautiful garments for every year up to the age of ten. Elise Ottesen-Jensen's comment on this story is very much to the point: "Experiences like those cannot be forgotten". Something had to be done and she did it.

(Part 2 follows next week)

TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

"I LOST the baby last night. The doctor said it had been dead some time, probably malformed from the beginning. Even now I can't quite believe it. The worst part never came. It was now that I had begun to miss my home, my family, and begun to dread the next month or two when I would be alone. Then this happened.

It was so sudden. I worked all morning and went shopping in the afternoon, came back and had some tea. I just slipped along to the toilet before I went on duty. A membrane came down about as big as a tennis ball. I had to run back to the bedroom. Dawn called Matron, the doctor came, and they found me a bed in half an hour.

I started labour then, and soon after I came here it got very bad, then the baby really started coming, and there was no pain. It came away in three stages. I just sat here and watched. That was my baby. When it was here inside me I could imagine it as a tiny baby. If it had resembled one in any way I would have been upset—but it didn't. Just three bags. Hard. They felt like bones.

Now I just can't imagine that the thing they took away in the dish could possibly have grown to be a living, breathing individual. I seem to feel no loss, or even realise that I am no longer having it. I know I'm not. I tell myself I'm not. But I can't really realise that the worst part never even came. Just the experience of *having* a baby without the experience of birth, or the worst part of parting with it and wondering—Where is it now? What is it like? What is it doing now?

Perhaps I just had to be taught a lesson. I've learnt it anyway.

School left me filled with edifying knowledge of Moses in the bullrushes, Jesus in the manger, angels in Heaven, but with little idea of how, when, why to have sexual intercourse with whom, with what, and with wisdom. Follow two years of tame, loveless romances but love hungry frustrations. Then feverish Yuletide festivities of a seventeen-year old searcher, happy party, much laughter, much drink, heaven looming, deep penetration, dire impregnation, unavoidable misery. Recoil to reality, harshness of consequence, confirmation of fear, tell it to Mummy, pain, shock, and sadness, no understanding, hot baths and shaking, pills, draughts, and potions, still growing larger, can't stay at home dear, what about sister, she's far too young to know of such nastiness, must go away dear, away till it's over.

So away to that nursing home which thrives on cheap labour of girls who can't ask more because they've no choice. Up early each morning, slave through the daytime, sleep on the hard bed wearily wondering, sleep a few hours then up with the lark dear, scrub all the floors and make others' beds, work where the dirt is for dirt's what you are. Work all alone the long lonely haul. Pray for forgiveness and sin washed away, and when it's all over keep evil at bay. Oh, what a hilarious side-splitting joke.

Dear Mr Minister, I know you are getting on in years now but surely you must know that the young need mundane help as much as heavenly holiness, that they need to be prepared to meet the contingencies of this world as much as (if not more than) the fanciful possibilities of a fanciful world hypothetically existing beyond the mists of death.

Will you please get to grips with the Birth Control clinics which the State should provide? And will you please ask your colleague in the Department of Education

David Collis

to see that children are taught the how and how not of sex? Children are taught that if they run about in the nude for an hour or so in the pouring rain they may catch the 'flu and possibly pneumonia. And that if they are so anxious to go out in such inclement weather rather than stay indoors where it is dry, they should at least take the precaution of going out with protective clothing, which should include either a raincoat or umbrella, precisely which depending on choice or availability.

We know how foolish it is to go out in the rain without protective clothing because some people have done it and have got wet. Why the consequences of their action or the means to avoid such consequences should be made the subject of secrecy and hidden from the uninitiated, particularly when it rains so frequently, I do not know. I would suggest to you, Mr Minister, that there are in almost any given inhabited area as many bursts of copulation as there are of rain, and that education in how to live with the former is as necessary and as reasonable as how to live with the latter.

Some primitive tribes have rain doctors to make life more tolerable. Civilised society could perhaps do with copulation doctors. At the very least they might prove as valuable as those spiritual doctors in our schools and pulpits who preach the degradation and sinfulness of man, woman and child, and ejaculate with righteous indignation when the wicked weak succumb to the Satanic temptations of the flesh.

FILM REVIEW

David Tribe

The Round-Up (Academy Cinema One).

PERHAPS the most consistently enterprising and artistic of our commercial cinemas, the Academy this year outscouted the London Film Festival (on the whole a disappointing selection, apart from good documentary on Spain and Algiers) by securing Miklós Jancsó's *Round-Up*, originally intended for the South Bank.

Set against blank, bare grey and white expanses of Hungarian plains, compound yards, hut walls, tent flaps and pitiless skies, grey and white faces, equally bare, blank and pitiless, came together and parted with all the precise aimlessness of a macabre ballet. The film laid bare the sadistic suppression of the 1860 Kossuth Rebellion by the cavalry of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (elements which are still a nidus of brutal fascism). Psychological warfare and degradation, false promises and the fomenting of internal strife moved inexorably on so that, though there was little overt torture or few emotional crises, decency and morale slumped as arbitrary terror and corpses mounted. Man's inhumanity to man was never more gentlemanly.

There was little dialogue, no star performers or performances, spare music and effects, no tricks. Silence and emptiness shouted their menace. With discipline worthy of cavalry *dressage* and beautiful yet unostentatious camera angles, the Hungarian unit made savagery into a poem curiously free of the political overtones and elaborated messages we associate with East European historical sagas.

STOP PRESS

READERS are urgently requested to write to their MPs before the Abortion Bill goes into the Committee stage on JANUARY 18th, reminding them just how many people support *all clauses* of the Bill. The opponents of reform (mostly Roman Catholic) have organised an enormous campaign in order to try and make sure that reform of our impractical and cruel law is once again obstructed. As a result many half-hearted MPs have now been persuaded to vote against the Bill. If *all* the clauses of the Bill are not supported, the Abortion Law Reform Association fears that new legislation could result in a worsening of the present situation. This is the last and most difficult stage of what has been a very long battle. **Please do all you can to help NOW.**

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.e to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platts Fields, Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.: Messrs COLLINS, DUGNAN, MILLS and WOOD.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Belfast Humanist Group (War Memorial Building, Waring Street), Monday, January 9th, 8 p.m.: Dr A. MILNE, "Humanism and Moral Relativism".

Glasgow Secular Society (Grand Hotel, Charing Cross), Sunday, January 8th, 2.45 p.m.: HARRY McSHANE, "The History of Christianity".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 8th, 6.30 p.m.: Dr H. W. TURNER, "Religion and Secular Activities".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, January 8th, 11 a.m.: Professor T. H. PEAR, "Novelists and Psychologists—Studies of Personality"; Tuesday, January 10th, 6.30 p.m.: J. KERR, "Cruelty to Animals".

West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, London, E11): Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

APOLOGY

THE EDITOR is very sorry for having been so clumsy as to write (News and Notes, p. 396, Dec. 16) "The Jews have now extricated themselves . . ." instead of "the Jewish impresarios who were to have presented the Oberammergau Play have now extricated themselves" from promoting the play.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I AM VERY GRATEFUL for your bouquet to the National Secular Society on the occasion of its entry into the second hundred years. We are a long way away from the day when with mutual congratulations we can go into voluntary liquidation. The work must not only continue but expand. The world scene has never been more in need of the sane comments of freethought; the individual, dwarfed by powerful pressure groups and indoctrination, never more deserving the uplift of secular humanism. Many law reforms are now in the pipeline, but many obstructions are in there too.

The public relations, lobby and reformist activities to which you refer are already occupying the Executive Committee to capacity. At the same time we want, like you, to find new ways to reach the mass of the population directly and constantly, supplementing sporadic broadcasts and what has recently been good newspaper coverage. And to organise, where necessary, more secularist projects that the State is not yet prepared to offer. And to see more social, cultural and educational events throughout the country, making a dynamic community life for freethinkers and humanists.

I AM TALKING TO EVERY READER. The NSS is a membership organisation which depends for its full effectiveness on the enthusiasm and work of its members. There is something that everyone can do. Supporters can join and be more active. Those unable to participate actively can still contribute to the Centenary Appeal and the John Harvard-Bradlaugh House Appeal so that office equipment and amenities can be improved and professional assistance and staff expanded. Very shortly in London there will be the first of a series of meetings to discuss expansion and consolidation. Ideas will be welcomed, but let me stress that we already have more ideas than manpower or money, and PRACTICAL HELP LIFTS UP WHAT PROPOSAL UPLIFTS.

Anyone with the necessary keenness and skill/tons of money is invited to write to HQ if able to help with organising/financing

(1) HUMANIST FILM SOCIETY—suitable feature and documentary films combined with illustrative talks and discussions, perhaps leading to creative work;

(2) PROFANE ARTS GROUP—preserve little-known freethought writings, etc. of the masters and provide a platform for quality contemporary heterodox culture;

(3) SECULAR SCHOOL IN NIGERIA—teacher volunteers and at least £10,000 needed to take secondary, especially technical, education to a district in Nigeria, free of the Christian salesmanship of the mission schools which now dominate the field;

(4) NSS CONSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES—strengthen existing NSS branches, forge new links with existing humanist groups, promote secular groups in all centres of population throughout the country;

(5) CO-ORDINATE WORK WITH SPECIALIST LAW REFORM BODIES;

(6) TYPE LETTER DRAFTS AT HOME.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking all those whose energies and financial or practical help made our Centenary Year so successful and look forward to yet more support in the coming years.

DAVID TRIBE

(President of National Secular Society).

DAVID TRIBE TO APPEAR ON TV

WE understand that David Tribe, President of the National Secular Society, will appear in five editions of the ITV programme *Dialogue with Doubt*. These will be transmitted late in the evening from Monday, January 9th to Friday, January 13th, and repeated before noon from Monday, January 16th to Friday, January 20th. Please check *TV Times* or the *Daily Press* for exact times of transmission.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH DETENTION CENTRES?

(Continued from page 3)

of SIX MONTHS OR LESS, WHICH ARE GIVEN ONLY AS A PUNISHMENT, were to be ABOLISHED, and "treatment in freedom" to be substituted. PUNISHMENT, he said, HAD BEEN PROVED USELESS.

Detention Centre sentences are usually for a minimum term of three months, "EVEN WHEN the maximum term of imprisonment that could be imposed is SHORTER". (Handbook, 1964). They are also primarily PUNISHMENT. Why are *young* offenders to be dealt with in a useless and cruel manner? Why can't they also be treated by modern and constructive methods?

The bulk of the offences which land boys in a Detention Centre are of the *impersonal* type. Personally inflicted punishment is very likely to arouse any latent hostility, and deflect it from attacks on property to attacks on persons.

The Centres are in fact so void of any good purpose that one wonders whether they have been set up for the simple and cynical reasons of economy. But the boy who is pushed to the limit of his endurance in a Detention Centre; thumped, punched, made to feel bitterness and hate which he must mask with a servile compliance; the boy who has been shouted at, provoked, taunted with loss of remission—this will be the man that Society in the end will pay dearly for. If this is economy, it is an economy that will be most dearly bought.

If any small minority of these boys really need custodial treatment it is of quite the opposite kind. These few need the experience of becoming, for a time, part of a welcoming and tolerant group, one they can feel glad to belong to, and which will foster their good qualities—their tolerance, kindness, sincerity, and self-respect; their social conscience and idealism.

None of this can be achieved within a Detention Centre environment, nor within any adaptation of it.

The Home Office claims that they have set up Detention Centres as an alternative to imprisonment. The true alternative to imprisonment is not the attempt to break down a person's mental fibre by physical punishment—it is the LIBERATION of good qualities in an individual by the re-establishment of his integrity.

[This is an extract of a much longer report. Readers who are interested should contact the author at 381 Marine Road East, Morecambe, Lanc.]

BOOK REVIEW

Madeleine Simms

The Reactionaries by John Harrison (Gollancz, 35s).

THIS is a book of unusual interest for Freethinkers, for it raises in acute form the question of the relationship between literature and morality, and in particular, the question of how one judges, as a writer, a creative genius whose intellectual attitudes one finds morally outrageous.

Mr Harrison selects five leading literary figures of the inter-war period, and addresses himself to the question of why they were attracted to Fascism. He deals with Yeats, Wyndham Lewis, Pound, Eliot and D. H. Lawrence, and asks of them all: "Why is it that great creative artists can totally reject a liberal, democratic, humanitarian society, and prefer a cruel, authoritarian, bellicose society?"

The answer to this question appears to be that these writers believed that an egalitarian society is bound to have low cultural standards, being ruled by the lowest common denominator of public taste, guaranteeing hostility to the true artist. They thought that only a society embodying gross inequalities and maintaining a hierarchy of caste, is sufficiently stable to allow a secure place for art. Stated in bald terms, this view is of course preposterous, especially in relation to Fascism, probably the most vulgar and anti-intellectual government ever devised by man.

Perhaps the full horrors of Fascism were not so apparent in the

thirties? Only, one suspects, to the wilfully blind. But how else to excuse such passages as this of Lawrence's: "It is the business of very few to understand, and for the mass, it is their business to believe and not to bother . . . to give active obedience to their leaders, and to possess their own souls in natural pride" (whatever that may mean in this context). Yeats looks forward to a new civilisation which would be "an aristocratic civilisation in its completed form . . . great wealth everywhere in few men's hands . . . and inequality made law". Eliot has as his ideal a society in which "the sense of tradition would be strong enough to make large-scale religious scepticism impossible."

Well, whatever else Hitler's Germany produced, it was not great art, neither did Mussolini's Italy, nor has Franco's Spain nor Salazar's Portugal.

D. J. Enright, himself a poet, writing recently in the *New Statesman* about this book, insists that poets and novelists cannot be tied down to exact definitions or specific political doctrines, and to attempt to extract these from their work is to falsify by over-simplification. This reply has its obvious attractions. It would, if we accepted it, enable us to continue to admire Eliot, despite not only his reactionary political views, but also his blatant anti-semitism. "He is afraid", writes Mr Harrison; "the free-thinking of the Jews strikes at the roots of Christian dogma, and destroys the premises on which religious orthodoxy is based . . ." Ezra Pound's anti-semitism, indeed, reached such obscene extremes that his own publishers insisted that passages of his *Cantos* be deleted before publication, "but which Pound insisted should be indicated with thick black lines". The truth is that Mr Harrison's writers are all too polemical; we cannot read their works intelligently while at the same time endeavouring to close our minds to their clearly expressed ideas and aspirations. They belong, after all, to our own moral universe, unlike Chaucer or Spenser.

We must therefore concede that great creative talent can often be found to co-exist with intellectual second-rateness, moral insensitivity, and human callousness. Thus, if, despite their superb gifts, we do not rank these writers with the very greatest, but lower down on the slopes of Parnassus, surely this is the reason.

LETTERS

The Lord Willis v Legerton Debate

JOHN SHEPHERD complains (Dec. 9) that ". . . due to Secularist lack of numbers in the audience, and the chairman's tendency . . . to be fair to the opposition, instead of putting Legerton in his rightful place, he and his hordes of supporters . . . seized the opportunity to turn a NSS-arranged meeting into a near Billy Graham Evangelistic Rally!"

I was there, and that certainly was not my impression. True, the chairman was fair: and indeed why not? Are we to shelve democracy, and common courtesy, simply because we feel strongly about a particular issue? We aren't at the barricades yet; so, while we are still on speaking terms, let's conduct ourselves in a civilised and decent manner. In fact, I think the chairman's fairness (he even stopped his own wife when she'd spoken three minutes!) did much more good for the Secular movement than it did for Mr Legerton and Co. For the evangelistic hordes made it pretty clear that they had little time for such niceties as tolerance and fair play.

However, I must agree with John Shepherd when he criticizes Secularists who were able to attend but did not. Here he touches on the real problem which is that the LDOS membership is fanatical and highly-organised (you should see the directives they are all receiving for an onslaught lobbying of MPs!), whereas the Secularists are not. This is a classic situation, in which one group feel they have got something to get hot under the collar about, while the other group (almost always the majority in numbers) are only partially interested. With slick organisation, absolute determination, and the cynical using of existing democratic machinery while it suits their purposes, the militant minority can almost always win.

But the majority can win, if they know what they're fighting for, and get organised.

London, N.W.3.

MALCOLM HULKE

REMINDER !

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