

FREE THINKER

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THE CALLOUS KIRK

ON Wednesday, March 24th, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland deplored the prevalence of homosexual practices and insisted on continuing to oppose the attitude of the *Wolfenden Report* to homosexuality. It wants to stand aside from modern thinking on the subject, which basically is that the private conduct of two consenting adults, be they male or female, is nobody's concern but theirs as long as such conduct does not impinge on the rights and freedom of others.

We should not be surprised that the Kirk maintains its intransigent attitude. The Kirk has a long unparalleled history of interfering in the private lives of people. As the Rev. Geo. S. Tyack put it, 'In no country and at no time has a more searching system of ecclesiastical discipline been attempted than in Scotland in the first century after the Reformation'.

The Presbytery was the local disciplinary court of the Kirk with the Synod as the district court and final appeal falling to the jurisdiction of the General Assembly. For many years the discipline of these ecclesiastical courts was supplemented by that of the civil authorities who were open to direction from the Kirk. Thus bailies were asked to put this or that offender in gyves; magistrates were requested to imprison others; employers were instructed to punish servants who used profane language; and town authorities were solicited to procure appliances for 'ducking' certain classes of sinners. The Kirk imposed fines, decreed banishments, used the steeples as prisons, inflicted mutilation, even death, upon offenders. It was able to enforce these sentences primarily because civil disabilities followed excommunication. The excommunicated person

was an outlaw and could be imprisoned by any magistrate to whom he was denounced. These powers were abrogated only in 1690. Three centuries later the effects of such a system remain. The Kirk has become traditionally accustomed to poking its long ecclesiastical nose even into a man's home and disciplining him for the iniquities it discovers.

The violation of the marriage vow was made a capital crime in 1563 and the sentence was, in true Kirk fashion, pronounced and carried out on more than one occasion. People were commissioned to take the names of those who were in alehouses after eight o'clock; midwives and doctors were threatened with discipline if they failed to report any illegitimate birth they attended; "searchers" were appointed to find out those who did not buy Bibles and Psalm-books; sons who did not respect their father were reported to the Kirk; and rebellious wives, whose husbands were unable to control them, suffered the same fate, with the usual consequence that they were sentenced to the brank, the pillory, or imprisonment. All persons who could not recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Commandments were debarred from matrimony. Those who failed to observe the Sabbath as demanded by the Kirk were penalised. The stool of repentance was used in the correction of fishermen who mended their nets and of people who gathered nuts. Lads who were found playing on Sunday were sometimes whipped, and at Dumfries it was enacted in 1664 that "persons walking idly from house to house and gossiping on Sabbath" should be fined thirty shillings for their evil conduct. Attendance at kirk was compulsory and fines were levied for absence. Although the Kirk forbade observance of old Church festivals, it rigidly enforced its own fasts and days of thanksgiving. There was usually a public service in the towns every Wednesday and Friday and work was as absolutely forbidden during service times on those days and attendance at kirk as strictly compulsory as on Sundays. The repentance stool, jugs attached to kirk walls, the stocks, the pillory, imprisonment, excommunication resulting in banishment, mutilation and execution were some of the modes of punishment used by the Kirk to assert its authority.

The Kirk has had its power drastically cut in the last three hundred years, but its influence is still considerable. The Kirk is far from being a corpse even though it acts as if life were a gloomy graveyard. Its coffin is in fact being prepared but the withering body has not yet given up the ghost. Until it does, we must expect the Kirk to continue to oppose enlightened reform and such attitudes as would further restrict its influence and sap its strength.

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Harry Lamont

ON THE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF AN ARTIST**Speaking Personally**

FROM TIME to time in various countries an outcry arises that an artist (novelist, dramatist, sculptor or poet), is responsible if any part of his work seems calculated to lead impressionable students of it astray.

Miss Pamela Hansford Johnson covered what are now known as the Moors murders, and in a book called *On Iniquity*, formulates the theory that society is too permissive in allowing potential murderers to stimulate their nefarious tendencies by reading works that describe sadism.

Miss Johnson disclaims any wish to interfere with freedom of thought and expression. She states categorically: "I do not wish to see the slightest extension of the present forms of censorship or near censorship, nor, until the effects of total licence have had a serious examination, do I want to see them relaxed" (p. 66).

In this country the Lord Chamberlain can ban a stage play or insist on deletions, but there is normally no censorship of novels or similar literature. Nevertheless a publisher produces a book at his peril. Any reader can lodge a complaint with the police or a magistrate, and if the book is deemed obscene the author, printer, publisher and indeed all who had a hand in its production can be fined or sent to prison.

Until 1959, under an ancient edict, if a volume were deemed capable of corrupting anyone liable to be corrupted, down came the law like a ton of bricks. A book could be condemned for a page, a paragraph or even a word. It did not matter one iota if the volume taken as a whole were of supreme merit. One forbidden word could damn it and did. So naturally publishers were very careful. But even so they got caught occasionally. Sometimes they called eminent critics, but the stern magistrate refused to listen to them. He knew filth when he saw it and there would be no extenuating considerations whatsoever.

But since 1959 the law has been altered. Now the literary merit of a book has to be taken into consideration, so often the smut-hounds bay for blood in vain.

But to return to Miss Johnson's thesis. It is highly tententious to blame an author for the possible effects of his writings on immature, unbalanced and psychopathic individuals. In accordance with such a theory, parts of the Bible could be banned as wicked and immoral in their implications. Shakespeare's tragedies would fare very badly. Many of the world's masterpieces would be suppressed.

In their efforts to clean-up TV certain people would ban all four-letter words and everything that might bring a blush to the virgin cheek of the vicar's maiden aunt.

Not so long ago it was impossible to discuss social problems caused by sexual abnormalities. Fine books were banned because they dealt with such topics. A famous doctor said it is as absurd to punish a man for being a homosexual as for having red hair or prominent teeth. In law a *queer* as he is commonly called can be given life imprisonment, while it is no offence to be a Lesbian, which is another example of the asininity of the law.

But times are changing. We can now debate these social

problems without being considered obscene, save by a few puritanic die-hards. Many years ago in Paris I stood near a couple of crabbed ancient spinsters fulminating before a statue called *Le Baiser* by Rodin. They considered it immoral and disgusting. According to them it would tempt young people to go in for what is called in some quarters heavy petting, and even encourage illicit sexual intercourse.

Which raises the question whether coition *per se* is reprehensible or not. For long the official attitude in this country was that sexual pleasure was wicked, save in marriage to procreate. Better marry than burn said St Paul. Nuns and priests were deemed to be favoured by the Deity because they eschew the satisfaction of sexual desires. But today an increasing number of young priests want to be allowed to marry, and there seems little doubt that nuns will follow suit, although the process will be slow, of course.

There are still worthy people who regard anything that stimulates the sexual urge as sinful. But why did the Creator ordain that the female body should stir desire in the male? Mating is as natural as eating, drinking or breathing.

Nearly half a century ago French intellectual reactionaries were hostile to all liberal tendencies. Julian Benda asserted: "About 1890 the men of letters, especially in France and Italy, realised with astonishing astuteness that the doctrines of arbitrary authority, discipline, tradition, contempt for the spirit of liberty, assertion of the morality of war and slavery, were opportunities for rigid poses infinitely more likely to strike the imagination of simple souls than the sentimentalities of Liberalism and Humanism". It was claimed that these doctrines were based on science and therefore impressed the herd. So men of letters exploited them. In South Africa today Liberal has become a word that stinks and is equated with Communism.

My contention is that an artist ought not to be blamed for the deeds of anti-social people. It would be too easy if a murderer could make the excuse that he had only done what he had seen described in a book. Writers of so-called shockers and thrillers would indignantly disclaim any such responsibility.

In the opinion of many social moralists, the dangerous book is the one that makes vice attractive. I read such a volume recently. The author paid lip service to virtue, but with his tongue very much in his cheek. Despite her amorous deceptions, the heroine appeared to have had a very enjoyable time.

Of course usually the senses are more titillated by vice than by virtue. As Swinburne puts it:

"Change in a trice
The lilies and langueurs of virtue
For the raptures and roses of vice."

If it had not been for the power of the sexual urge the human race would have died out long ago. Until recently the police and magistrates assumed that any reference in literature to the sexual act implied moral turpitude, but if our parents had not copulated we would not be here. It is high time we ceased to condemn *in vacuo* such a normal, fundamental and significant activity.

People always on the hunt for what they call smut are

(Continued on page 183)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN STATE SCHOOLS

Stella Greenall

Review of Brigid Brophy's pamphlet, published by the Fabian Society.

AS one finishes this thorough, lucid, charming, and unanswerable statement of the case against Religious Education in State Schools, one finds oneself asking some rather bitter questions. Why did Parliament make this law? Why did the Church agree? Why may we not stop telling our children lies? Is it because Church and State are governed by politicians so adept in the art of changing their own beliefs when convenient that they do not care what citizens believe; but do very much require that citizens should acquire early those authoritarian habits of mind needed to believe what politicians say? Belief, in fact, need have little relation to truth, or tolerance, or principles, or ethics; but the habit of unthinking response to a demand on our credulity is an indispensable strand by which our rulers fasten the individual citizen into the structure of the State. Therefore, perhaps, our rulers think it most desirable and apt that hymns, psalms, miracles and other wonder-creating devices, should emanate from the State's agent in school, the Head Teacher, in the daily act of worship; or, possibly even better, from that medium our rulers use themselves for suitably important communications to us—the BBC. And it is actually desirable that the whole mild daily dose of worship should be not only compulsory but also subliminal, a social soother, presenting no drastic denominational shocks to the budding habit of belief. For if these habits of mind will not be acquired in Church, because citizens no longer attend, nor send their children to Sunday School, then they must be acquired in school.

But if we think it possible that this is what our rulers intended—a universal innoculating drip against free thought—what are we to conclude of the indefensible encouragement they give to sectarian schooling? What about the

single school areas where there is no choice but a sectarian school for children or their parents? How can we construe a Socialist Government's largesse to the sects' schools, for they found not only our money but even more extraordinary, their own Parliamentary time, to give Catholic and other sectarian schools substantial extra help, in the 1966 Act—so that the schools now receive 100 per cent of running costs, 100 per cent of maintenance costs other than structural repairs, 80 per cent of those repairs costs, and now, 80 per cent of the cost of building new denominational schools, enabling the sects to build something like five times as many new school places as they could have afforded before. What are we to make of this? Was it simply a large-spirited gesture to help the sects to go comprehensive? If so, did nobody notice that the result would be large sectarian neighbourhood comprehensives with no alternative school? Or was it that the Government thought it well worth a Mass to buy all those new school places at 20 per cent discount (less, of course, the minor administrative costs of handling, somewhere well down the hierarchical line, complaints from parents)?

If one believed in compulsion at all in matters of thought, one would be tempted to say that this pamphlet should be compulsory reading for every cleric and Head Teacher, and more especially for every Principal, lecturer and student in every College of Education in the country, and for every teacher, for it is they, and their principles, that are being forcibly compromised by the present state of the law. More insidiously, it is they who could at least make more sure than they sometimes do, that any child whose parents wish to exercise their right to opt him out of religious observances does not thereby suffer. At the very least, they could make sure that all parents know of their rights.

NCCL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

G. N. Deodhekar

THE Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Civil Liberties was held at Conway Hall on Friday evening, April 28th, and all day Saturday, April 29th.

Over 30 resolutions were discussed and adopted and a large number of speakers were heard. The conference was keen on protecting the right of the delegates to be heard and the Executive and the Chairman were very willing to concede this. There were, naturally, plenty of points of order, standing orders to be passed, suspended, resumed, motions for closure and next business, counting of votes and occasionally recounts! It was therefore quite an achievement to have got through all that was planned.

One category of resolutions had to do with the police and the law: rights of bail, finger-printing, juries, rights of demonstration and so on. Another category covered the civil rights of minorities: gypsies, immigrants, servicemen, homosexuals, etc.

There were a number of resolutions of particular interest to freethinkers and humanists. One resolution proposed by the National Secular Society congratulated Lord Willis on his initiative in introducing the Sunday Entertainments Bill and was passed by the Conference. Another resolution proposed by the NSS and adopted by the Conference deplored "the grave abuse of free speech entailed by the statutory position of Christian religious broadcasting de-

partments, particularly that of the BBC, without corresponding provision for alternative religions and philosophies such as freethought and secular humanism".

The Executive Committee's official resolution on the Plowden Report was passed with an overwhelming majority. It urged "the Minister for Education to take note of the Plowden Committee's analysis of the harmful effects of religious education in schools". It regretted "that the committee did not see fit to make recommendations to amend the situation" and commended "the members of the committee who in the minority report suggested that religious education was not a suitable subject for the curriculum, but that if it were to remain parents should be able to opt in rather than opt out of the system". The BHA's resolution on single school areas urging the Secretary of State to remedy this anomaly "so that parents who do not wish to send their children to a church school do not have to do so", was also adopted with an overwhelming majority.

The Report gave an idea of the truly tremendous work that the NCCL was doing and the treasurer's call for 'Funds not words' rang utterly true. For a delegate who attended the Conference for the first time the proceedings left a strong impression that here was an organisation which was getting results and therefore worthy of support.

NEWS AND NOTES

1967 is the centenary of the birth of Joseph McCabe who has often been described as the last of the major nineteenth century rationalists. Born in Manchester, McCabe was a very young man when he entered the monastery where he spent the famous "Twelve Years". He was thoroughly trained in Catholic theology, and when he broke with the Roman Catholic Church in 1895, had had a varied career as a priest and teacher.

For nearly sixty years—he died in 1955—Joseph McCabe was one of the most scholarly and prolific opponents of the Roman Catholic Church. During his lifetime, McCabe's former co-religionists pursued him with characteristic venom, and after his death the usual "death-bed repentance" stories were circulated.

South Place Ethical Society has arranged a Joseph McCabe centenary lecture at Conway Hall, London, on Sunday, July 9th at 11 a.m. It will be given by Richard Clements, and the chairman will be David Tribe, President of the NSS. I hope that Freethinkers—particularly readers of this journal to which Joseph McCabe contributed—will make a special effort to be at Conway Hall, and honour the memory of a man who made an immense contribution to the fight against superstition and obscurantism.

Monkey business

IT seems that we have possibly missed a repetition of the "Monkey Trial" of the nineteen-twenties when a young biology teacher was convicted of teaching the evolution theory. The combination of Darwin and Darrow—the redoubtable Clarence Darrow defended—was too much for the pious folk of a small American community forty years ago, and things don't change much in the old home town.

But they do change, and school-teacher Gary Scott has been given back his job from which he had been dismissed a month earlier for breaking Tennessee's anti-evolution law. Scott was ready to fight the case in Court, but the Tennessee House of Representatives was probably anxious to combat any suggestion that they feared the wrath of God and the fundamentalist electors when they altered the law. Teachers in the State of Tennessee can now legally tell their pupils about man's ancestors. But they can only teach Darwin's principle of the biological evolution of man as a theory, not as a "fact" that would deny the "story of the divine creation of man".

The naked truth

IT'S the same the whole world over!

Spain. When two British girls on a hitch-hiking holiday sat down by the roadside to rest, the sight of their bare legs caused a traffic hold-up, and they were arrested for causing a public scandal.

Italy. A Milan resident complained to the authorities that a baby doll being sold in a shop offended decency as its male sex was revealed. The court rejected the complaint.

Britain. A group of businessmen at Walton-on-the-Naze thought it would be a good idea to have a "Welcome" sign erected outside the town. But the council members were not amused. The sign carries a picture of a child in a sun-hat digging in the sand, but—horrors—the child's bottom is bare! The Council chairman said: "I would suggest there is no other sign in the whole of England which is so blatant". I hope the local Chamber of Commerce which is paying for the sign will not mind if the bare bottom is regarded as a gesture to the pruders of Walton and elsewhere.

Trouble in the Church

FATHER Gregoire Lemercier the monastery prior, has been ordered to return to Cuernavaca, Mexico, after having been virtually a prisoner of the Vatican for eight months. He had engaged a woman psycho-analyst to treat his monks, and many of them had decided to leave the monastery and get married. Father Lemercier was banished to Belgium, and when he appealed to the Pope an ecclesiastical court was convened.

The judges—their ages ranged from 77 to 82—had to discuss such problems as the Oedipus complex, "father figures" and infantile sex. They became so confused during the trial that they had to send for a psycho-analyst to help them! Father Lemercier has been strictly forbidden to suggest to candidates for the monastery that they should undergo psycho-analysis.

An American priest who was suspended from his duties has now written a book in which he blames the "madness of the Roman Catholic Church" on rules made by monks and celibates with little experience of real living. Father James Kavanaugh bitterly criticizes the Vatican's attitude to divorce and birth control, and strongly implies that the Pope is being hypocritical when he weeps for the poor of a country like India while condemning the "only sensible plan to control its teeming population".

Sectarian schools

THE Rev. S. D. B. Picken told the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland last week that the separate school system for Roman Catholic and Protestant children created an "insidious and poisonous atmosphere", and caused much of the religious intolerance in Scotland. He proposed that the Assembly should press for single public schools for all Scottish children irrespective of religious denomination. The Assembly took a reactionary line on most of the issues discussed, so it was not a surprise that the proposal was rejected. The voting figures were quite significant however—197 for, 249 against.

Blessed are the poor

MISS Dorothy Kerin, a faith healer who took a vow of poverty and chastity in 1917, left an estate worth £180,000.
E.A.

Extract from A GRAMMAR OF POLITICS by Harold J. Laski (Allen & Unwin).

IN general, the Western world, outside of politics, has grown to the acceptance of freedom of speech. A man may now be an atheist or a vortocist without fear of legal penalty. It does not seem, however, to be realised that religious toleration cannot be fully maintained so long as a State maintains special relations with a given Church. For, in that case, whatever the law, there is bound to be a special prestige for those who belong to the official connection. For the State to stamp with its approval some special religious doctrine is to offer privilege to that doctrine even if the privilege does not assume institutional form. If the Church of England were separated from the State, Anglican theology could not maintain itself at Oxford and Cambridge against scientific theology. If the Church of England were separated from the State, a single form of religious belief would not hold a privileged position in the educational system of the community. A State Church is bound to receive privileges in some shape or form; and no citizen enjoys genuine freedom of religious conviction until the State is indifferent to every form of religious outlook from Atheism to Zoroastrianism.

The real source of conflict in the recognition of this right lies in the field of politics.

PURPOSE AND VALUE

A. C. Thompson

MEDIAEVAL SCIENCE was afflicted with purpose and value. The purpose of the sun was to give light and heat, that of the ear was to hear, and the purpose of weeds and flies was known to God. Man was superior to animals, animals to plants, kings to peasants, angels to devils. Modern science rejects such judgments.

Have the universe, and the things it contains, purposes for existing? Philosophical doctrines which have tried to answer this question are called, according as they give an affirmative or negative reply, respectively teleologism and mechanism. According to the teleological viewpoint, all things exist for specific purposes, and these purposes are analogous to those of human beings in rational conduct. For everything in nature to exist or happen for no reason at all is to the teleologist inconceivable. The mechanist, on the other hand, asserts that there is no justification in carrying the analogy of human purpose into the domain of nature. He believes that things exist or happen as they do because of mechanical natural laws, and that no material existing things can decide upon or work out their own forms, functions or destinies. Extreme mechanists deny purpose even in human behaviour, and describe all human conduct as mechanical stimulus-response reactions.

Systems of nature were once built on efforts to explain phenomena by discerning their purposes. It was once believed that the physiology of the human body could be best understood by ascertaining the purposes of anatomical structures and vital processes. Indeed, purposes have figured most prominently in the life-sciences, although they have also been offered in explanations of non-living data. Anthropomorphism has been the investing of plants, animals, non-living objects and natural processes with human personality, and anthropocentrism, the doctrine that everything in the universe exists for the pleasure and benefit of man.

For the reason that the existence of purpose, in the sense of a motive, cannot be reasonably proved of non-human processes, scientific inquiries assume the mechanistic alternative. Science assigns no conative attributes to any of its data. An explanation must be in terms of mechanisms, of cause-effect relations. It must not consist of purposes, values or benefits. That things are often in fact benefited, or harmed, is undeniable. One of the greatest advantages conferred on biological science by the Darwinian conception of evolution has been the possibility of explaining mechanically the self-benefitting processes of living things. According to this view, an organism which is able to make a favourable adjustment fares better, and has a better chance to survive and produce offspring than one that is not; and out of the billions of organisms that have appeared in the course of ages, those which could best make this adjustment did survive, while those in which the mechanism was deficient perished, crowded out by others better adapted. Science does not attempt to answer the question "Why?" of natural phenomena in the same sense as this question would be answered of human motives. It seeks to tell "How?" by describing the sequence of events involved. At the start of the age of modern science, Galileo, instead of asking why objects fall, as Aristotle had, sought to describe how they fall.

Nor does a scientific exposition try to estimate the value or good of any object or process in relation to others. That there are such things as values is not denied; but they are so intangible, so subjective, so unprovable, that

they are omitted from scientific discussion. Questions such as, "What is the greatest good?" or, "What is most important in life?" may well be within the domain of philosophy, but they have little meaning for science. This failure to discriminate the relative beneficence of things has led scientists to an utter lack of fastidiousness. The analysis of sewer gas ranks equally with determining the composition of precious stones; the life habits of slime moulds are as interesting as those of songbirds; and processes of excretion are just as important and just as deserving of study as are the abilities of the intellect.

It could be proposed that ethics could form the basic philosophical foundation for sociology. This suggestion the sociologist would probably reject, declaring that he does not make value-judgments, which ethics requires. He desires to remain completely scientific, objective, factual, dealing in what can be observed, not in opinion or affective states of mind. Of course, this statement can be immediately contradicted. In the very act of rejecting value-judgments he is in fact making a value-judgment. When he says, "It is good, or right, or proper, to avoid using such vague, subjective, unscientific terms as 'good', or 'right', or 'proper'", he displays the inescapability of value-judgments. One may object that these value-judgments apply to methodology, rather than to sociology itself, but it can be pointed out in rebuttal that the nature of his subject is such that he can not escape value-judgments. If he were studying crime, for example, he would need to define a crime, and however he does this, he must rely ultimately on value-judgments.

The exclusion of the study of values from science is regrettable. Every human act and endeavour, every component of civilisation, and every institution of society have their aspects of value. If we deliberately neglect consideration of purposes and values, do we condemn ourselves to ignorance about what is of greatest importance? Shall we learn how to make bombs and missiles scientifically, and then have no scientific judgment about what to do with them after we have made them? If the findings of science are to furnish an intelligent guide for the progress of the world, the scientist should find some way of determining the effect of various factors of culture upon human welfare. There are some who, seeing the results of science being applied to deadly implements of war, declare that the guidance of intelligent estimates of value is sorely needed to prevent the utter destruction of our civilisation. There are others who assert that it is not needed because our inherent if undefined sense of value leads us to strive for what is good for us and to avoid what is harmful.

Consideration of value is excluded from science because of necessity rather than of choice. There has been no method for investigating value. If some way were found of explaining the nature of value objectively, along with methods of identifying it, of proving its existence, and perhaps of measuring or estimating its quantity, value might well be made a subject of scientific study. That such methods have not been found does not indicate that they cannot be found. If the study of value could be a science, applicable to all other science, indeed to all other knowledge, the achievements of science would be multiplied in human happiness. It is important to realise that the reason why values are neglected in science is that there has been no assured method for investigating them, not that their investigation is in any way undesirable.

The nature of value is related to that of the good, which has been a vexing problem in philosophy ever since it was first formulated by Socrates, as reported by Plato. Science may reject value-judgments, but ethics cannot. The whole history of ethics has been an effort to provide a principle for distinguishing the good from the bad. Through the centuries, the search for 'the good' conceived as a supreme good, or an ultimate good, or an absolute good, or a standard of goodness, or the generalised element which is common and peculiar to all good things, has failed; at least, it has not produced agreement. At the beginning of the present century, G. E. Moore declared the word 'good' to be essentially undefinable—not in the sense merely that no satisfactory definition is at present available, but in the sense that such a definition is inherently impossible, that the word will never be defined, and its meaning can be grasped only intuitively.¹ And if it were defined, why should it oblige human conduct? Moore points out how silly it would be to say, "Do, pray, act so, because of this definition of good".

Axiology, the philosophy of value, developed through the 19th century, chiefly from the work of Kant and the neo-Kantians. Early attempts at a general theory of value were psychological. Value, it was held, involves appreciations, which are feelings, and hence based on desires. The economic theory of value, which was developing concurrently, regarded value not as an objective, inherent property of a commodity or service, but as its propensity for the satisfaction of desires; for, what has value at one time may be worthless at another, according to desire. The general theory of value later recognised that desire is not the ultimate source of value, for desire is itself due to certain biological needs or instincts. Value ultimately was seen to be related to ability to sustain life, or, in the case of aesthetic values, to enrich life or to provide life with amusement, relaxation and inspiration. On this theory, one must concede finally that continuation of life would be the ultimate, the supreme value. Another theory has it that logical value is the ultimate form of value, and that the greatest good is truth. Logic would be the axiology of truth-values; the judgments by which one seeks for certainty are judgments of cognitive values. Every conclusion, it is said, is ultimately an evaluation of evidence; any recognition of value presupposes a will to truth; and any adequate philosophical system must value truth pre-eminently.

Axiology, which deals with the general nature of value,

may be subdivided according as values are those of morality, sustenance, affections, or intellect. One thinks of Plato's triad of Goodness, Truth and Beauty, which can serve as headings for three divisions: ethics, logic and aesthetics.

Ethical or moral values are of all human actions those which involve others, and for these the notion of self-survival as the standard of value is inadequate. The recent Social-Survival theory of the ethical principle asserts that, as man lives in societies, his basic moral obligation must be to preserve his society, and to perform such duties, and to accord to others such rights, as make possible mutual success in maintaining the order and security that enable society's members to interact and to beget and rear the new members of their society. The survival of the individual is better assured by interacting with others in society. Long ago in ancient Greece, Aristotle declared that he who can live without the society of others is either a beast or a god.² Man is physically endowed for social existence; his bodily structures and organs are ill-adapted to a solitary existence, better adapted to a social one. The wide variety of sounds producible by the human throat, tongue, teeth and lips which make possible communication by means of articulate speech, constitute a feature which is unique in the animal kingdom and which predisposes man to communal life. Man's capacity for division of labour, for specialisation of employments, for co-operative endeavour, confer upon communal life in society an efficiency and productivity which are not possible to a solitary man. Man's physical endowments of hand, voice and reason, his limitation of claw, fang and fleetness, his propensities for making tools, shelters and clothing all ill dispose him to the solitary life of other animals and make life in society all but an indispensable necessity. The rational, natural ethics which the Social-Survival theory offers can propose and uphold the values for sociology, government and law, for marriage, family and education; economic activity is social also, and hence ethics may undertake the duty of erecting the ultimate standards of value also for economics.

We pass to the ulterior question, why should the individual survive, and we come again to the problem of purpose. What is the purpose of life, if there is one, especially of human life? To ask what is the end or purpose of life assumes that there is one. With the limitations of present knowledge, this question cannot be answered. Why living things exist on the earth at all, why there is an earth, why living things are self-perpetuating and self-propagating, why each individual plant and animal does what is needed for life, why each clings so tenaciously to life, why living things live, these are questions which perhaps the future may answer. But they are outside the scope of ethics; they are questions for axiology. Without being able to say exactly why, most of us may feel that there must be some reason for our survival even if the reason is inscrutable. When we consider the marvellous perfection of our bodies, the wonderful privilege that it is to be living and the worthlessness of non-existence, we feel that the will to live cannot be without reason.

Viruses, which are tiny packets of amino-acid molecules, cause the materials in living cells in which they are present to produce more virus packets like themselves; thus they are propagated. If you ask, what is it that gives these tiny molecule packets the will to live, the biochemist replies that there is no reason to suppose that they have a will to live; their propagation is merely a chemical reaction which is self-sustaining as long as the proper materials are present, just as a coal fire is self-sustaining as long as fuel

PUBLIC FORUM

CENSORSHIP

Speakers include

JOHN CALDER	PETER WATKINS
PETER FRYER	JOHN MORTIMER
DAVID TRIBE	

The Very Rev. IAN HISLOP, O.P.

FRIDAY, JUNE 23rd, 7.30 p.m.

CAXTON HALL, Caxton Street, London, SW1
(nearest Underground: St James's Park)

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is present or supplied. If chemists will be able to trace a similar process in cellular organisms, they may tell us that our will to live is only our body chemistry. But this explanation, whether true or false, will not affect the Social-Survival principle of ethics. As long as we do have a will to live, whether the explanation for it is chemical, spiritual or any other, we act to preserve ourselves; and as long as we interact with one another, for the sake of self-preservation, sociability or anything else, we have the necessity of maintaining a society in which such interaction continues.

Either there is a reason, a purpose for the existence of human life or there is not. If there is not, if it is a matter of indifference whether we all perish, and our society with us, then when this occurs there will be no ethics and no need for any. We need ethics while we maintain our lives and our social relations, and for that reason, whether we know why we do so or not.

The discovery of atomic fission has emphasised that science is amoral—neither moral nor immoral—and that mankind therefore needs, for survival, an ethics with valid precepts and value-judgments. It is possible to have an essential definition of the good, in the moral and economic senses as distinct from the individual, the aesthetic and the logical senses, which avoids all of Moore's objections, as that which is conducive to the survival of society.

REFERENCES

- ¹ G. E. Moore. *Principia Ethica*.
² Aristotle. *Politics*, Book I, Ch. 2.

ON THE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF AN ARTIST

(Continued from page 178)

apt to be boring, and it is piquant to shock them. As Elizabeth Wordsworth put it:

"But somehow 'tis seldom or never
The two hit it off as they should;
The good are so harsh to the clever,
The clever so rude to the good."

There are self-righteous censors, intoxicated with their own superior rectitude, who sit in front of a television set, with a stern expression on their face and a pencil in their hand, ready to pounce on any swear word or the slightest deviation from the straight and narrow path of their conventional code. It may be argued that an artist has a duty to society, to preserve his artistic integrity. But let us beware of condemning any words or ideas merely because we don't like them. It may be we need to widen our minds.

In the US a revue was banned because a white actress on the stage exposed her breasts. After some correspondence the censor agreed that one breast might be uncovered, which seemed to indicate a dirty mind. Strangely enough there was no objection to black or brown breasts being shown.

Nowadays in this country a nude study may be published provided the pubic hairs are removed. It would be just as logical to insist that a sitter should have his head shaved before posing for his photograph.

Our ideas about what is proper and improper in life and art are so hopelessly contradictory from one person to another that we should hesitate before howling for the suppression of that which displeases our irrational and vacillating susceptibilities.

LETTERS

E.A. replies

I AM aware of Mr Otto Shaw's interest in the welfare of young people, and the excellent work that has been done for highly intelligent, maladjusted boys. But Barbara Smoker is, I think, understating the case when she describes Mr Shaw's question to a defendant as "indiscreet".

However worthy Mr Shaw's motives were, he acted in a manner which merits serious criticism. But there are many magistrates who, in the words of Marcus Lipton, MP, "poke their noses into things which do not concern the case before them", and use their position to bully and humiliate those who appear before them.

E.A.

Catholic freedom

I WOULD have been disturbed to read a letter in the FREETHINKER from anyone who suggested it would be right to deny a person a position of authority, because they adhered to a particular religious faith. I would have thought that this idea would be abhorrent to a rationalist.

However, when this suggestion comes from a freethinker of the stature of F. H. Amphlett Micklewright, I think it a very serious matter.

His letter which was published in the FREETHINKER on April 14th concerned the question of the Church and establishment. In his letter he stated that, in his opinion, the practice of denying positions of authority, eg, the Crown and office of Lord Chamberlain, to Catholics should not only remain, but should be extended to other positions of authority.

In the FREETHINKER of April 28th Mr. Micklewright very rightly attacked the bigoted attitude of the Scotch Church in denying teaching positions to agnostics. Yet he suggests judging the right of Catholics to hold positions of power by the same criteria. I realise Mr Micklewright will argue that Catholics are controlled by a foreign dogmatic and dangerous power. This argument is simply replacing prejudice with prejudice, dogma with dogma.

I would consider myself a freethinker. I do not wish to see one narrow attitude (anti-atheist) replaced by another (anti-Catholic). Surely we Freethinkers, Humanists, and Rationalists are striving for a free society where a person's religious and political beliefs are their own *private* business. This question should not enter into a person's right or ability to hold any job or position of importance.

C. H. GODFREY.

Biography of G. W. Foote

AS the question of a biography of the first Editor of the FREETHINKER keeps cropping up, may I say that some 20 years or so ago, I spent four years in writing a life of G. W. Foote. I think I was particularly qualified to do so for various reasons, as I had an almost complete set of his published works and was able to consult the first 35 volumes of the FREETHINKER at the NSS library.

The MS, I think, is still in existence, and if the readers of the FREETHINKER would like it published—could they not come together and try to obtain the necessary money for its publication?

H. CUTNER.

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Humanist Holidays, Art Holiday, Burton Galleries, Wirral Cheshire, 29th July to 12th August. Small Youth Camp near Yeovil, Somerset. Details of both from Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey.

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Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.; Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

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INDOOR

Manchester Humanist Society (Literary and Philosophical House, 36 George Street, near Piccadilly), Wednesday, June 14th, 7.30 p.m.: N. F. MOODY, "Germany as I Have Seen It".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, June 11th, 11 a.m.: MAURICE CRANSTONE, "Rouffeuau and Liberty".

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