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Friday,
June 7, 1968**CENSORSHIP AND OBSCENITY**

THE openness with which the Danes (and the Swedes) are now publishing nudist, sexual and para-sexual books, magazines, photographs and film is making it impossible for the authorities here to exercise any effective control of matter published in Denmark.

In the FREETHINKER of May 24, I contributed information from the Royal Danish Embassy giving the arguments of the Criminal Law Committee in favour of the liberalisation of the Danish Obscenity laws.

The Minister of Justice acted upon the advice of the Committee and Parliament accepted his Bill. The revised text of the relevant provision, in English, is as follows:

Article 234 of the Danish Criminal Code

"Any person who

- (i) offer or hands over to any person under eighteen years of age obscene pictures or objects, or who
- (ii) publishes or circulates or, for such purpose, produces or imports obscene pictures or objects, or who
- (iii) arranges for any public lecture, performance or exhibition of an obscene nature,

shall be liable to a fine or to simple detention or, in aggravating circumstances, to imprisonment for any term not exceeding six months.

The chief amendments will come into force on August 16, 1968. This legislation is bound up with the denunciation by Denmark of the International Convention relating to Suppression of the Circulation of and trade in Obscene Publications concluded at Geneva on September 12, 1923.

The United Kingdom ratified this Convention on December 11, 1925 (*Treaty Series No. 1, 1926; Cmd. 2575*). Under this Convention Her Majesty's Government agreed to take all measures to discover, prosecute and punish any person committing the offence of distributing by way of trade any obscene thing—the definition of 'obscurity' being left to the law of each contracting party to the Convention to formulate.

The important agreement was that under *Article 6* each contracting party undertook to inform the appropriate other contracting party of any obscene object discovered in violation of the Convention in the territory of the informing party which was believed to have come from or been produced in the latter party's territory.

This would mean in effect that the suppression of the publication of allegedly obscene matter in one country could be triggered by complaints from other countries

which are signatories to the Convention. In my own cases, the first Scotland Yard investigation was prompted by a complaint from Italy; later prosecutions resulted from complaints from the USA, Australia and Canada.

Such complaints from overseas countries compel the country of origin to suppress the circulation of matter objected to.

By denouncing the Convention Denmark now tells the world that Danish publishers will not be subject to the penalties of the Criminal law if any matter issuing from Denmark is found to be obscene in any other country. This virtually means that the authorities here are limited in their power to suppress, for any discovery here of obscene matter produced in Denmark can no longer be used to enforce suppression at the source.

I have called the attention of the Home Office to the position, and the Home Office have confirmed that the UK Government is still a signatory to the Convention. The position is thus ridiculous, for it now means that there is a treaty obligation which makes it impossible for a United Kingdom photographer to produce work which may legally be published in an overseas country because some other countries overseas may consider it to be obscene.

But the position is even more foolish than this, for anyone can now go into a British post office and obtain a money order payable in Denmark for the purchase of whatever he wants, while British photographers are unable to compete by supplying a domestic product which, incidentally, would help the 'Back Britain' campaign.

Of course the matter is not only an economic one; it is an educational and psychological issue also, for while such legal restraints prevent the dissemination of sexual knowledge it is almost impossible for anyone who does not travel abroad to have a balanced view of sex. A Dane who recently visited me commented: "England is for children; Denmark is for adults".

JEAN STRAKER.

NSS PRESS RELEASE

IT is high time the authorities of Lancaster University reinstated Dr David Craig to the Deanship of Cartmel College and abandoned all thought of future disciplinary action against him. His proposals for mixed hostels for students is no more than realistic in the modern world.

Already many university students have reached the age of 21, and practically all are passed the proposed new age of majority, 18. Even if this were not so, the status of *in loco parentis* is less and less relevant, as wise parents advise but do not presume to snoop on the sexual activities of their late-teenage children.

University colleges were established as monastic institutions and many of their controllers have failed to observe we are no longer living in the middle ages. Their sexual

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

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

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

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

Bristol Humanist Group, Kelfscott, 4 Portland Street, Clifton, Saturday, June 8, 7.30 p.m.: Garden Party.

British Humanist Association, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, June 8, 2.30 p.m.: Reunion Meeting for HAROLD BLACKHAM. All welcome.

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group, 31 Windsor Road, London, N13, Saturday, June 8, 8 p.m.: Social evening with slide-show (bring your own).

Lewisham Humanist Group, The Saville, 436 Lewisham High Street (near the hospital), Lewisham, Friday, June 14, 8 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.

Luton Humanist Group, Carnegie Room, Luton Central Library, Thursday, June 13, 7.30 p.m.: Annual General Meeting, followed by IVOR LLEWELLYN-JONES, 'Islam'.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, WC1, Sunday, June 9, 11 a.m.: Professor HYMAN LEVY, 'Ethics and Party Politics'.

NSS PRESS RELEASE

(Continued from front page)

obsession is perhaps to be explained by their own fading or faded sexual powers. Most of their students for the most time are—believe it or not—actually interested in their studies; and could concentrate on them better if they were able to achieve, with proper safeguards, reasonable expression of a biological urge.

Reports that the Government is to provide extra time so that the Sunday Entertainments Bill can pass through all stages in the Commons are encouraging. In the interests of justice it is imperative that these assurances be carried out, whatever other pressures on time there may be.

Just as special parliamentary steps had to be taken in the eighteen eighties against the Parnellites, even though they had legitimate grievances, any re-organisation of parliament today must give the House and sponsors of reforming measures reasonable control over the wilful obstructors, the foes of democracy, the backwoodsmen of the Bible Belt, the Members for Bumbledon, the minions who claim to take their instructions from God but take their money from man, the puppets of mini-minorities, the warriors whose intellects perfectly match their sense of justice—the whole company of which Sir Cyril Black is the brightest ornament.

DAVID TRIBE, *President, NSS.*

CORRESPONDENCE: BLASPHEMY

THE *Times* report of the NCCL AGM was quite accurate. An emergency motion of censorship was brought in, and I was responsible for an amendment, subsequently carried, making it specific by calling for abolition of the offences of indecency, obscenity and blasphemy in media of arts and communications. It seemed to me unrealistic to call for the abolition of all censorship, which would create a free trade in military secrets, sadistic comics for children and malicious defamatory libel, but desirable to abolish as many offences as possible.

I fear that Jean Straker has misread the 1967 Criminal Law Act. Part II, section 13 (1) (a) names a number of abolished offences such as maintenance and eavesdropping. Blasphemy is not among them. Paragraph (1) (b) abolishes 'any offence under an enactment mentioned in Part I of Schedule 4 to this Act, to the extent to which the offence depends on any section or part of a section included in the third column of that Schedule'. One of the acts named here for complete repeal is the 1697 Blasphemy Act (also the 1745 Profane Oaths Act). But this Act, which never appears to have been enforced, defines blasphemy in a particular way: to 'by writing, printing, teaching or advised speaking, deny the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority'. Clearly this is a very special definition, which could be applied against all non-Christian religions, particularly Judaism. The advocacy of atheism and any form of religious satire fall outside it.

In other schedules there are repeals of certain sections of the other blasphemy acts, but on close inspection I cannot find mention of their operative clauses, viz. section 3 of the 1548 and 1558-9 Acts of Uniformity (particularly directed at the theatre and still, it seems, around for when

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PRINTER'S ERROR

OUR apologies to Douglas Bramwell whose name was wrongly associated with Joseph McCabe's article CAXTON'S PLACE IN HISTORY (May 31). Apologies must also be extended to Charles V. Bryan (USA) who donated the article to the FREETHINKER, and to all readers misled by this error.

THOUGHTS ON KARL MARX

Peter Crommelin

THE communist revolution should have happened, here in England, in the middle of the nineteenth century, when we were lucky enough to have Karl Marx living in our midst. Social conditions a century ago would have fully justified the conversion of this island into a socialist republic. One bloody revolution might have saved a great many bloody wars. But it was not to be. We missed the golden opportunity provided by history. We became deviationists from the true path of social progress, and now perhaps, it is too late even to dream of a genuine radical revolution here.

Yet nothing can alter the fact that communism was conceived here in England, in the brain of Marx as he studied and meditated in the Reading Room of the British Museum. No man has contributed more to the ultimate solution of human problems. Poverty still remains the chief cause of misery in the world, more so than the violence of wars or the infirmities of old age. Neither Capitalism nor Christianity can provide any real cure for world poverty. This can be achieved only by some form of socialism, communism, or, if you prefer the term, secular humanism. Here indeed, we have the living principle for the solution of all human problems. For man or woman all problems are human.

Bertrand Russell in his *History of Western Philosophy*, a work of vast and almost incredible scholarship, has devoted a chapter to Karl Marx. It is not the best chapter in the book. Russell is here not really in sympathy with his subject and does less than justice to the genius of the man. Statements are made that call for correction. If political and economic theory are not an integral part of philosophy, then Marx should not be discussed at all. All the most important thoughts of Marx are dismissed by Russell as irrelevant to philosophy.

Russell states that Marx "disclaimed all ethical or humanitarian reasons for preferring Socialism". This, I believe, to be quite untrue and quite unfair to the memory of Marx. No man ever was animated by stronger passion for social justice. No man ever discovered more poignantly from personal experience the evils of poverty. It was to rectify terrible evils felt by himself and by millions of other poor folk worse off than himself, that Marx worked at his schemes for a better world. In his work he tried to be as scientific as possible, but the inner feeling that prompted the effort was a moral passion for truth and justice.

Russell demonstrates nothing but misunderstanding when he complains that Marx was "too practical, too much wrapped up in the problems of his time. His purview is confined to this planet, and, within this planet to Man". These qualities that Russell condemns as "grave shortcomings" were in fact the very qualities that enabled Marx to concentrate his genius on one thing only, the removal of all obstacles to the final result, the dictatorship of the people, by the people, for the people.

Russell writes "Marx professed himself an atheist, but retained a cosmic optimism which only theism could justify". This seems to me quite absurd. I can see no reason whatsoever why an atheist should not feel optimistic about the future of mankind here on earth. That there are great dangers ahead is undeniable but there seems no

rational reason why these dangers should not be overcome by human effort, without having recourse to belief in a divine or supernatural providence. The "dialectical materialism" of Karl Marx does provide a rational basis for a reasonable amount of optimism about the future of mankind. Nothing is to be taken for granted, but there is a basis for hope in the "increment of association" that lies at the heart of the materialist concept of history. The future must depend more and more on the getting together of human forces and powers. One might describe secular humanism as the world becoming conscious of its capacity for continued existence, and its own capacity for being made better and better by rational human action. There is no need for an atheist to despair. Many humanists think and feel that Marx would not recognise Russian Communism as the true and genuine article. I believe them to be mistaken. I doubt if the Russians themselves would be completely satisfied with the up-to-date achievements of Russian Communism. But millions of individuals do subject themselves to a communist discipline, and they certainly do not regard such subjection as degrading to human dignity or as being anti-social, or anti-democratic. On the contrary, I am quite sure that the world being what it is, communists feel that a communism dictated by events is the only way to make the world better, and the only way to the ultimate achievement of social justice and world peace. What matters in the communist world is not the dogmatic authority of Karl Marx, but the moral influences of the man himself as this has been recorded in the pages of history.

In the actual words of his friend F. Engels, Marx made "the two great discoveries of the materialist conception of history, and of the secret of capitalist production; and through these discoveries socialism became a science".

And if I may be allowed the space, here is another quotation even more worth recording: "In every society which arises in history the distribution of the products, and therewith the social articulation into classes or ranks, depends upon what and how, men produce in such a society, and upon how these products are exchanged therein. Thus the final causes of all social and political changes are to be sought, not in philosophy, but in economics. And this fundamental law and vital movement, of itself quietly eliminates all religion. For with mankind's recognition of the fundamentally economic character of its entire life, a new social order arises, with a new law and a new morality; whilst religion disappears when man, thus fully awake, enters upon the Socialist period of human history".

Thus while Charles Darwin was working away at the origin of species, the other Charles (or Karl) was working equally hard at the more basic human problem of poverty in the midst of wealth, and in what conditions the wealth of the wealthy actually causes the poverty of the poor. Millions of communists all over the world, who pay homage to the memory of Karl Marx, must feel that he certainly did not over-estimate the importance of his work to the solution of these problems, that are with us still. When communism is permitted to come into contact and communication with more liberal forms of secular humanism and more refined forms of atheism, the results might be more visibly impressive than anything that could be imagined a century ago.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF FREETHOUGHT

F. H. Snow

WHAT does freethought imply? From the purely secularist viewpoint, freethought is the conception of ideas, undeterred and unguided by belief in a deity and compliance with its ordinances. Liberty to think is necessarily unrestricted, and it is only its articulate form that is subject to repression. Does the right and ability to think freely signify the right to express oneself freely? Society does not think so.

All down the centuries, freedom of thought has been frowned upon, and its known advocates penalised, often horribly. The position today, though incomparably easier, is still adverse to the free circulation of opinions and sentiments. In the past, the emphasis has been on religious and political views, the former involving the harsher penalties. Even now, society is unsympathetic to Freethought's sceptical philosophy. Faith and tradition survive stubbornly, in face of scientific wonders, aided by their radio and television confederates, whose virtual embargo on sceptical broadcasts all but bans the voice of Freethought from the air. Society, nevertheless, has not the power to outlaw the atheism implicit in Freethought, though invested with a legal guardianship of morals.

Where able, society sees fit to prevent the publication of views she deems improper. By means of censorship and prosecution, she obstructs the propagation of ideas which she condemns as liable to disaffect and corrupt. As secularists, humanists, freethinkers, we resent the enlistment of the law to curtail oral or written thought. We do not deprecate its employment for our protection, however, and for the prevention of crime, and are morally bound to resist prejudice in judging the enactments of society, both in our favour and against it. We have to be intellectually and unemotionally sure of the reasonableness of our position and the unjustness of society's, in relation to our ideals and objectives. How are we standing up to this obligation?

We know that we are justified in campaigning against religion by the conviction we have reached, through exhaustive examination of its claims and authorities, that it is fallacious. We know that we have a case against it which religionists cannot meet, and which we at all times challenge them to argue. We know, and they know, that their creeds are intelligently indefensible. We are justified in wishing to destroy belief in the supernatural, alike because it shames modernity and condones the *status quo* that is inimical to the furtherance of humanitarian projects. We do not aim to destroy liberty to worship, but the illogical and mystical processes that inspire it. Freethought prin-

ciples bind us, in fact, to fight, if need be, for the liberty to worship of even the most fanatical. We are therefore justified in pressing for propagating facilities, particularly in broadcasting, at least equal to those afforded the religious. The case of secularism's primary objective is, we rightly claim, powerful.

Our fight for free abortion is strongly authorised. To refuse birth to an unwanted child is the unqualified right of every potential mother. Freethought had never greater cause to be articulate than for legal recognition of that right. In agitating for divorce by consent, humanism is on strong moral ground. That a formula of words, whether uttered by a minister of religion—in the 'hallowing' atmosphere of a church or in the comparatively unsentimental one of a registry office—should have power to fetter unwilling couples for life, or make the attainment of divorce cruelly hard, commands Freethought's most voluble expression. We are justified in raising its voice against the Lord's Day Observance provisions. Seeking no restraint of religious devotions and diversions, we have the authority of tolerance and common rights in working for unrestricted enjoyment of secular amenities on the Sabbath, and repeal of the obsolescent Act responsible for this bigoted legislation.

In voicing its condemnation of racialism, Freethought reflects society's general view. Where conditions approximate, discriminatory action against persons of whatever race or hue is repugnant to the rational-minded. Concerning the present situation in Britain, however, is secularism right in condoning the worsening of the already cruel conditions afflicting many of our people, in relation to housing and employment, by advocating the virtually uncontrolled entry of many more thousands of immigrants, pathetic as their case may be? Many rational-minded people, whilst deploring the racialist outburst by dockers and others, do not think so.

Are we pressurising, in all respects, in the best interests of our cause and for the greatest good of society? Are we pioneering for some freedoms which are ethnically impracticable? Are we assailing some values esteemed by a good many secularists as well as by Christians? Are we right to assume, for instance, that most freethinkers are in sympathy with agitation for free expression of what society terms obscenity and secularism terms liberal thought? The use of a certain four-letter word or 'bad language' in general, and displays of 'visual art', would certainly not be welcomed at secularist functions. In shirking such frankness, do we not tacitly justify society's attitude to it? Should we not leave society to find its own way to this freedom, and press for the urgent reforms for which we have full justification in campaigning?

We cannot afford to have our image blurred. We have a mission. Let us not get dangerously far from our paramount objective of liberating the people from the delusion that hag-rides far too great numbers of them, and gravely hinders the realisation of humanist ideals. Freethought should not transcend the bounds of fairthought, and in giving it expression we should not disregard values respected within our sceptical fraternity. We need to give scrupulously rational consideration to the implications of Freethought.

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MAN THE FAILURE

Michael Gray

Part I

WHEN I was a child I used to believe in God and Man, in that order. Because parents take such great pains to instil in their children a belief in their own infallibility it is not very difficult for a child to accept the idea of an almighty God. The child's concept of God is simply a projection of the father-figure ideal; God is essentially perceived as a superman, the all-knowing teacher, the all-loving father, the all-powerful policeman. God, however, is infinitely superior to man since reality cannot live up to the ideal and parents unfortunately have to live in the real world, not the spiritual no-where wherein dwells God. Parents make mistakes; worse, they are seen to make mistakes, because no matter how much they try to be fair in their dealings with children they cannot know everything or be everywhere at once. God, of course, can. Children take comfort that injustice (in their eyes) endured because of adults, and good deeds greeted by human indifference will eventually bring divine reward. Even more, perhaps, they take delight in imagining the future-world sufferings of the class or street bully who always seems to escape human retribution. (They themselves of course are never bullies).

I do not think it is sufficiently appreciated what a real shock a child experiences on discovering that adults are very ordinary, typically maladjusted, often very stupid people. The realisation usually starts during adolescence, which is a not often enough understood reason why so many teenagers rebel against parental authority and try to assert their own independence. They reason that they know what is good for them more than their parents do. As often as not they are right, but it would never do for grown-ups to have to admit this. Thus pride isolates them from their own children.

Quite early in life I learned to my cost the fallibility of parents. I soon began to discover faults where before I had only sought to admire, and envy. But just as I had projected the idealised parental qualities into my god-image I now perceived the newly-discovered human faults and inadequacies infinitely multiplied in that image. Man had this excuse—he permitted misery and injustice because, being man, he could not prevent it—he was *only* human. God—the *super*-human—became condemned by that very quality of omnipotence that had most drawn me, as insecure child, to him. God saw—God knew—God permitted! This was the unbearable, irrefutable fact that first threw me into revolt against my god. My image of deity had originated as the personification of Goodness which was the reflection of my own childish naive faith in man. The intrusion of reality with maturation and disillusionment transformed that image into a personalisation of evil. That concept was to remain a long time with me before devolving into non-existence; but it has still left me with a distrust and hatred of arbitrary authority in all its many-headed forms, from the mental tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church to the physical brutality of 'our wonderful police' so beloved of our bourgeois press.

After disposing of the immortal I proceeded to take another long, cool look at mortal man. (How many of us honestly attempt an objective, critical appraisal of this intolerant, warring species which with typical arrogance

proclaims itself *homo sapiens*?) I did not like what I saw, and I still don't, which is why I do not like to use the title Humanist when applied to my philosophy. So many Humanists expect, many automatically assume, that the man who believes in Humanism acknowledges a belief in the basic dignity and nobility of man, and his ultimate ability to achieve a free and just society which is what all Secular Humanists are struggling to bring about (cf. recent correspondence on the definition of a Humanist in the magazine of that name). I do not acknowledge this. I see man as an observer from another planet would undoubtedly see him: as a species of animal that, by reason of its particular specialisation in the field of brain-power, has managed to devise the most effective and ingenious methods of killing off (or domesticating and living off) the other animals who competed with him for domination. Man, it should be noted in passing, is the only animal that kills for the pleasure of it.

Nevertheless, discarding clerical sanctions and supernatural authority, I find myself now more than ever aware of the moral problems and dilemmas facing mankind. Instead of shedding my conscience with my faith, as I had always been taught by good Christians is what Atheists do (and some of them believed it) I find that I suffer from an expanded conscience which some, no doubt, would attribute to neurosis. Man that I despise as a race I cannot help but sympathise with as an individual. Since there is no supernatural to govern morality and I can no longer identify with God I am ever more deeply identifying with man, with all men. Identification *with* man is the key to the understanding of all human relationships and conflicts, and to the tolerance of other customs, cultures, colours and creeds. It is the antithesis of the alienation *from* man which is the disastrous effect, and very often the aim, of organised religion. I must now seek a 'natural' morality using this identification as my guide in order to solve the problem of human misery which supernaturalist ethics have only succeeded in increasing.

(To be continued)

NOTE FOR NEW READERS

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THE CHRISTIAN DIALECTIC

R. Stuart Montague

ALL motion and movement of matter in the universe and the world of nature is a history of perpetual change and development from which arises every finite form and mode of existence of matter. Action and reaction, attraction and repulsion, inertia and motivity, are the essential constituents of matter in motion. All movement reveals itself in the polarity of opposites; positive and negative, thesis and antithesis. All self-movement, change and development of matter in the world is ruled by definite laws. Law reigns supreme throughout the macrophysical world, the world of outer space and the microphysical world of inner space.

The origin of life, self-movement and motion in the universe of matter and nature remains a mystery for the future brain of man to unravel. What is known is that the same laws of motion and change universal through all the spheres of matters and nature also obtain in the realms of human thought and the history of mankind. Since organic life, mind and thought evolved from the evolution of inorganic matter the logical laws of reason in the minds of men correspond to the universal laws of motion of the material world since the human brain is part of the world of matter and nature.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus taught that everything happens through struggle and that the conflict of opposing forces is the source and father of all things. The struggle or conflict of opposites is the first law of the dialectic. This fundamental law is reflected in the symbolical history of many nations.

The reflection in the mind of man of the laws of motion, change and development in the natural world around him can be traced back through the ages of the history of mankind. The name for these laws of the universe originated in ancient Greece and is known as the Dialectic. This term derives from the Greek word *dialeptomai* meaning 'to carry on a conversation'. In the art of discussion in dialogue by the ancient Greek philosophers there was the clash of opposite and contradictory opinions. By statement (thesis) of one speaker and counter statement (antithesis) of the other speaker something new and of a higher nature is learned by both speakers (synthesis).

China has the ancient dialectical principle of the universe symbolised in Yin and Yang, negative and positive, female and male, inertia and energy, darkness and light. Through the interaction of Yin and Yang, says the ancient Chinese philosophy, sprang the five elements. In ancient India we find the personification of Rta in the Rig Veda, the principle of the unification of opposites, the existence of Mitra and Varna, the two guardians in Hindu mythology, also the Hindu Devas and Asuras.

The Japanese have the dialectical opposites Izanagi and Izanami and with the Koreans it is Li and Ki. "Truth can be obtained only through the comprehension of opposites", wrote Okakura Kakuzo. With the Christians, Jews, Muslims and Parsis the opposites are symbolised in God and Satan, good and evil. Professor Karl G. Jung wrote that "life, being an energetic process, needs the opposites, for without opposition there is, as we know, no energy. Good and evil are simply the moral aspects of this natural polarity. The fact that we have to feel this polarity so excruciatingly makes human existence all the more complicated. Yet the suffering that necessarily attaches to life cannot be evaded. The tension of opposites that makes energy possible is a universal law, fittingly expressed in the Yang and Yin of Chinese philosophy".

Also of profound interest is Karl Jung's interpretation of the Christian dialectic in his *A Psychological Approach to the Trinity*. "In other words, as soon as the number two appears a unit is produced out of the original unity, and this unit is none other than the same unity split into two and turned into a 'number'. The 'One' and the 'Other' form an opposition, but there is no opposition between one and two, for these are simple numbers which are distinguished only by their arithmetical value and by nothing else. The 'One' however, seeks to hold to its one-and-alone existence, while the 'Other' even strives to be another opposed to the 'One'. The One will not let go of the Other because, if it did, it would lose its character; and the Other pushes itself away from the One in order to exist at all. Thus there arises a tension of opposites between the One and the Other. But every tension of opposites culminates in a release, out of which comes the 'third'. In the third, the tension is resolved and the lost unity is restored. Unity, the absolute One, cannot be numbered, it is indefinable and unknowable; only when it appears as a unit, the number one, is it knowable, for the 'Other' which is required for this act of knowing is lacking in the condition of the One. Three is an unfolding of the One to a condition where it can be known—unity become recognisable; had it not been resolved into the polarity of the One and the Other, it would have remained fixed in a condition devoid of every quality. Three therefore appears as a suitable synonym for a progress of development in time, and thus forms a parallel to the self-revelation of the Deity as the absolute One unfolded into Three".

* * *

"Dialectics is the soul of any scientific cognition."
George Hegel.

"The two great drives of all nature: the concept of polarity."
Goethe.

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Douglas Bramwell

PHENOMENALISM is the theory that our knowledge is limited to our experiences; that we have no knowledge of an external world beyond those experiences.

To put it another way, phenomenalism holds that it is not necessary to assume the existence of an outside world—either the everyday world of ships and shoes and sealing wax, or the physicists world of atoms and electrons—in order to explain our experiences. Such a world may, in fact, exist but, according to the phenomenologists, it is not necessary to drag it into our explanations of what we experience. All the actual and possible happenings in what we normally assume to be the outside world, can be described and predicted in terms of 'sense data'—patches of colour, sounds, smells, etc.—and their interrelations.

At first sight a theory such as phenomenalism seems in direct opposition to materialism. And yet, Chapman Cohen, with enviable insight, saw in phenomenalism a means of reinterpreting materialism to rid it of some of its metaphysical difficulties. His attempt to combine the advantages of materialism and phenomenalism, and eliminate their shortcomings, was made in a book entitled *Materialism Restated*, first published by the Pioneer Press in 1927. A second, revised and enlarged edition appeared in 1938.

"The essence of Materialism lies in the simple and single proposition that an explanation of any given phenomenon, and therefore by implication of all phenomena, is to be sought and found in the condition of its appearance."

"'Matter' is real in the only sense in which reality has a meaning. When, for example, I say that the table is objectively real, I do not mean that the table as I am conscious of it exists apart from my consciousness. I mean that it appears to other people in substantially the same form that it appears to me. If they take up the same position as I occupy they will see the table as I see it. That is all that is necessarily implied when we speak of objective reality."

The above quotations from the 1938 edition leave no

THE UNKNOWN GOD:

A Reply to Mr Cregan

WHILST agreeing with Mr Cregan, May 17, that there exist beliefs of all shades, tinctures and hues in the spectrum between Fundamentalist and Modernistic beliefs, I do not feel that the examples which he cited in defence of his argument are particularly relevant to the point. Between the former school, who accept all, to the latter, who accept practically none of the Bible's teachings, there are obviously many who feel that a compromise is in order, but such intermediary positions are usually based upon a quantitative rather than a qualitative assessment of beliefs (i.e., it is a question of how many Biblical miracles the individual accepts, rather than in what way he accepts them).

The compromise suggested by Mr Cregan on behalf of the 'religious mythicist' certainly appears somewhat amorphous. If the Genesis narrative is a poetic elaboration

room to doubt Cohen's phenomenalist position. But to read his book in full is the only way to appreciate his attempt to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable.

The way in which life and mind arise out of inanimate matter was one of the difficult problems which faced materialism when Cohen wrote his book. The philosophy of 'emergence' was an answer current at the time. In emergence theory, new qualities and properties of matter—chemical and physical properties as well as those of life and mind—arise when the matter is combined in new ways. And the new qualities cannot be predicted from the properties of the matter before its new combination.

Cohen's phenomenistic materialism, holding that our knowledge never passes beyond our experiences, was freed from the need of employing a device such as 'emergence' to explain life and mind in terms of a matter which existed 'out there'.

But time has not been on Cohen's side. Phenomenalism is today a dying philosophy. In order to talk about future possible events, the theory was forced to make use of the idea of 'possible future sense data' and in so doing met complex technical/logical difficulties which, after years of philosophical discussion, seem to be insuperable. With phenomenalism dies Cohen's version of materialism.

The difficulties which Cohen attempted to meet in materialism are with us again. Emergence theory is still used, particularly among Humanists, to explain life and matter. I attempted to lay the theory to rest, in a way that Chapman Cohen would have violently disapproved of, in the April 1966 issue of *The Humanist*.

It seems that to resolve the difficulties in materialism, another interpretation must be used. The double-aspect theory, in which mind and matter are two aspects of a single substance, and of which philosophers of the calibre of William James and A. N. Whitehead can be said to be exponents, seems, perhaps, a promising direction of approach.

A. J. Lowry

around the truth that God made the world, we are then left with the problems of determining (i) what this God is, (ii) how 'He' or 'It' formed the world, (iii) how this hypothesis may be tested, and (iv) why this God mis-informed the Israelites as to how this wonderful event took place. Indeed, as far as I can understand Mr Cregan, the only difference between the two philosophies which he outlines, is that the 'religious mythicist', as opposed to the unqualified 'mythicist', insists that the stories of the Bible have something to do with an entity referred to as 'God', but appears devoid of either the ability or the inclination to inform us in any clear way, what this object of veneration is.

Despite Mr Cregan's claims to the contrary the Bible, in part at least, *does* set out to make itself a textbook on science. Genesis 1, for example, is delivered with a perfectly straight face, with no suggestion that it might mean anything except that which it explicitly states; and, since

its assertions cover the disciplines of cosmology, physics, astronomy and palaeontology, it is surely justifiable to consider its accuracy in the light of recent discoveries in these fields. The miserable and multifarious errors observable from this comparison need hardly be tabulated here. but the point remains that the story gives every indication that it is meant to be read as inspired truth, and enjoyed such a reputation amongst the Jews, and later amongst the Gentiles, for a significant proportion of the world's recorded history. It says little for either the morality or the veracity of the God of the religious mythicists' conception, that He allowed Bruno to be consigned to the flames for believing to be true no more than He must have known to have been the case, anyway.

The atheist's conclusion, that the Bible holds a position in the history of the world's literature no more exalted than that enjoyed by *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Prose Edda* or the *Tao Te Ching*, may appear extreme and radical to people who have employed the term 'God' in their deliberations for so long that they feel unable to do without it. The alternative, however—that this term must convey an idea which is either demonstrably untrue or logically incomprehensible, and until a more satisfactory meaning can be given to this term, it would surely be of advantage to everyone if the religious mythicist abandoned this vestigial item of his vocabulary.

CORRESPONDENCE : BLASPHEMY

(Continued from page 178)

the Lord Chamberlain's theatrical rôle is abolished) and section 1 of the 1819 Criminal Libel Act. There is also the common law offence of blasphemy involving the use of 'ribald language', under which, as it happens, practically every prosecution has been brought. A latter-day Aristophanes wouldn't stand a chance under this. Then there are the unflattering (to Christianity) visual incongruities of Buñuel's *Nazarin* and *Viridiana*. It may be I have interpreted the 1967 Act too pessimistically. I shall refer the matter to the Lord Chancellor and let readers know the answer.

Assuming blasphemy is still a legal hazard, should it be linked with other offences in a reforming measure? The answer is assuredly yes. The enormous difficulty of introducing, and then getting through, a private member's Bill makes it imperative to get as much as you can when you can. Experience shows that reactionaries are not to be mollified by timid measures, that a confrontation is risked on the most marginal reform, and that the fight is little more difficult if the maximal change is sought. It is obvious that obscenity is a convenient charge to bring against plays, films and books while it is on the Statute Book, but its removal would throw the common informer back on to blasphemy prosecutions. Joyce's *Ulysses* is a good example of a work which, if protected on one ground, would be attacked on the other. Particularly is this true of the modern theatre, most of whose writers are freethinkers.

I hope blasphemy will be added to the Freedom of Communications Bill and am happy to say that Will Hamling agrees with me.

DAVID TRIBE, *President, NSS.*

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