

Freethinker

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A MODERN PARABLE

THE boy had been brought up very strictly by his father. His mother had died at the time of his birth. He was never allowed out, without first explaining where he was going and getting his father's approval. The books he read, the films he saw, the friends he associated with—all these had to be approved. He could never get away with anything, because his father searched his room from time to time. He had six grown-up brothers, one of whom was a half-brother. Four of them were merely echoes of his father. The other two were more jovial and kind. The boy looked forward to their visits, though they obviously angered his father.

Slowly, as he grew older he began to realise that there were people who did not have to live in submission to a tyrant like his father. There were happier people who said what they liked and read what they liked.

The boy began to wonder what would happen if he ran away from his father. One of his brothers had done this, but his father had brought him back, bruised and bleeding. Demoralised and weak the young man had passively accepted his role as a reflection of his father. In spite of this, the boy soon found the overbearing domination of his father intolerable and made up his mind to go. Of course, as soon as his footsteps were heard on the stairs, his father came and asked where he was going. He told him straight out that he was leaving because he wanted to be more free. It was a word that sounded strange on his lips. Even then he did not fully appreciate its meaning. He added that he wanted to remain friendly with his father, because he appreciated his way of life, but he just thought he could practice it better in his own way.

His father stood, glared but did nothing to stop him. The boy, a little surprised, walked out the door. He set up his own home and found life more satisfying in every way. His two kind brothers sent their good wishes and encouraged him. Then he had a message from his father, 'Why don't we meet and discuss this, I'm sure we can come to a better arrangement'. Obviously father was embarrassed by what the neighbours, whom he despised, must be thinking. The boy met his father, but his obvious determination and enthusiasm for his new life was so great, that father could not convince him that to appear friendly, at least in the eyes of the neighbours, was a necessity.

The boy left the meeting still free. It looked as though the force of his desire to improve on his father's ways of life had won through. However, amid the congratulations of his kind brothers and indeed many of the neighbours, who respected the boy for what was really an act of great bravery, without warning his father walked in followed by his four brain-washed brothers, 'Are you coming home, or am I going to have to carry you'.

The boy looked at his once rebellious brother, a sorry caricature of a man, with no will of his own. Resistance had made him like this. Better to save the energy and retain his morale. There was a faint hope that father would weaken when confronted by such a passionate yearning for freedom.

Wearily he went home and wept. His kind brothers wept, and the neighbours wept because they could not help him.

Credit where Credit is due

IT MUST BE seldom or never that a FREETHINKER editor has had any reason, or indeed dared, to say anything nice about that pillar of the opposition *The Catholic Herald*. However, Desmond Albrow, the editor, is to be applauded for his good sense in both publishing criticism of Pope Paul's untenable encyclical, and in seeing as part of his editorial duties the need to present both sides of an argument.

In his issue of August 23rd he printed a report describing the reaction to the liberal line he has taken on this matter. It finished with the paragraph: "One of the saddest letters to the editor was from a young girl. 'Please do not publish my name and address or my mother will do me', she said, and continued: 'Please excuse bad typing. I had



to do it in bed while the rest of the family was asleep'." As an editor (of short-standing admittedly) I find it hard not to express respect for his disregard of bigotry in printing what amounts to a serious indictment of his own religion.

He has, not surprisingly, received a lot of criticism, particularly from certain Catholic clergy, in the forefront of whom seem to be the brothers Edward and Basil Harriott, from Newcastle and South Shields. They have taken it upon themselves to censor the reading material of their congregations, by prohibiting the sale of the *Catholic Herald* in their churches. Edward Harriott typifies the unthinking near-sightedness of these traditionalist sheep. "The Pope is the head of the church and his word is final."

This is a deplorable and depressing attitude—especially now that it is related to an issue, so foreboding as the prohibition of artificial forms of contraception in the face of the population explosion.

Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8, Sunday, 8th September, 7 p.m.: 'Do we need an intelligent elite', talk by VICTOR SEREBRIAKOFF (Founder of Mensa).

Humanist Teachers' Association, Friends' Meeting House, Euston Road, London, NW1, Saturday, September 14th, 3 p.m.: 'RI in the Primary School—What Alternative?' JUNE SMITH.

Trade Union, Labour Co-operative—Democratic History Society, Central Garage Hall, Leeds, September 14th-20th: Exhibition to mark the 100th anniversary of the TUC.

THANKS HOPES AND INTENTIONS

AS THE NEW EDITOR of this paper I would first like to make public my gratitude to Karl Hyde, for his valuable help in acquainting me with the job in hand and for his appeal, on my behalf, for your support both as readers and contributors. May I, both thank those who have already got in touch with me (your letters will be answered just as soon as possible), and endorse Karl Hyde's appeal. The FREETHINKER badly needs both written contributions and subscribers. Anything you can do to increase the number of either will be most welcome.

You will have noticed that certain changes, and, I hope, improvements, have been made. While not forgetting our common aim of promoting secular humanism I hope to be able to cover a wider range of subjects, and especially to put more accent on current affairs and social topics. The Arts are something, which would play a large part in a totally secular society, and thus I propose to give more space to them, with reviews of films, theatre and occasionally art exhibitions. I also aim to increase the number of books reviewed in these columns. Photographs will be included when it is possible, though the price of copyright will curtail their frequency. Kieran Daly, an Australian artist and professional cartoonist, has kindly agreed to contribute cartoons when he can.

I very much hope these ideas will be generally popular. I look forward to your reactions.

THE NSS ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

THE ANNUAL REPORT of the NSS, which is published this week is split into two main parts; 'Towards Human Rights', and 'Review of the Year'. The first is a careful and concise analysis of the world situation from a Secularist standpoint. It begins by pointing out the part played by religion in initiating and perpetuating many of the armed struggles, which are rife in the world at the present time. Most notably, Pope Paul could bring pressure to bear on the Roman Catholic minority, who rule South Viet-Nam and who were originally encouraged by Pope Pius XII and Cardinal Spellman. Less obvious an example of religion

as a cause of conflict than that of the Indians and the Pakistanis, is the bloody strife between the Nigerian Muslim Hausas and the predominantly Christian Ibos. Amongst other examples the Report makes the interesting statement that 'Vatican intrigues' operating through certain right-wing parties are 'prominent behind the scenes in the turmoil in France, Italy and the Federal German Republic'. It is further explained that though the church's adherents are dwindling its political power is being maintained as much 'reverent agnostics' as by the hard core who remain devout.

Christian unity is coming very slowly, though it is predicted that with it will come a number of splinter groups. Modernism and the view of Christianity as neo-Humanism are both losing support. The recent trend in senior university common rooms and through the mass media to boost religion as a vessel of 'freedom and humanity' rather than 'subjection and credalism', is not to be taken too seriously since the man in the street is slow to appreciate such arguments. The indulgence of ordinary people in spontaneous 'crypto-blasphemy' tends to indicate an unwillingness to remain subservient to 'arrogant minorities'.

The Report goes on to delineate the progress made during the year in terms of new laws passed in Parliament. The National Health Service (Family Planning) Act, the Sexual Offences Act, and the Abortion Act are all testimonies to the work of Secularists and others. The realism contained in the report is exemplified by its regret for the way in which, despite the new Abortion Act, the sectarian minority will continue to fight by trying to make pious doctors aware of their religious obligations in this matter.

This section of the Report is concluded by the confession that little concrete progress has been made in the campaigns for secular broadcasting and education, though there is definitely more sympathy with the latter as a result of the year's efforts.

The second part of the Report, entitled 'Review of the Year' is a straightforward record of the many activities of the NSS during the past twelve months. Four public forums were held, all of which were well attended. Notable speakers at these were: Leo Abse, MP; Brigid Brophy; John Calder; Professor Hyman Levy; Professor O. R. MacGregor; Norman St John Stevas; Baroness Stocks; Baroness Summerskill; Peter Watkins and of course the President of the NSS, David Tribe.

A number of leaflets on the question of RI have been produced and distributed, perhaps the most effective being Maurice Hill's *RI and Surveys*. This is an analysis of the numerous surveys of this question conducted amongst parents and teachers.

Three working parties were organised on: 'Social Security', 'The Rights of Children', and 'The Right to Die'. These last two were set up as a contribution to Human Rights Year and their statements issued in leaflet form.

Possibly the most important long-term achievement was the setting up, in conjunction with the BHA of the Humanist Parliamentary Group. This is something that could have been reported more fully, though its very existence is a landmark in secular progress.

As a conclusion what more appropriate than the conclusion of the report itself: 'The NSS has been in existence for over a century and is recognised as an important and responsible section of the movement in Britain. While pursuing our own independent role we shall continue to work and campaign with other organisations and individuals. Every member can help in some way to build and strengthen the Society, and we look forward to another year of continuing loyal support'.

REMEMBERING PERSONALLY

KIT MOUAT

WITHOUT EVER HAVING set out deliberately to live an eventful life I have much enjoyed doing so, and perhaps the eight months I spent as the first woman editor of this paper were some of the most interesting. As a result I am busy 'remembering' and visualising the problems as well as the opportunities which our new editor will be facing.

One of the biggest of the problems is, I think, the fact that the FREETHINKER does not (and cannot afford to) pay its contributors. Although I was very fortunate in taking over a most welcome pile of MSS from David Tribe, not everyone is so lucky. Rarely does any FREETHINKER editor have enough material in hand to allow him to look ahead without anxiety for more than a few weeks at a time, and when he does he may be bombarded by letters asking why this or that article has not yet appeared! The editor's duty is of course to publish material which he believes sustains his own policy and helps to create the sort of paper the readers want and tradition to some extent demands. Having begged for help it is not easy to say that you don't like what has been given. All writers are notoriously sensitive about their offspring, but it is perhaps especially tempting for the Rationalist writer to assume that a rejection slip from the FREETHINKER is the sort of censorship so often practised by editors of anti-Freethinking periodicals. To suggest this is unjust, however. All this means that our contributors have to be the sort of people who are not only willing to give up their time and use their skills in order to help us all, but who must also have the humility to accept that, having produced material on request, it may still not necessarily be acceptable. In my experience most of our contributors are just those sort of people. The few, the very few, who persuade themselves that only the editor is at fault are a menace and not worth bothering about.

G. W. Foote, the founder and first editor of the FREETHINKER, wrote in his first issue of May 1881 that the purpose of the paper was "to wage relentless war on superstition in general, and against Christian superstition in particular . . ."; and he added, "any competent Christian will be allowed reasonable space in which to contest our views . . .". Again, in my experience, this admirable sentiment has been adhered to. There is a point worth mentioning, perhaps; it is surely not a sign of 'toleration', or even 'freethought', to introduce opposition points of view from irresponsible spokesmen. To do so will damage our opponents only in the eyes of the ignorant; anyone else will recognise it as cheating. We cannot defeat Christianity by implying, assuming or pretending to ourselves that all Christians are fundamentalists, and to do so is dishonest.

Together with the applause and encouragement, the editor of course receives grouses, orders to do this or that 'or else', as well as some downright abuse. Thick skin and sensitivity are not often found together, although they can and must be developed for anyone trying to edit a paper up to his own standard without being influenced by threats! A correspondent may (did) begin 'The purpose of this letter is to show you how shallow, callous, hypocritical you humanists are . . .' and then expect his equally abusive article to be accepted, and of course, published *at once!* An editor may be told that her (or his) predecessor is 'an imposter, liar and hypocrite', and all Humanist VIPs 'ignorant buggers . . .' In my view such a writer cannot be said to represent anyone but his own warped outlook, and to respond to threats (yes, even obliquely of violence) by trying pacification by publication is plainly doing no good

to anyone. We can be sorry for such people, and wish that they were better cared for in our society, but it is no duty (in my view) of any periodical to treat such material differently from any other, which must stand or fall by its relevance, responsibility, accuracy, readability and topicality.

Mind you, all the editors before Mr Hyde must to some extent envy him and David Reynolds for the fact that this editorship is now a full-time and paid job. We previous editors all had to fit the same (perhaps even more) work into the moments left from doing our primary duties and bread-and-butter jobs and cope on an expenses allowance. It is not just a question of the weekly editorial (adopted by some of us more as an insurance against a shortage of material than as a desire to inflict our personalities on these pages), it is the daily reading of the press, from *Morning Star* and *Catholic Herald* to *Guardian* and *Mirror* seven days a week in order to extract what concerns the Movement most, the constant proof reading, the keeping in touch with possible contributors and trying to provide a rather more human image than most editorial offices, just because we are Humanists. It is trying to plan for the future while always being crowded in by the present and the publication date. It is trying to read the illegible, check possibly inaccurate facts, and see how the balance can be kept between theoretical atheistic-Rationalist-Secular-Humanism and the reporting of how Humanism is being put into practice.

FREETHINKER editors are fortunate in having behind them the ever-ready help of Bill McIlroy, General Secretary of the NSS. The paper inevitably makes demands on his already over-burdened time and patience, and in my own experience he never fails to help when help is required. Yet neither he nor David Tribe, as President of the National Secular Society, ever interfere with the editor's freedom. The fact that the NSS has received a full share of criticism as well as praise in these pages surely refutes any suspicions that it is anything but generous, and goodness knows few enough people realise just how much is done and how much nervous energy is spent by those who work for the Movement in high (but lowly paid if paid at all) places! No. 103 Borough High Street serves Humanism and Freethinkers seven hectic days a week, and I for one am glad to be able to say again how grateful I am both to the NSS and to this paper.

It is of course only as a reader that I look ahead. And even then David Reynolds having taken note, must ignore anything he feels will betray his own plans for the paper. That is as it should be. Let me just say, however, what I "personally hoping" look for in a Humanist journal: I want a paper that will confirm for me the facts and truths of atheistic-Rationalism on which I base my Secular-Humanist way of life and attitude of mind. I like to be reminded sometimes, in this biased, Christianity-saturated society, that down the ages men and women who have shared my own beliefs and rejections have lived usefully and happily and done much to make this world rather less miserable for some people. I am glad to be kept in touch with the latest Christian apologia, so that I can check on my own arguments against it. This is an age of fearful fence-sitters; of men who worship the Christian God of expediency, who complain about the misinterpretation of God's law when it affects their immediate well-being but

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HOMES FOR UNMARRIED MOTHERS

MARGARET McILROY

IN HER BOOK *Mother and Baby Homes* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 30/-) Jill Nicholson provides valuable information on a subject about which too little is generally known. She has investigated a representative sample of homes in the North and South of England, about half belonging to the Church of England, a quarter to other religious denominations, and a quarter to local authorities. In most of them unmarried mothers stay for about six weeks before and six weeks after the birth of their babies, at the end of which time most of the babies are placed for adoption.

Despite the devoted work of many of the matrons, the overall picture is disturbing, for while the best of the Homes provide greatly appreciated shelter and kindness for girls in difficulties, a number of serious defects in the service reflect the intolerant attitude of society towards the unmarried mother, and the lack of understanding of her problems.

Miss Nicholson found the voluntary homes were all short of staff, and most of the matrons were grossly overworked. This was particularly serious, since the main determinant of the quality of a Home seems to be the quality of the Matron, and the better matrons could help girls much more, if they had the time. Moreover, overworked staff sometimes tried to lighten their own burdens by regimenting the girls.

The amount of freedom varies widely, and depends primarily on the matron. Some homes are hedged about with unnecessary restrictions, some of which must be vexatious in the extreme. In other homes rules are kept to the bare minimum necessary for communal living.

One of the most serious failings of the homes is the dearth of psychiatric help. Psychologists consider that an illegitimate pregnancy is frequently a symptom of fundamental personality problems, which if untreated can result in another pregnancy within a very short time. But even the sparse psychiatric services available to the homes were seldom used. Matrons usually had more faith in chaplains than in psychiatrists. Miss Nicholson was very struck by the amount of help and comfort the residents receive from each other. This community could well be used as a basis for group therapy.

A more surprising failure was in dental care—only one Home sent girls for a routine check-up, and in relaxation classes and preparation for childbirth. Some girls therefore go into labour ignorant and frightened. It is appalling that what should be routine for all expectant mothers should be neglected in *Mother and Baby Homes* of all places.

Another main defect is lack of sufficient assistance with the all-important decision on adoption. Whereas only 13.2 per cent of expectant mothers interviewed were planning to keep their babies, 22.5 per cent after delivery said that they were. The weight of the decision was, says Miss Nicholson, for ever on their minds. They were desperate to sort things out, but they had no one to talk to except someone who was just as worried. Social workers seldom had time to visit girls in the homes; matrons frequently refused to discuss the matter either because they were anxious not to influence the mother or because expectant mothers or newly delivered girls were likely to change their minds. Matrons are of course right not to influence the girls, but a mother needs information about what is involved in keeping her child, and she needs plenty of oppor-

tunity to talk to clarify her own thoughts. It is really unkind to brush away her expression of her feelings with the remark that she will probably change her mind. Moreover, in their zeal to protect girls from being influenced, some matrons try to isolate them from their parents, ignoring the fact that the practicality of a girl's keeping her baby usually depends on her parents' willingness to help her, so that restricting their opportunity to get to know their grandchild raises additional difficulties for the mother.

Nearly all the homes insisted on the mothers staying on for six weeks after the birth, caring for the babies themselves. The strain of this on girls whose baby is destined for adoption is immense, and Miss Nicholson considers that to inflict it on a reluctant girl is an unnecessary cruelty.

Miss Nicholson concludes that the service provided by *Mother and Baby Homes* is very necessary, but a number of improvements should be made. She suggests that homes should be of different types, perhaps ranging "through various forms of accommodation, from facilities with minimal support and supervision, to homes providing intensive case work and psychiatric care", so that a girl could be sent to the one which can best help her particular problem. At present the home to which a girl goes is usually determined by the accidents of religious denominations and locality.

In the present service as in so many spheres of public life religion is given a totally unrealistic emphasis. The fact that most of the homes were religious did not matter particularly to most of the residents. In two homes with a strongly evangelical emphasis rules were particularly restrictive, and in a few cases prayers were insufferably long, but most girls cheerfully accepted the unaccustomed religious observances as a part of the unnatural environment into which they had fallen. A small number found the religious atmosphere a comfort. The one valuable aspect of all this religion is the satisfaction it gives to some of the overburdened staff. One might fairly conclude that religion does not matter on balance. The good and the harm it does are pretty equally balanced.

However, the position is not quite so simple. The stress on religion seems to encourage neglect of more important matters. A girl's religion, however formal her actual connection with it—is the only one of her preferences or characteristics that is likely to be respected when she is allocated to a particular home. Classification by religion is about the least helpful of all possible ways of classifying pregnant girls. Psychiatrists, case workers and physiotherapists are in disastrously short supply, but the largely irrelevant services of chaplains are offered to the residents in superabundance. Religion has its value for some troubled people, but an end to this preoccupation with it would be of great benefit to the service.

The publication of *Mother and Baby Homes* will do much good; in fact some improvements have probably come about as a result of Miss Nicholson's research. "Two matrons admitted during the interviews that they unthinkingly operated certain rules and routines which on reflection were neither relevant nor necessary". Staff should benefit enormously from the insight this book gives into the feeling of their girls. It is essential reading for anyone who has even the remotest connection with the problems of unmarried mothers.

PHILOSOPHIAN PARANOIA

MICHAEL GRAY

POOR OLD J. J. Thompson—persecuted by that fiendish National Secular Society secret agent “Gray”, who is only restrained by the fear of the law from burning him at the stake! This is Mr Thompson’s carefully-considered conclusion in his article wittily titled “Gray Intolerance” (August 16) because I had dared to find fault with his Philosophian Church (see “Mr Thompson and His Un-Ethical Church”, August 2). Thompson originally stated that he put forward his theses for “scrutiny and debate”; he should have made it quite clear that he was only interested in favourable comment. It is truly remarkable how the very people who propose systems which will inevitably breed intolerance are the first to cry ‘persecution!’ if their views are challenged.

Mr Thompson’s first quibble is with my use of the word ‘absolute’ to describe his ethical system which, in his own words, “is capable of objective proof . . . and can be demonstrated, by strictly *a priori* proof, to be logically necessary”, although he certainly does not provide any such evidence to my satisfaction. After insisting that he cannot answer criticism until he knows which of four meanings is intended by ‘absolute’ he goes on to admit that all four are applicable to his system which he claims “is opposed to Subjectivism” and “applicable to all acts of all persons in all times and places”. The dangers of such a system can easily be seen by a study of the history of the Catholic Church, which claims exactly the same qualities for its “moral law”. I illustrated my point in my original article by a brief summary of the atrocious history of the Church *not* to contend that intolerance was the result of the ‘mistaken’ application of the Social-Survival principle, but on the contrary my contention was that such intolerance is the *inevitable* consequence of the application of such an authoritarian principle.

I never disputed that the Social-Survival principle *has* been the basis of morality in the past but that it *should* be considered a just moral code for the future, as I made quite clear. There is no doubt that the principle would form the ideal foundation for a moral code—in a perfect society. However, since the perfect society can never exist, I think we should concern ourselves more with protecting the rights of the individual within the imperfect one that does. There are many widely divergent ideas on what would constitute the ideal society, and consequently there could never in reality (whatever the theory) be agreement on which actions were most beneficial to society and which most destructive. Who is to decide—Mr Thompson, perhaps? He patronisingly informs us that “whenever anyone conceives himself to be acting morally, he is acting for the survival of *what he conceives to be* his society” (my italics). Is this not then an admission of what the ‘Reverend’ Thompson so vehemently denies, that the principle is subjective since every individual conceives the preservation of society in a different way?

Nowhere in my article did I ever claim to be writing for the survival of the National Secular Society, as Mr Thompson asserts. I do support the NSS because its aims and policies largely coincide with my own, and are much more likely to bring about improvement in the welfare of mankind than the adoption of any arbitrary authoritarian principles. However, the ‘Reverend’ Thompson should appreciate what has been acknowledged many times in the past, that if and when the principles of the NSS have been

achieved universally there will be no further need for its existence. Indirectly then, we are fighting to bring about its extinction not its survival. Like Mr Thompson I too am concerned with the larger society of the human race, which is why I gave my opinion that the adoption of his ideas would be a threat “not only to Humanism but to all human beings”.

I find it exceedingly hard to credit Mr Thompson’s modest claim that nobody can explain what “it is that makes the difference between right and wrong” until he explains his Social-Survival theory to them. A far better criterion of the morality of any action is whether anybody is harmed or helped by that action, not whether it will assist society to survive. Mr Thompson seems much too concerned with the preservation of his Great Impersonal Society to bother about the welfare and happiness of the individuals of which it consists. I hope I may be forgiven also for being a little sceptical of his boast that “everyone so far who has heard (his) theory has agreed with it; no one has ever refuted it”. Obviously I don’t count.

Mr Thompson requests that I delineate the sex standards I recommend for society. I do not claim the right to dictate to anybody what their sexual conduct should be. Any relationship that exists between two people, be it hetero- or homosexual, whether they are legally married or not, is entirely their own affair. The attitude of any Church is irrelevant and the State has the right to interfere *only* when there are children born. It is sufficient protection for the child that births continue to be registered as at present and both parents identified so that they might not escape their responsibilities. It is intolerable that “prospective sexual unions be publicly declared and recorded” as Mr Thompson demands. With this one provision to protect children, any “clandestine fornication” (to use Mr Thompson’s cleverly-loaded terminology) which exists is none of his business nor anybody’s else’s. Nor would I agree with him that ‘adulterous’ relationships are necessarily wrong. Would the ‘Reverend’ Thompson have imposed on us the ridiculous ‘moral laws’ of the USA where in 48 of the 50 states any sexual relationship outside of marriage is illegal; where in many of the smaller towns people are encouraged to spy on their neighbours and report any suspected ‘sexual offences’? In these towns single people dare not even risk being alone with a person of the opposite sex. A charge of ‘fornication’ can mean six months in prison; ‘adultery’ can mean as much as three years.

One point I can agree with Mr Thompson on, that there is no profit in Freethinkers fighting amongst themselves. But he must excuse me if I am a little sceptical of his right to that title when he advocates an absolute system of ethics which is the antithesis of all the principles of Freethought. I have not closed my mind to new ideas, as he charges. As a Freethinker, starting with an open mind, I have waded through all his articles with great patience; I have found his ideas wanting in many respects and positively dangerous in others. I have therefore rejected them and used my legitimate (though somewhat limited) right of freedom of speech and expression in the hope of dissuading others from supporting his Church. This is not my idea of persecution. Or would Mr Thompson seek to deny me this right?

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RACIALISM IN BRITAIN

G. L. SIMONS

"... Tilbury Docks boasts two kinds of little boxes: one lot marked 'European toilet', the other with Urdu on the door." (Guardian, 11/7/68.)

RECENT EVENTS have revealed powerful undercurrents of racial prejudice in British society. Today a significant coloured population and a variety of social problems that have not been adequately tackled by successive governments make it easy to focus discontent into racial channels. But the element of racialism that exists is not a new phenomenon in the British outlook.

In the days of the slave trade, the naked cruelty and exploitation was aided by representing the negro as sub-human and having no rights. The Church assisted this characterisation, and prospered. In Ronald Segal's excellent *The Race War* we learn that The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel branded its slaves with the word 'Society' to distinguish their ownership; Bristol churchbells pealed their rejoicing of Parliament's early rejection of abolitionism; Spanish Jesuits invested in the plantations; one of the slave ships was called *The Willing Quaker*.

The coloured inhabitants of the British colonies came to be regarded as stupid, lazy and immature—an attitude well satirised by Swift in *A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*. To people who still regard this as true in some innate sense rather than as a result of oppression I recommend reflection on Cicero's advice to his friend Atticus: that no Britons be taken as slaves because "they are so utterly stupid and incapable of learning". Conquest almost always produces a sullen resentment in the conquered which the victors can interpret as a racial characteristic if they are of different racial origin. This is one reason why the Nazis treated the Slavs and Jews so much worse than the Anglo-Saxons.

And anti-semitism was by no means confined to the Nazis. In the thirties the anti-semitic clamour was strong enough in Britain to cause tight immigration control on Jews trying to flee from Germany. Opposition MPs protested that Jews were being refused entry. In the immediate post-war period there were riots in London caused by anti-semitic or anti-negro feeling.

In the sixties we have had Smethwick, Rhodesia and Powellism, all unsavoury and all throwing great discredit on Britain. In Smethwick, Peter Griffiths was elected to parliament (later defeated) on a platform of naked racialism. The *Smethwick Telephone* supported his campaign, highlighting criminal cases involving negroes and publishing a regular correspondence of bigotry and intolerance. And at no time did the Tory leadership disavow Griffiths' racialist posture.

After the Rhodesian UDI we heard all sorts of spurious arguments about supporting our "kith and kin". The implicit racialism in the attitudes could not be more clearly outlined: because we were in some way related to the Rhodesian rebels they should be supported *if they broke the law in a racial context*. Some commentators were quick to point out that our jails were full of our "kith and kin".

And why has no effective action been taken to restore British authority in Rhodesia? When the British authority was threatened in Kenya and Aden, troops were sent instantly. When there was a threat of racial conflict in British Guiana (now Guyana) we sent troops and suspended the very constitution that we ourselves had introduced a short

time before. In these instances, and more could be cited, the Rhodesian rebels are distinguished in that they are white.

Little need be said about Enoch Powell. By inflammatory overstatement and misrepresentation he has put a gloss of respectability on obscene and disreputable views. He has intensified racial bitterness and made conciliation more difficult. Under the terms of the existing Racial Discrimination Act there can be no doubt that he should have been prosecuted.

Racialism is a logical and moral affront. In logic it can find no support, feeding as it does on prejudice and ignorance, myth and hearsay. Morally it is shameful. It causes rank injustice and the depersonalisation of human beings. The white people who support Smith and Griffiths and Powell represent the negro as "the coloured problem". He is not a human being with familiar sensitivities and hopes and fears: he is a dark threat to civilisation and common decency. He does not feel as we do. I quote from *What's Wrong with Hospitals?* by Gerda L. Cohen (a hospital matron is speaking):

"Bed curtains? No we don't consider them essential. Sometimes we get a more refined type who asks for a screen. This Jamaican girl is screened for another reason."

She lay quite rigid, one knuckled fist gripping the coverlet. Only her bloodshot brown eyes moved to fasten on someone else's baby. "A stillbirth," Matron imparted across the bed, "a toxæmia. Fortunately, these people don't suffer as you or I would." (My italics.)

Such views are horrible.

In a time of economic difficulty it is easy to label the coloured citizen as a scapegoat. Hitler did the same with the Jews, and in the early thirties he was advocating their deportation from Germany. Already in Britain many people are recommending the forced deportation of *coloured* immigrants. Already the government is prepared to give financial assistance to coloured immigrants who wish to leave the country.

The recent legislation on racial discrimination is to be welcomed, but legislation is empty unless it is implemented. It is worth quoting a letter from Emyrs Hughes and others to the *Guardian* (11/7/68):

Since the passing of the Race Relations Act in 1965, the main prosecutions seem to have been those of the coloured activists. Their speeches were held to be inflammatory and likely to incite racial violence.

Yet on Sunday, July 7, the march organised by the Immigration Control Association was allowed to parade the streets of London shouting such racialist slogans as "Nigger lovers", "Sieg heil", and carrying banners displaying the words "Keep blacks out", "Britain for the Britons", "Repatriation not immigration". It was typical that many of them used the Nazi salute to exhibit their brand of racialism.

These were all seen and heard by the police, witnessed on television, and reported in the national press. One is left to wonder what other acts these people must perpetrate before they are arrested and tried for inciting racial hatred. Is the Home Office exercising discrimination?

It is also necessary to tackle the problems that breed racialism: bad housing, overcrowded schools, unemployment, etc. Where there is widespread discontent, scapegoats can be very useful. The discontented have an apparent explanation for their suffering, and the authorities have an excuse for incompetence or inaction.

Racialism is an unhealthy fibre in British society, and must be opposed in all its aspects. There are a number of tests for the civilised society. One of the most important is the prevailing attitude towards its racial minorities.

BOOK REVIEWS

PETER LEECH

PHILOSOPHY AND ILLUSION by Morris Lazerowitz; Muirhead Library of Philosophy, Allen & Unwin, 48s.

'THE PHILOSOPHER'S HELL is Paradox Lost and his heaven Paradox Regained.' The opening sentence of *Philosophy and Illusion*, a collection of essays on the understanding of philosophy by Professor Morris Lazerowitz, is characteristically acute and vivid. The essays, most of which have already appeared as single papers, are valuable exercises in the analysis of philosophic procedure. Collecting them in one volume has been a worthwhile project.

In the first essay, 'Paradoxes', Professor Lazerowitz examines the nature of metaphysical problems. Since the logical positivists in general and Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* in particular, metaphysics has played poor (and distant) cousin to analytic philosophy. But although Ayer's arguments were sufficient to dismiss metaphysical problems (his criteria were well chosen), this did not ultimately say much about how they came to be problems. Lazerowitz claims that in fact 'metaphysics works by unseen paradoxes'. This is the source of puzzlement, and it is not much good sweeping metaphysics under the positivist carpet. The two poles of the paradox or contradiction which characterise each metaphysical problem have, according to Lazerowitz, the same logical relation as the thesis and antithesis of a Kantian antinomy. And like the antinomy it is illusion to think that one or other pole may at some time be permanently established. The paradox remains a paradox. 'In metaphysics it may truly be said that once a paradox always a paradox.'

'Wittgenstein: The Nature of Philosophy' is an essay which acknowledges the debt of contemporary philosophy to Ludwig Wittgenstein. It is not often the case that a philosopher analyses the difficult Wittgenstein works in such concrete terms that a general appraisal of Wittgenstein's views on the nature of philosophy is possible, but this is exactly what Lazerowitz does. However, the essay is revealing in another sense. It is clear that there are several inconsistencies, or at least oddly conflicting tendencies, in Wittgenstein (especially in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*). But these are so often interpreted, as they are in this essay, as merely 'the trying out of different ideas to explain the enigma of philosophy'. Philosophers whose inconsistencies are credited are a rare breed.

'The illusion of philosophy is that its pronouncements state theories about the nature of things. . . . What is beginning to come through . . . is that we have been the intellectual dupes of a linguistic deception of our own contrivance.' This is the meat of the hypothesis of the essay which forms the title of the book, *Philosophy and Illusion*. In support, Lazerowitz analyses Hume's theory of causation (that causation is no more than the constant conjunction of independent occurrences). Briefly the analysis amounts to this: anyone who claims that 'x is not really y, it only appears to be' (for example, 'water is not heated by fire, it only appears to be') necessarily must know what it is for x *actually* to be y, otherwise how is the distinction between what is really the case and what appears to be the case possible? It follows then that the Humean knows what it is for water *actually* to be heated by fire. But then he must be taken as saying *either* that 'cause' means 'constant fortuitous conjunction' (which it clearly doesn't) or that we should re-edit language so that for 'cause' we read 'constant fortuitous conjunction'. But if the latter is the case, what purports to explain what? We are deceived into thinking we have an explanation when we really have nothing of the sort.

It would be wrong to suppose that *Philosophy and Illusion* contained only essays concerned with the philosophy of philosophy. On the contrary, there are several good essays on particular philosophic problems: universals, time and temporal terminology, perception, and the justification of induction. There are also two essays on classic works on philosophy: on G. E. Moore's *The Commonplace Book*, and on J. L. Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia*.

A word should be said about one of the essays in these two further categories. In 'On Perceiving Things' Lazerowitz claims:

"How vastly different the philosopher's words "we do not really see things" are from such sentences as, "He does not, as he thinks, really see a lion and a unicorn in combat; all he sees are projections on a screen". For the philosopher is unable to say

what it would be like to see a material object, as against its only seeming to us that we are seeing one.'

First, it is misleading to suggest that an argument for the perception only of sense data would be formulated as 'its only seeming to us that we are seeing (a material object)'. In order to say this, one would have to know what it was anyway to see a material object. (As in the Humean causation argument, how is a distinction between appearance and reality possible unless the appropriate experience of each is known?). And actually seeing a material object is precisely what the sense datumist denies. Further, Lazerowitz goes on to show that the sense datumist makes an *a priori* judgment about the nature of perception (and one can't help but detect a note of condemnation) because he is unable to point to the difference between perceiving a sense datum and perceiving a material object. Well of course he is unable to do this, exactly because there is no observable difference. A sense datumist doesn't expect to see anything different from his rival. But then, if no distinction can be made out by observation then the possibility of an *a posteriori* judgment is ruled out. So the philosopher is bound to make an *a priori* judgment.

Philosophy and Illusion is valuable in two ways. It is an excellent account of procedure in philosophy and a guide to understanding philosophy; it is as good as a paradigm of philosophical disputation and provocation. A worthy book, though a little expensive.

ANN ROEST

A PARENTS' GUIDE TO EDUCATION by E. B. Castle.

READ THIS BOOK. It is written for adults who know and understand Mr Castle's first line, "Education is what happens to us from the day we are born to the day we die". It is written so that adults who are already aware may enlarge their own education, their sympathies and understanding, so that they may give of their best to their young. It is, in a sense, a good text book.

Much of what Mr Castle has to say was being said 25 years ago in Teacher Training Colleges. This does not mean that it should not be said again and brought in line with the developments of the last quarter century. One of these developments has been the loosening of religious shackles and it is interesting that Mr Castle almost entirely avoids discussing religion and religious morals. Throughout the book I was expecting to have his arguments backed by his Christian beliefs. It is impressive that these arguments needed no such support.

As a parent myself and also as a teacher I read the book hoping to be spoken to as a parent. It seems over weighted towards advice to teachers. Mr Castle is an idealist, a poet, a man of integrity. He admits his experiences with children are limited. How in fact he would have survived 20 years of teaching tough, unimaginative and socially difficult C and D stream boys and girls aged 13—15 in a class of 30 in a slum area I do not know! In fact he spent 20 years as Headmaster of a Quaker School of high repute with an intake of boys from socially most acceptable homes. There are problems with the intelligent and the good but there are more problems with the unintelligent and the bad. It is easier to help young Quakers to become courageous, temperant, wise and with a knowledge of the 'good life' (Socrates) than it is to help the far larger numbers of socially and intellectually inadequate children. I would have felt happier if Mr Castle could have been more constructive and critical of a society that does not help sufficiently those who have the greatest need.

I am at variance over Mr Castle's attitude to fee paying schools. Gradually these schools are becoming unable to meet the rising salaries of their teachers. Gradually, non-qualified and weaker qualified teachers are being employed. State schools are getting not only the best teachers but more and more of the 'best' children. Those fee paying schools which charge enough to afford fine teachers are becoming Comprehensive Schools since they are taking children from a wider range of intellectual ability than they have ever done before.

Mr Castle has a message of immediate and vital importance. Parents must learn what they mean by education. They must know what they are aiming at when they bring up their children. Whatever the financial, religious or political circumstances surrounding these children, success will come if the parent, the teacher and the state can combine with tolerance, honesty and the determination to do what is best for the children.

I very much hope that the readers of *A Parents' Guide to Education* will not only be the already converted.

LETTERS

Sexual Morality

CORRESPONDENCE (August 23) shows some readers confusing our article on sexual morals (August 9) with the document on *Marriage and the Family* we drafted for consideration by the BHA. These two articles are on different themes and have no connection other than the editor's note on the former advertising us as authors of the latter. *Marriage and the Family* will be available in pamphlet form from the BHA in October. But you won't find much on sex in it.

G. D. Rodger points out that our sexual morals article said nothing about VD or sexual eccentricities ("perversions"). Other important topics we thought of but didn't mention are sexual etiquette and "signalling" (i.e. letting people know what you want to do with them), boasting and gossip, the taboo against initiation of love-making by women, classification as a "nice girl" or a "whore", and selection of sexual partners. All highly relevant to sexual morals, but for reasons of space (the Student Humanist Federation's finances) we restricted ourselves to the more central aspects. Worse things than VD can be transmitted during copulation, but we are confident that acceptance of our views would do more good than harm to public health, just as universal education has done, despite the ideal conditions for epidemics that schools provide.

The suggestion that couples be permitted to construct marriage contracts to suit themselves is SHF official policy, which we fully support. We also support recognition of a "a sexual responsibility to the partner", taking this to mean you should concern yourself with your partner's satisfaction as much as your own.

There may be rational disagreement with our sexual morals, based on different assessment of the facts, but the objections raised in "Letters at Length" (August 23) merely expressed traditional emotional attitudes. There was an appeal to "acknowledge the biological purpose (the only 'purpose' of sex)—the sex-equals-babies fixation dies very hard, even among Humanists. We doubt if impregnation is the sole biological function of copulation, but be that as it may, by "purposes" we mean the aims of human beings. What Mother Nature intends is her business, not ours. "Sexual jealousy is a normal human emotion"—of course, and so are the other impulses towards family rows, assault, murder and denial of other people's freedom. Then we have "teenage promiscuity"—a handy smear, implying that variety of partners (which we favour) means lack of selectivity (which we oppose). In fact a major reason for our recommending varied sexual experience for teenagers is to counter the trend towards irresponsible early marriage with hastily-selected partners. M. J. O'Carroll writes of "Utopia", "laissez-faire", "personality defects", "an atmosphere of complete freedom" and "scornful disrespect" for "reservation". All this is no doubt a sincere reflection of how our article "struck him", as he puts it, but we respectfully suggest that unless he can refer to anything we actually wrote, his emotional reactions are his personal problem.

Finally we should point out that the SHF commissioned our article not so much to promote our "Personal View" as to attract young people to Humanism by showing them that here is a movement in which sex is discussed without the lies and hysteria one usually gets from adults.

CONNAIRE KENSIT and RUTH BUCHANAN.

PHILOSOPHIAN PARANOIA

(Continued from page 285)

Mr Thompson accuses me of intolerance because I dispute his ideas. He makes it appear that I am opposed to "free speculation on ethics or the Philosophian church" by the hoary old device of quoting out of context, when in fact I am merely warning of the dangers of attempting to put his ideas into practice. Mr Thompson is obviously obsessed with his imagined persecution by Humanists in general because he cannot understand why they do not welcome with open arms his ethical system and Philosophian Church—which incorporate ideas that Humanists and Freethinkers have always opposed. He should realise that true Humanism is concerned with the health and happiness of individual human beings and not with finding excuses for preserving archaic and superstitious institutions such as the Church.

REMEMBERING PERSONALLY

(Continued from page 283)

will swallow any superstitious rubbish about saints and virgins if it leaves them basically unaffected. It is an age when honesty is valued less than faith, and hypocrisy is actively encouraged by our most influential men and media. We can well cry, 'How long, O Lords Russell, Willis, and all, how long?' And in this age where men tremble on the brink of progress and too often draw back the FREETHINKER has the opportunity to stimulate the desire for Reason as opposed to Unreason, and the chance to bring comfort to those who have lost their appetite for fairy stories but cannot yet face reality. There is no call for optimism: read our Rationalist literature of 80, 18, even eight years ago. Rationalists then saw the churches as crumbling edifices; religion was doomed. It was only a matter of time till Christians would be slinking off into the background. Our society may be a little more Humanist than it was, with recent reform of laws regarding sexual behaviour and the rights of women over their own bodies, but what of the power and the privileges of the churches: have these really decreased? Outside London new churches are being built, Christians are still giving thousands of pounds for the paraphernalia of primitivism; congregations may dwindle in some areas, but in others they are growing and extensions are being built to house the newly indoctrinated. We have no cause for complacency, and a long battle ahead—even to mark time. How we achieve successes must always be a matter for discussion, and I believe that we have to try many different methods, without condemning any too fiercely.

T. H. Huxley is not a man I would usually turn to for support for the militants, yet I believe he would find many Humanists today unbelievably and perhaps intolerably woolly and mealy-mouthed. He talked about the pleasure of 'jamming common sense down the throats of fools' as being one of the keenest in middle-age, and among public benefactors he reckoned 'he that explodes old error, as next in rank to him who discovers new truth'. I hope that the FREETHINKER will continue to try to do both; to attack and expose what is rotten, false and dishonest, and to help create a social climate in which only the exploiters, the deceivers and the cruel need to shiver and worry about their survival. Anyway I do wish David Reynolds the very best of coincidences or whatever we call 'luck', together with all the support from contributors, readers, printers, the NSS and friends which made my own brief editorship so interesting.

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