

**The Humanist World Weekly**Registered at the  
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Friday,  
August 23, 1968**THE POPE'S ENCYCLICAL**

THIS very important meeting was arranged too quickly for FREETHINKER readers to be notified in the usual way. Nevertheless, most readers in London and the Home Counties will have received loose inserts in their copy of the journal while NSS members were sent notices through the post.

Despite the tremendous publicity given to the opposition to the Pope's encyclical, the NSS protest meeting was probably the first to be organised anywhere in the country. Arrangements began as soon as the encyclical was published and, ten days later, was held at London's Caxton Hall on Thursday, August 8. To find a suitable venue and a platform of speakers at such short notice, and to fill the 250 seats when so many are away from home on holiday, was a prodigious task successfully accomplished, for which most credit should go to William McIlroy the NSS General Secretary.

Perhaps the most important feature of the meeting was a motion moved by one of the speakers, Renee Short, MP, carried almost unanimously by those present, and, as a resolution, given mention in several of the leading national newspapers.

The Chairman, Tom Ponsonby, Secretary of the Fabian Society, read in full the messages of support received from Bertrand Russell the philosopher, Paul Johnson the Roman Catholic editor of the *New Statesman*, William Hamling, MP, playwright John Mortimer and Michael Foot, MP.

Talks were given by Renee Short, Kingsley Martin the veteran journalist and previous editor of the *New Statesman*, David Tribe the NSS President, and by Dr Faith Spicer well-known for her work in connection with family planning and sex education.

That the Pope's encyclical was not only the business of Roman Catholics but concerned everyone, that, if obeyed, the demographic and sociological problems which would follow would hurt us all, were two points emphasised by each member of the platform.

Mrs Short pointed out that this country too would bear its share of a rise in world population; that already overcrowding was bringing great pressures upon housing, education and hospitals; that England already has more inhabitants—per square mile—than has India.

Attention was also drawn to the number of unwanted babies being born in this country each year. Mrs Short said that surveys and research had shown that a quarter of a million babies in this country each year are not wanted. The number of babies born to unmarried girls of sixteen years of age and younger (sometimes as young as 12 years) had doubled between 1957 and 1967. For these children, frequently institutionalised from birth, the emotional and social deprivations were appalling.

Mr Martin felt that the encyclical was a vestige of the Middle Ages and that we should be working toward a position in which all children are born only because they are wanted. The Pope knows nothing, said Mr Martin, of the sort of problems and conditions which had been described by Mrs Short.

Mr Tribe pointed out that, while it would have been serious enough had the Pope addressed himself only to Catholics, he had, in fact, appealed to doctors and to governments to support him. In effect, he was asking doctors to obey him rather than their Hippocratic Oath. Catholic governments may be persuaded to ban all contraceptives not only for Roman Catholics but for all the inhabitants.

Mr Tribe was instancing some cases of Catholic influence on governments when a member of the audience shouted at the platform and created a disturbance which didn't end until he had been forced to leave the meeting. This gave Mr Tribe yet another instance of Catholic tactics.

Dr Spicer took a rather different line emphasising the urgent need for sex education and wider education in birth-control, describing some of the difficulties which met any campaign to implement this need. Dr Spicer wished to say 'thank you Pope' for bringing this matter out into the open and for making it a talking point throughout the world; this would assist, she felt, in bringing individuals and governments to realise the need for sex and family planning education in view of the grave problems of overpopulation.

Mrs Short gained loud applause when she promised to resist any attempts by Catholics to persuade the Minister of Health or the Government to back pedal on the provision of family planning services. Her closing words were nearly drowned by applause: 'As a woman, I defend to my last breath the right of every woman to decide for herself how many children she shall have, and I shall fight to my last breath any attempts made to deprive her of this right'.

The resolution carried by the meeting, after minor amendments of Mrs Short's original motion, was as follows:

**This meeting held at Caxton Hall, London, calls on the Minister of Health to undertake a national campaign, using the full facilities of press, radio and television to educate the entire community in the principles of family planning. It further calls on him to take all steps to ensure that local health authorities fulfil their responsibilities under the Family Planning Act, and that the hospital service be enabled to provide family planning advice.**

NSS PROTEST MEETING.



# FREETHINKER

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## NO TITLE

SINCE Bradlaugh's time the world has been shrunk to the dimensions of a very small planet around which an artificial satellite can travel sixteen times a day. No place on earth is more than a few hours removed from every other part by jet propulsion; or a few minutes by rocket; or a split second by radio.

The world has perforce become a neighbourhood beset by problems for which religion can provide no answers. They have been created by the ingenuity of man and only the ingenuity of man can resolve them.

When the National Secular Society was founded and when Bradlaugh was agitating for birth control the world's population was probably 1,200,000,000. Today it is over 3,250,000,000. By 1980 it will, inescapably, be over 4,000,000,000. By 1995 it will be over 6,000,000,000. Half a million years for *homo sapiens* to reach the present figure; thirty years for *homo insapiens*—unthinking man—to double it!

Science, by its mechanical advances, has given us death control. Organised religions still discourages birth control.

At the same time, man has acquired the powers to veto the evolution of his own species. In the stockpiles of the nuclear powers there is the destructive capacity of 100 tons of TNT-equivalent for every man, woman and child on earth.

We have to feed, and at the same time to restrain, the multiplying millions. We have to curb the unreason of man which still divides our neighbourhood into warring camps. With universal means, including communication satellites, to promote common understanding, these means are used to encourage dissension. The compulsions which brought the National Secular Society into existence a century ago in Britain are magnified on a world scale today.

Lord RITCHIE CALDER.

(The above is reprinted from the NSS Centenary Brochure, 1966.)

## NOTE FOR NEW READERS

THE FREETHINKER may be ordered through any reputable British newsagent. The newsagent may order it through most of the larger wholesalers and distributors (Marlborough, Menzies, W. H. Smith, Wyman, Marshall, etc.)—though some newsagents are not yet aware of it and may need it to be pointed out to them. If you wish to order through a newsagent (rather than subscribe to the publishers) please notify your newsagent of this; you will be helping yourself, and helping widen the FREETHINKER'S circulation.

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## QUOTES FROM THE ENCYCLICAL

Some points of interest

4. . . . No believer will wish to deny that the teaching authority of the Church is competent to interpret even the natural moral law. It is, in fact, indisputable, as Our Predecessors have many times declared, that Jesus Christ, when communicating to the Apostles His divine authority and sending them to teach all nations His commandments, constituted them as guardians and authentic interpreters of all the moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the gospel, but also of the natural law, which is also an expression of the will of God, the faithful fulfilment of which is equally necessary for salvation.

Conformably to this mission of hers, the Church has always provided—and even more amply in recent times—a coherent teaching concerning both the nature of marriage and the correct use of conjugal rights and the duties of husband and wife.

7. The problem of birth, like every other problem regarding human life, is to be considered, beyond partial perspectives—whether of the biological or psychological, demographic or sociological orders—in the light of an integral vision of man and of his vocation, not only his natural and earthly, but also his supernatural and eternal vocation. . . .

9. . . . Again, this love is faithful and exclusive until death. Thus in fact do bride and groom conceive it to be on the day when they freely and in full awareness assume the duty of marriage bond. A fidelity, this, which can sometimes be difficult, but is always possible, always noble and meritorious, as no one can deny. . . .

13. . . . one who reflects well must also recognise that a reciprocal act of love, which jeopardises the responsibility to transmit life which God the Creator, according to particular laws, inserted therein, is in contradiction with the designs constitutive of marriage, and with the will of the Author of life.

14. . . . We must once again declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun, and, above all, directly willed and procured abortion, even if for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as licit means of regulating birth.

Equally to be excluded, as the teaching authority of the Church has frequently declared, is direct sterilization, whether perpetual or temporary, whether of the man or of the woman. Similarly excluded is every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible. . . .

17. Upright men can even better convince themselves of the solid grounds on which the teaching of the Church in this field is based, if they care to reflect upon the consequences of methods of artificial birth control. Let them consider, first of all, how wide and easy a road would thus be opened up towards conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality. Not much experience is needed in order to know human weakness, and to understand that man—especially the young, who are so vulnerable on this point—have need of encouragement to be faithful to the moral law, so that they must not be offered some easy means of eluding its observance. It is also to be feared that

the man, growing used to the employment of anti-conceptive practices, may finally lose respect for the woman and, no longer caring for her physical and psychological equilibrium, may come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion.

Let it be considered also that a dangerous weapon would thus be placed in the hands of those public authorities who take no heed to moral exigencies. Who could blame a Government for applying to the solution of the problems of the community those means acknowledged to be licit for married couples in the solution of a family problem? Who will stop rulers from favouring, from even imposing upon their peoples, if they were to consider it necessary, the method of contraception which they judge to be most efficacious? . . .

22. . . . Everything in the modern media of social communications which leads to sense excitation and unbridled customs, as well as every form of pornography and licentious performances, must arouse the frank and unanimous reaction of all those who are solicitous for the progress of civilisation and the defence of the supreme good of the human spirit. Vainly would one seek to justify such depravation with the pretext of artistic or scientific exigencies, or to deduce an argument from the freedom allowed in this sector by the public Authorities.

23. To rulers, who are those principally responsible for the common good, and who can do so much to safeguard moral customs, We say: Do not allow the morality of your peoples to be degraded; do not permit that by legal means practices contrary to the natural and divine law be introduced into that fundamental cell, the family. Quite other is the way in which public Authorities can and must contribute to the solution of the demographic problem: namely, the way of a provident policy for the family, of a wise education of peoples in respect of the moral law and the liberty of citizens. . . .

. . . We repeat: No solutions to these difficulties is acceptable 'which does violence to man's essential dignity' and is based only on an utterly materialistic conception of man himself and of his life. . . .

25. . . . And if sin should still keep its hold over them [married couples], let them not be discouraged, but rather have recourse with humble perseverance to the mercy of God, which is poured forth in the Sacrament of Penance. . . .

27. We hold those physicians and medical personnel in the highest esteem who, in the exercise of their profession, value above every human interest the superior demands of their Christian vocation. . . .

## OBITUARY

IT is with deep regret we have to announce the death of C. H. Smith, of Cannon Hill, Birmingham, who died on August 1, aged 94. He was cremated at Lodge Hill, and a secular service was conducted by W. Miller.

Mr Smith was for many years Secretary of the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society and its Honorary President for the last ten years. He was a unique character whose capacity for absorbing knowledge was tremendous and his way of imparting this knowledge to others was so kindly and sincere that it won him many friends. Those who knew Charlie Smith can never forget him. His death is a great loss to the National Secular Society and the Birmingham members in particular, who greatly appreciate the valuable services given to the Branch over many years.

The Society extends its sympathies to Mrs N. Smith who survives him.  
W. MILLER, Vice-President, NSS.



## HAPPINESS AND HUMAN ENDS

Ian Davison

Ian Davison is a graduate of the University of New South Wales in Engineering and of the University of Sydney in Arts.

RELIGION and humanism afford contrasting views of the world. The first is supernaturally centred, making reference to an intelligence beyond the terrestrial. The second is human centred. Both, however, are finally concerned with questions of ends—of what is or should be the point and end of life, of the relationship between individuals, between individuals and society, and between individuals and their environment. Ultimately these are questions of what is the right and the good and what criteria can or should be used to define them.

Religion provides *a priori* answers to these questions, based on revealed truth and belief in a supernatural power. Humanism, evolutionary scientifically orientated humanism, has sought the same answers empirically, in scientific knowledge and with reference to human nature. Within limits, religion has provided frameworks of values and ends, although these are dogmatic and limited in scope. Humanism has as notably failed to do so.

The conventional wisdom of this age is that the pursuit of happiness, or the greatest happiness of the greatest number, comprises the right end of human life, or the "good".

This viewpoint—Utilitarian Hedonism—was formally enunciated by Bentham and developed by John Stuart Mill and later Utilitarians in the nineteenth century. Logically it is open to Hume's attack, since it derives a value statement—what should be, from a statement of fact—of what it is. Bentham argues that since it *is* human nature to pursue happiness, the criteria of good and evil, or the value of an act lies in the degree to which that act or thing increases the sum of happiness. Implicitly, people *should* pursue the greatest happiness, because it *is* human nature to do so.

Not only does this view attempt to base an "ought" on an "is", it is otiose. There is no point in a philosophy exhorting people to do what—if Bentham's view of human nature is correct—they must inevitably do in any case. Moreover, Bentham's notion of psychology is faulty.

People do not generally engage in their various activities simply to obtain happiness that may result. They play sport because they are interested in it, pursue a partner because they are fond of them, buy a car because they like the look of it and lie in the sun because they feel the need for a rest. Happiness motivates at an unconscious level. Once a person is conscious of playing sport, making love, acquiring possessions and bestowing friendship for the sake of any possible happiness involved, both the happiness and the activity sour.

Despite these objections, the pursuit of happiness is held by the majority as justification and rationalisation of every form of activity whether the activity is directed toward building a business empire, toward the pursuit of women as sex objects, toward the playing of sport, or simply lying in the sun. It is central to the all pervasive merchandising mentality that dominates this age ("you'll be twice as happy with Alpine") to education, recreation and even industrial relations. ("Keep your good employees working—keep them working for you. Keep them happy—keep

them comfortable—that's what keeps them loyal.") And the magical idea that happiness is some god given or society given reward for conformity or good behaviour still persists. So any discussion of the meaning of or end of life must reasonably begin with this accepted goal—happiness.

The word "happiness" is ambiguous. As commonly used it denotes a psychological state, a feeling of elation, of walking on air, or euphoria. This is the Hollywood-Detroit usage, and it is generally accepted in this sense.

However, "happiness" also denotes well-being or good fortune. When the Chinese refer to the happiness, they indicate conditions such as good health, long life and so forth, and not a subjective psychological state. Defenders of a Utilitarian Hedonism slide from one meaning to another in defence of their view, without being fully aware of what they are doing.

In addition to this, psychological happiness has become hopelessly confused with another quite different quantity—physical pleasure, so that the two terms are used interchangeably. Bentham's doctrine is referred to as the Pleasure Principle, despite referring to happiness, and people refer to the pleasure of one's company when psychological delight is indicated.

This three-fold confusion plagues all discussion of ends. I want to separate three elements: pleasure-pain as a physiological reaction bound up with nerves and the senses; happiness-unhappiness which is a psychological reaction associated with emotional states; and total well-being comprising economic well-being, physical and mental health, freedom, satisfactory social relationships and agreeable environment.

If it is not accepted that pleasure and happiness differ, a person is committed to the view that sadness or unhappiness is identical with actual pain.

If it is not accepted that well-being or good fortune differs from psychological happiness, one is committed to the view that people who are well-off are in a state of constant delight, and that people who are deprived or badly-off must be in a state of constant depression. Happiness and unhappiness have their source in physical and emotional states, but the relationship is causal rather than one of identity. And a person can be happy while very badly-off, and depressed while well-off.

Digressing, it is reasonable to suggest that the capacity for pain and pleasure developed in the course of biological evolution, confers an adaptive advantage on a species. Pleasure is generally associated with conditions advantageous for survival of the individual or the species, pain with conditions that are best avoided. This motivating function is in addition to providing warning of biological malfunction.

Pleasure and pain, however, are course indicators, tied entirely to the physical world. With the growth of intelligence and society, the capacity for happiness developed at a psychological level, allowing more flexible and subtle motivation independent of the physical world. Thus a capacity for happiness, and the linking of capacity would be reinforced by selection, since happiness to biologically favourable conditions, would confer advantages on that species.



Psychological happiness derives from three main sources. These are: creative activity or change of state, emotional relationships, and sense-usage or physiological pleasure.

People gain happiness from acting creatively and doing the things that they wish to do. More accurately, they gain it from purposive action and the change of state produced by activity. This may be a simple involvement such as housework (getting the lounge-room clean), wood-working or model-making, or it may be a sophisticated activity such as professional work, administration and organisation of a major project. The only condition is that the person see the activity as purposive, or the change of state as beneficial, and that they be emotionally or ego-involved in the activity.

Emotional relationships, whether intense love affairs, camaraderie and mateship, or the affection of the spinster for her cats, serve as a source of happiness. Happiness in giving affection, and happiness also in receiving affection. As a converse, isolation, loneliness and prolonged solitude will normally leave a person depressed and unhappy.

The third source of happiness lies in pleasure and the senses. A person derives happiness from seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting where the stimulæ are at all agreeable. Natural or artistic beauty, a mountain panorama, music, physical pleasure, warmth and a good meal are all elements detected through the senses, which will, in appropriate circumstances, give rise to happiness.

But in the case of happiness caused by pleasure, it is impossible to tell where pleasure leaves off and happiness begins. The two are inextricably combined in a person's awareness as well as being causally connected.

This division of the sources of happiness was developed empirically, mainly through observation and introspection. But it does represent a polar view of the world, in which those elements closest to a person serve as the most immediate source of happiness. In acting, a person is immediately and operatively related to the objects and conditions involved. He mixes his labour with them in one classical phrase, becoming ego involved with the project.

The second area represents those objects, people and places with which an emotional or affectionate relationship exists, but with which no manipulative or acting relationship applies. A libidinal relationship only exists. The third area represents those things, natural scenery, sounds, warmth, etc., with which only a sense or perceptual relationship exists.

An object clearly can, and often does provide happiness in any or all of these major areas, but the psychological happiness that results is always the same quality. Happiness has one nature, no matter where its source lies, and differs only in the intensity of feeling.

If the capacity for happiness developed through an evolutionary process, it is reasonable to suppose that the major sources of happiness—creative activity, affectionate relationships sense-usage confer biological or social advantage. This I believe is so. Further, it is suggested that human beings do have definite drives to activity, affection and sense-usage, and that this drive can generally be trusted. **Happiness hence is an indicator of how well people are in accord with their psychological needs.**

On this view, happiness can be tentatively defined as a psychological reaction to and awareness of well-being. As happiness is a psychological quantity, the degree of

happiness gained at any time will depend on a person's emotional state as well as external influences. So an event which produced considerable happiness when a person was depressed may later fail to produce any. Or an event which did not affect them when elated may later delight them.

A law of diminishing returns applies. If a person is intensely depressed, a small thing will make them happy. If already elated, then the greatest good fortune may not make them happier. One win of a lottery would delight a person; so would a second. But after a dozen wins the same event would bring no elation and failure to win would leave them depressed.

The mind resets its susceptibility to happiness, depending on its own condition. A long period of mild unhappiness may balance a short period of intense joy, as the mind becomes more sensitive to welcome stimulæ. A short period of intense happiness may be balanced by a brief depression. If a graph is drawn of a person's happiness, then over several months, the area below the zero of happiness will balance the area above it.

Moreover, where one interest forms a large part of a person's life, be it a job, a marriage, or even a car, the happiness bound up with that major item will tend to be balanced. The person constantly examines the state of that thing, feeling happy when it goes well and miserable when it goes badly.

Alternately, if one part of a person's life is manifestly unsatisfactory, the unhappiness caused by it will be compensated when it ceases to affect them and happiness comes by reaction.

Even if this conservation of happiness is not exact, it is so closely so that psychological happiness is invalidated as a goal in human life. Objects cannot be valued as good and bad on the basis of their contribution to happiness, since the same event will produce a different degree of happiness at different times, and ultimately the total of happiness will sum to zero in any person's life.

Further, happiness being psychological is associated with change of state rather than state. It is only on first coming to a breath-taking view or on re-establishing a friendship that happiness results. Unlike Lucy, a person cannot hope for only ups, ups, ups, in life.

The pursuit of well-being, of physical, mental and economic welfare is a possible alternative to happiness as a goal in life and the one the welfare state tacitly accepts. But welfare is subject to the same law of diminishing returns. Once a certain degree of prosperity and health is achieved, there is less point in pursuing them further.

Total well-being, or 'euness' to coin a general term, is a means to an end: the individual's capacity to cope and function to the maximum extent. Once it is achieved the individuals must decide to what end to use their wealth, health and general capacity. The welfare state can only set up conditions under which the individual has the greatest capacity to act. Unlike the totalitarian state, it cannot or should not legislate ends.

Beyond maximising a person's potential, welfare has no content. An individual may use wealth, skill and knowledge for good ends, or for very destructive and evil ends, and there appears no rational criteria for judgment. One

(Continued on back page)



## TOWARDS JOURNEYS END

R. Reader

"ASPECTS of Overpopulation—Overcrowding" (FREETHINKER, December 12, 1958) outlined the appalling housing conditions in a certain 'advanced' European country, and the insane policy of that country in stimulating its birth-rate.

"Aspects of Overpopulation—Juvenile Crime" (FREETHINKER, December 19, 1958) pointed to juvenile crime as a natural consequence of overpopulation and predicted that 'ten years hence (i.e. in 1968) the users of flick-knife and iron bar will be in the dominant age group . . . and many of the present middle-aged, or ageing, forces of harsh deterrence will have disappeared. What is going to happen then?'

Also in that article: ". . . when the much-vaunted 1946-47 birth-rate 'bulge' reaches late teen-age, it could constitute, not an abundance of young arms to defend the country, but a sinister and growing menace to all who are no longer capable of defending themselves by force.'

Those 'ten years hence' have now passed. It is 1968, and the student mobs everywhere, not only in the 'advanced' country, but in every continent, have shown themselves to be something more than a 'sinister and growing menace'. They have used violence to force governments to make all kinds of concessions and compromises. But, for reasons outlined in "The Vital Square" (FREETHINKER, May 13, 1960) no government on earth will be able to make good its promises to the swarming young. Inevitably the momentarily-placated hordes will find themselves, not better, but worse off than before. Eventually, the real nature of their appalling plight will become known to them. They will realise that there is no way out, even with violence. They are in too-great numbers, having been unwarrantably born (*loc. cit.*, December 19, 1958). *What is going to happen then?*

What is going to happen? All civilisation is going to knock itself to pieces. Social nucleation will break down until the enraged mobs, those ripe fruits of religious neurosis, the infamous 'increase and multiply', for whom no hope exists, liquidate one another and 'those who cannot defend themselves by force'.

And herein lies the explanation of the recent official pronouncements of religious neurosis on birth-control. The greatest threat to religious neurosis has always been the slow, but persistent, advance of material knowledge, before which it has been forced to retreat, step by step, throughout history. And this latest threat—that of *effective* birth-control—is the most dangerous of all. For reasons outlined in "Beyond Malthus" (FREETHINKER, May 25, 1956) rational birth-control will result in the rapid disappearance of most of the stresses on which religious neurosis builds its foundations.

On the other hand, the contrary policy, *aggravation of already-existing overpopulation*, will result in the complete collapse of the material foundations on which all civilisation rests. Mankind will revert to medieval conditions and the coast will again be clear for waddling mystics, degenerates and sadists to dominate mankind in order to appease their own neurotic fear of death ("Neurotic Aspects of Organised Religion"—FREETHINKER, August 6, 1954).

Faced by these two alternatives, and also by the present extremely dangerous state of the mobs, religious neurosis decided to *put out a feeler*—to make a pronouncement, and

yet to make no definite pronouncement, risking the criticism of those of its dupes who have not yet quite lost all touch with reality, in order to gauge the strength of the opposition.

That opposition has been fairly vigorous, but there can be no doubt that the official attitude will remain unchanged. To admit the right of every human being to be master of his or her own body is the first step to humanity controlling its own destiny also. Eventually would come control of *quality* instead of quantity; shams, pretences and humbug would be out, and with them, all religious neurosis.

Unfortunately for religious neurosis, the alternative (aggravation of overpopulation) will bring it face to face with an opponent immeasurably more powerful even than birth-control, namely, biological imperatives of the earth's space-time framework. All previous species have disappeared by swarming, struggling vainly to hit on survival conditions and all the indications are that our end will be just the same. The atomic bomb is the obvious threat, but it need not necessarily be that. Humanity may return to medievalism, yes, but it will be a medievalism of swarming millions which, with the deterioration in social services, hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, increased contacts with modern transport, and the already-observable changes in world climate, will be vulnerable to diseases and epidemics of all kinds, the ravages of which will far exceed those of any war.

The dupes of religious neurosis would do well to ponder this situation. Religious neurosis, expressing itself in the demented pursuance of quantitative expansion—particularly expansion of human numbers—has now brought all mankind to the verge of extinction. Religious neurosis cannot retreat; to do so would be to commit suicide. Nor, in spite of its present manoeuvrings, can it persist in its present policy. To do so will produce the complete annihilation of all mankind, including religious neurosis itself, through biological developments. Religious neurosis is hesitant. Is it any wonder?

Perhaps the dupes hold, in their own hands, the way out of this impasse. The pretensions of religious neurosis are, in essence, only an impudent bluff, dependant on the acquiescence of its dupes. The latter may, in fact, ask themselves the question contained in "Smog, Drought, and Religious Neurosis" (FREETHINKER, January 27, 1956): Neurotic delirium, seeking safety, consolation and immunity from death in more of everything—especially young life—works out to its final conclusion—the descent of Man to a level below a beast, terminating in a pile of stinking radio-active corpses. If some lingering doubt assails you, and it assails many who have listened to the pronouncements of religious neurosis, would it not be better to avoid the whole thing by freethinking now?

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## LETTERS AT LENGTH

### Some Recent Correspondence

#### Sexual Morality

I WISH to comment (at some length, I fear) on the article "Sexual Morals—A Personal View" by Kensit and Buchanan (August 9).

I am sure many of your readers shared my hilarity at the straight-faced statement that 'to get pregnant' is 'a subsidiary purpose' of copulation, and that 'its purpose is physical enjoyment'. I do not believe that this can be regarded as less irrational than a recent widely-publicised remark that any non-reproductive sexual practice is to be condemned. To acknowledge the biological purpose (the only 'purpose') of sex is not to preclude its use as a non-reproductive source of pleasure. Nor does it invalidate the writers' eminently sensible comments on family planning, sex education, etc.

On the other hand, their comments on sexual jealousy may be rational, but they are certainly not very realistic. Whether or not it is rationally justified, sexual jealousy is a normal human emotion. To ignore it is as pointless and dangerous as for the pruders to deny the force of the sexual urge itself (which is also quite non-rational).

I should like to know on what grounds the writers conclude, in effect, that teenage promiscuity is to be encouraged. Even assuming 100 per cent contraception, which is highly unlikely in this age group (with or without adult guidance, for different reasons!), such a practice would create ideal conditions for the spread of venereal diseases, which cannot all be regarded as lightly as the common cold or measles, and against which no vaccines are available (to the best of my knowledge). The article ignores VD completely, yet it is highly relevant to sexual morals (is it not immoral to promote the spread of a disease?).

Finally, no overall view of sexual morals should ignore (as these do) perversions, minor, such as heterosexual buggery, or major, such as homosexuality, sado-masochism, etc. Are these to be regarded as acceptable personal idiosyncrasies, of concern only to the participants, or as forms of illness requiring treatment? Both of these views have much to recommend them.

I hope that the above points will be of help in revising the article, so that it may come to express a true reflection of humanist opinion, when published as a pamphlet. GEORGE D. RODGER.

THE 'personal view' (August 9) strikes me as irrationally one-sided. The only mention of sexual jealousy is to say that it should always be repressed. The writers call it socially harmful, but this is incompatible with their 'aim of morality'—with which I broadly agree; to offend and to repress sexual jealousy is to cause unhappiness.

There are many and strong conflicts in human attitudes to sex. Only if all views were at one with the writers' would this Utopia be effective. The result of such *laissez faire* can only be guessed. My guess is that, as a result of jealousy and other aspects of personality, the results would involve regrettable pain. On the other hand, Christian sexual morality has been proved at fault.

#### Flexibility

It would be naive to suppose that all attitudes differing from the writers' are due to residual effects of indoctrination. Personality defects may contribute as much to an urge for sexual freedom as restraint.

I suspect there is something to be gained in emotional security and stability from monogamic association for a substantial part of the population. May I suggest the flexibility of marriage contracts, as regards the duration and obligations, with special regard for the welfare and emotional security of children. Couples could then construct the contract to suit them.

#### Responsibility

Sex is not a purely physical pleasure. For example, to some women the emotional attitude immediately after the physical sensation subsides is very important. A sexual responsibility to the partner should be recognised. An atmosphere of complete freedom is not conducive to this.

#### Reservation

There may be many people more happy to be highly selective about sex and to reserve intercourse for only very strong relationships. An atmosphere of respect for reservation would suit them. Scornful disrespect is suggested by the article discussed.

#### Privacy

The sex act in public may well affront many as a matter of purely personal taste. Discretion is a matter of responsibility to others. Strongly emotive scenes, uncalled for by the viewer, are an undesirable distraction (except for humanitarian motives, such as on Oxfam posters). It is rather like blaring transistor radios.

My second suggestion is for the promotion of an atmosphere of respect for responsibility, reservation and privacy, including mild legal restrictions if popularly desired. My third suggestion is the emphasis that views on these topics are personal opinions with no special demands on humanism other than that humanism should favour greater all round happiness. Fourthly, sexual freedom is a line likely to lose us support and such things as religious indoctrination in schools should come first in our attention.

M. J. O'CARROLL.

#### General comments

I HAVE been a reader of the FREETHINKER for over sixty years, while my father had taken it since the earliest days of Foote—perhaps from the first issue. I have a fairly complete library of freethought works from Paine to Tribe. From these few words you will see I have been a very interested reader in the past.

However, two things have speeded my decision to finish at long last with the paper: the recent leader by Karl Hyde (July 19) sneering and denigrating Chapman Cohen, and the article 'Sexual Morals—A Personal View' (August 9). Perhaps I should add my objection to the propaganda given to Jean Straker's nudist gallery. I really find article after article on the rights and wrongs of revealing pubic hair a fearful bore and a waste of space which might well be better utilised.

Year after year I have hoped the paper might recover from its collapse following Cohen's decease, but it has not; it has just been 'freethinker' in name.

The tagging on of the wretched "Humanist World Weekly" has assisted the work of destruction. What are these 'Humanists' who have snaffled the FREETHINKER? From their effusions they appear to me to be solely interested in sex: normal and morbid. Their minds seem never free of every species of delinquency: abortion, homosexuality, and justifying the publication of dirty books of no literary merit.

Foote and Cohen were both men of wide culture with a profound understanding of Man and his nature. If the present organisers of the paper have the wit or ingenuity to do it, let them take a volume of the paper of Foote's and Cohen's day and fairly compare it with this contemptible set-up today.

With the publication of Tribe's *100 Years of Freethought*, I had hopes that a favourable reaction had set in. This book is worthy of the old tradition. On the face of it, however, Tribe is the only person left with any real capacity or competency in the group. He cannot outlast the squabbling cabal who are obviously mad with envy at Tribe's outstanding ability. He cannot last!

Returning to the elaborate and persistent Straker-nudist-pubic-hair essaying—whatever would Foote and Cohen have thought of it? I knew Cohen personally for 30 years, and the Straker stuff—pictures and all—would have been for the w.p.b. without more ado.

Nudism, of course, has its place in art; no artist ever represented the pubic hair of his duchess-whore more faithfully than Goya. Titian made a very good job of his Renaissance courtesans. Impressionists, of course, utilised the whores and brothels of Paris for their pubic-hair display. Naturally, one falls into the usage of today calling them 'model young women' who so boldly display their pubic-hair as models.

I enjoy a witty and bawdy story as much as any of you, but this dreary muck which we are being subjected to day, in the FREETHINKER, is too much. Please have a little respect for the memory of two great men, Foote and Cohen, and eliminate the name 'Freethinker' henceforth from the paper.

ROBERT J. TURNER.

[Editorial alterations to the above letters has been reduced to absolute minimum.—Ed.]



## REVIEW

Richard Clements

### ESSAYS OF A RATIONALIST

SCIENCE AND LIFE: *Essays of a Rationalist* by J. B. S. Haldane.  
The Humanist Library, 15/-.

J. B. S. HALDANE was a richly endowed human being. In childhood and youth he enjoyed all the advantages of life in an aristocracy of learning. He had received at Eton and Oxford a classical education. This gave him a background of security, leisure and culture which shaped and coloured his mind and work. In whatever task he undertook he brought to bear the spirit of a great Humanist.

It was a good idea to republish in book form the exciting essays which, at intervals between 1929 and 1965, Haldane wrote for *The Rationalist Annual*. Here and there a sentence, marking the passage of time, is redolent of the past and battles long ago. But, on the whole, it is fair to say time has not staled the pungency, common sense and wit of these writings.

Written in a stormy and tragic period of modern history, when not only the fate of individuals but also that of whole nations hung in the balance, and discussing vital problems in society, science, religion and politics, they were read and debated with eager interest on their first appearance. It says much for the germinal character of Haldane's ideas that today they are still as pertinent as ever.

Thirty years have passed since I first heard Haldane lecture on science and philosophy. He came to the Midlands on that occasion to deliver the Muirhead memorial lectures in the University of Birmingham. His reputation as a writer and lecturer had drawn a crowded audience in one of the largest lecture halls in Mason College. And there, before a critically-minded audience, week by week during the months of January and February 1938, he unfolded his views on *The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences*. It is evidence of his sincerity and courage that he undertook such an enterprise. He carried it through brilliantly. His book which brought together that course of lectures is still worth reading.

What was the secret of his success as a popularizer of scientific ideas? Part of his power over the minds of his hearers and readers sprang from his transparent honesty, modesty, common sense and courage. There was no pretence of the pedant about him. Another of his advantages was the originality of his thinking and treatment of whatever subject he dealt with. This was perhaps due to the fact that Haldane never received a specifically scientific education. He was thus enabled to avoid the jargon and other pitfalls which so often beset the specialist. Further, he had in mind other aims than the prizes of an academic career: he wished to educate the masses in science.

"He became", to quote the words of Joseph Needham, "one of the leading scientists in the whole of the country on genetics, especially in its biochemical aspects, and from there again he gradually moved on to the role of inheritance in the evolutionary process, and he became one of the leading experts on the genetics of the evolutionary process". The prevailing opinion amongst scientists seems to be that Haldane's name will be remembered on account of his scientific labour in the field of mathematical genetics.

The sub-title given to this book stresses the value of his work as an advocate of rationalism. His plan seems to have been to select as subject an idea, a personal experience, or some controversy, and then to discuss it in his own inimitable, provocative and witty manner. His humour is sardonic. And he cannot resist some leg-pulling. Professor J. Maynard Smith had these facts in mind when he wrote in his introduction that "the most important thing about Haldane's essays . . . is that they are enormous fun to read".

One of the most important essays in this collection (it is perhaps the best known of his articles) is about *The Origin of Life*. Rationalists who are able to recall the interest in this subject aroused by the publication of Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, will read this essay with much interest. For it will enable them to measure the progress which has since been made in this whole field. Haldane's powers as an expositor of a scientific theme are seen at their best in this little masterpiece.

Other essays which should be read by freethinkers are, *The Laws of Nature*, *The Limitations of Rationalism*, *A Passage to India*, *Some Lies about Science*, and *On Being Finite*. Indeed, my hope is that the samples I have mentioned will induce readers of the FREETHINKER to buy this book and read all the twenty-one essays. There is not a dull page in this volume.

## Letters to the Editor

**NOTE: Letters exceeding 200 words may be cut, abbreviated, digested or rewritten.**

### Correction

IN OUR recent article on sexual morals (August 9) the word 'legal' has been put in place of 'illegal', so that the sentence in question makes no sense. The sentence should read: ". . . abortion, even when illegal, is in almost every case medically safer than childbirth . . .". Possibly your printer found this incredible and supposed our manuscript at fault; well, the facts surprised us too when we investigated the matter.

RUTH BUCHANAN and CONNAIRE KENSIT.

### Agreed!

I AGREE with everything Connaire Kensit and Ruth Buchanan say in their article 'Sexual Morality: A Personal View' (August 9) and hope it will be taken as the Humanist policy at the 1969 Conference.

LILIAN MIDDLETON.

## HAPPINESS AND HUMAN ENDS

(Continued from page 269)

either accepts the *a priori* dogmas of Christianity, Communism, Nationalism or the Press, or falls back on an intuitive Rousseau-like subjectivism.

**The West's failure to develop a philosophy or world view of ends has been monumental.**

It has allowed the growth of scientific and technical knowledge which men have not the skill or understanding to use for good. It has produced a material-object-cum-merchandising mentality, encouraging individuals to spend their lives acquiring property, houses, cars, furniture, TV sets, china-animals-on-the-mantelpiece and plaster-gnomes-on-the-front-lawn. It has resulted in a power philosophy, impelling individuals to a lifetime spent limbing political and economic organisations, acquiring status and domination over the lives of others.

By reaction, among the less able and the less willing, it has produced the bingo-horse-racing-TV-watching mentality that finds release in trivia and the beat mentality that simply contracts out.

There is an emptiness and aridity in much of western civilisation which is not due to the failure of religion. It is due to the failure of ideas, of reason, and of individuals to think out a philosophy of purpose and direction. Humanism, alone of present ideologies, could develop an empirically based, open minded philosophy of ends. To date it has failed to do so. (The Australian Humanist)

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