Freethinker

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BROADCASTING

IMPORTANT, though not progressive, steps have been made in the struggle for time on BBC television and sound radio for the putting of the secular humanist viewpoint. The Humanist Parliamentary Group, formed jointly by the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society, and which now comprises forty-two MPs, has been in correspondence with Lord Hill, the Chairman of the Governors of the BBC. The group's argument centres around the unarguable point that the BBC should have a "responsibility to present the fact that there is a Humanist movement to which people without religious faith can turn for support". The group considerably reinforces this argument with reference to the Beveridge and Pilkington reports. (Recommendation 63 of the Beveridge Committee, which made its report as long ago as 1949 states: "Bodies which without being religious devote themselves to study of spiritual and moral issues should, according to the measure of their seriousness, have opportunities of broadcasting, but under the Talks Department rather than the Religious Broadcasting Department". Recommendation 69 of the Pilkington Committee, which reported in 1960, states "Non-religious bodies such as the Humanist Group should be allowed their fair share of time in controversial broadcasting outside periods set aside for religious broadcasting".)

In addition the Parliamentary Group's letter made considerable concessions to the fact that "Humanist views have a degree of representation in BBC output", and went on "At this time we are not raising the question of comparative volume as we know the Corporation has a traditional policy of giving a special place to religion". That the letter allowed the BBC this much licence makes it all the more insufferable that Lord Hill merely shrugged off the appeal by dodging the issue with platitudes and irrelevancies.

A second letter was sent and Lord Hill was asked to answer four numbered questions, on the subject of which he had been particularly obscure in his reply to the first letter. The general tone of his reply to this is best shown by printing the second question and Lord Hill's answer to it verbatim. *Question*: "What does the Corporation take to be the meaning of the phrase 'non-religious bodies' in Pilkington? How does it think 'a fair share of time' should be worked out?" *Answer*: "There is no generally accepted definition of the phrase 'non-religious bodies' which appears in Pilkington. What is a 'fair share of time' can only be a matter of editorial judgement". A better example of question begging I have yet to see.

And so no progress was made in a cause the importance of which Lord Hill inadvertently pointed a finger towards in his first letter to the Humanist Parliamentary Group. He wrote: "It is certainly the case that many of the writers and broadcasters who contribute to the BBC's output are in some sense humanists, and it is worth remarking that, for example, six out of seven recent Reith Lecturers hold, *as it happens*, humanist views". Not "as it happens", Lord Hill. One Reith lecturer out of seven is religious, fifteen people out of one hundred go to church regularly in this country. These figures are almost in ratio and represent the strongest argument for some time to be given to secularists and humanists on BBC television and sound radio. Surely Lord Hill realises that the secular-humanist movement is not just trying to abolish religion, it is trying to put something in its place, which is broadly a philosophy arrived at from scientifically proven facts and a morality guided primarily by unselfishness. To deny such a movement any significant time to express itself on the air, when it has such strong and distinguished support and when six people out of seven have ceased to be regularly religious is surely a gross error of judgement—an error which could have dire results—and above all an error which must be rectified.

A DEMONSTRATION OF BOWLER HATS

DEMONSTRATIONS have now become a force to be reckoned with, rather than something to be dismissed as the actions of a collections of weirdies. The massive demonstration on October 27 made this clear chiefly because it went off so smoothly. The press had instilled in more than one mind the idea that there was to be wholesale bloodshed and an attempt to take over key buildings in London. No doubt the more imaginative among us had visions of tanks rolling down Piccadilly, while Nelson's column lay in pieces blocking Whitehall. This uncalled for press build-up made the marked lack of violence that much more impressive.

It is the fact that a lack of violence makes a demonstration more effective that is the significant point, which all demonstrators and would-be demonstrators must take note of. Presumably the purpose of a demonstration is to convert the unconverted, to build up public opinion to a point where the government has to take notice and ultimately act.

Some leftists make out that the government is irrelevant, and that it is the people that matter. They live in a fool's paradise. There is no denying that at the present time the government is very relevant because short of a people's revolution, any change in policy has to be made by it. All demonstrators, above all the extremists who want revolution, must ennervate public opinion, and this will not be done through violence. A peaceful demonstration, such as that on October 27, is surely the most effective type of demonstration. For it must be accepted that a large num-

(*Continued on next page*)

Freethinker

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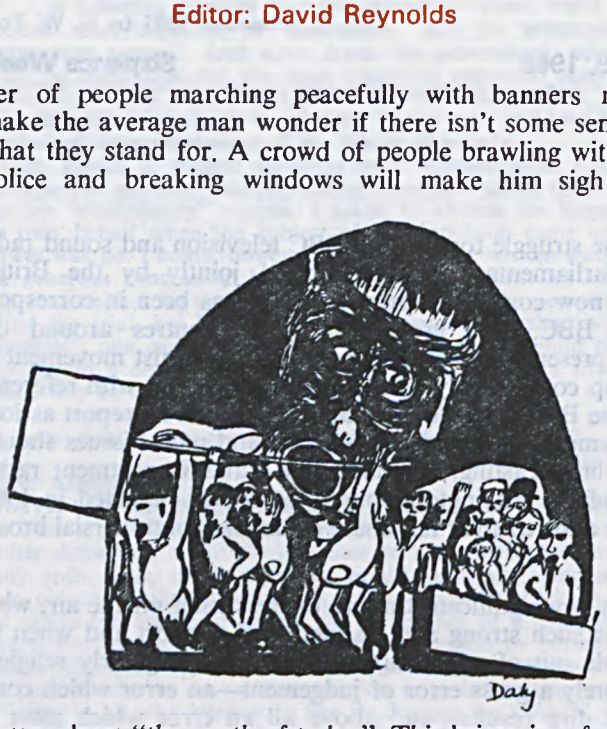
Editor: David Reynolds

ber of people marching peacefully with banners might make the average man wonder if there isn't some sense in what they stand for. A crowd of people brawling with the police and breaking windows will make him sigh and



mutter about "the youth of today". This brings in a further point, which is seldom considered. It must also be realised that long hair, unkempt beards and scruffy clothes, though of no importance to the intellectual elite, are bound to cause unnecessary reaction amongst the apathetic majority. If it can be accepted that an orderly demonstration is more effective than a brawling mob, it can also be accepted that a well-ordered procession of neatly turned out marchers is more effective than a well-ordered procession of people whose appearances are described above.

Demonstrators must be made to realise this and surely anyone who really believes in a cause will be prepared to cut his hair and wear a suit for it. The, at first sight amusing, spectacle of a procession of people all looking like bank clerks would result, and their cause would surely be considerably furthered. Instead of turning the television off with a snort wife will turn to husband and say, "Oh look at all those nice people, what do you think they're doing that for". Immediately interest will be aroused, slowly brains will begin to tick in a more radical direction and eventually progress will be made.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

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

OUTDOOR

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

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

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

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

INDOORS

Belfast Humanist Group, NI War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Belfast, Tuesday, November 12, 8 p.m.: "The Missing Humorist, some thoughts about NI writers", JOHN CRONIN.

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group, 106 Southover, London, N.12, Sunday, November 10, 7.45 p.m.: Social evening. Bring a short entertaining record.

Leicester Secular Society, 75 Humberstone Gate, Sunday, November 10, 6.30 p.m.: "Facing the Future", Mrs ISOBEL GRAHAM.

Luton Humanist Group, Carnegie Room, Central Library, Luton, Thursday, November 14, 8 p.m., "Religion in Schools", MARGARET MCILROY.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, November 10, 11 a.m.: "The Individual v. Bureaucratic Society", Dr D. P. HALPERN. Admission free; Tuesday, November 12, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion "United Arab Republic", speaker from United Arab Republic. Admission 2s (including refreshments), members free.

TELEVISION

EDWARD ASHLEIGH

AT a time when we hear so many complaints that radio and television studios are virtually forbidden territory to all but the charmed circle of commentators and political pundits, it seems a good idea to bring advocates of opposing views together, and to invite members of the audience before the microphone and camera. But so often the end product does not justify the effort and viewing time. Those who seem particularly keen to expound their views are frequently either inarticulate or have an amazing arsenal of cliches and jargon which they reel off at high speed. The one thing they have in common is the inability to listen to more than five consecutive words from anyone else without interrupting. The recent David Frost show in which the Londonderry riots were discussed was a deplorable example of such programmes. However, as the Irish tend to be particularly intolerant, hysterical and abusive when talking to each other, it was hardly surprising that Frost almost had a riot on his hands. But at least it was a lively programme, with some of those taking part being waylaid by a crowd of fearsome ladies outside the studio for good measure.

Roundhouse (London Weekend Television) has been hailed as "television's Speaker's Corner" complete with platforms, speakers and audience of 300-400. This mini-Hyde Park has been set up in a huge locomotive shed near Camden Town, but last Sunday there was little genuine controversy and a great deal of noise and confusion. It was quite remarkable that David Tribe managed to get over several good points despite the din. The President of the NSS appeared to be enveloped in cigarette smoke, and complete with beard must have caused any of Mrs Whitehouse's followers who had just switched on to fear that the devil himself was on the small screen!

FREETHINKER editor David Reynolds making his first television appearance took part in a discussion on religion in the school. This took place in the coffee bar of the Roundhouse, and was much more restrained and interesting than the rest of the programme.

THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

R. STUART MONTAGUE

THE material forces of historical progress sweep majestically onward. The great social revolutions of the past happened according to the natural laws of motion inherent in all change and development, historical, physical and biological.

History is made by men but the decisive forces of historical change are determined by the stage reached in the method of producing the means of life and existence. Quantitative growth of new forces of wealth production came into conflict and rebellion against the old mode of production which had become a fetter on further social progress. With sudden qualitative change a new social order was born from the womb of the old regime.

Such were the great bourgeois revolutions of 1642 (England), 1789 (France), 1848 (Germany), 1917 (Russia), 1927 (China). Revolutionary changes in the means of existence cause revolutionary changes in the views, ideas and standards of behaviour of new social relations of men in society. All history is the continuous transformation of human behaviour.

The ideological superstructure does react back on the material basis of society but the evolution of material conditions are always the deciding factor.

Man is a victim of his own creation in the material means of wealth production and in the ideological superstructure of his religious creations. Freedom for man is not to ignore the laws of motion of historical change but to gain knowledge and understanding of these laws and use them to achieve his ends. In this way only will the masses conquer the world for themselves and man become captain of his soul, master of his fate.

Freedom is knowledge of the laws of social necessity.

The Hegelian idealist conception of history is that the world can be changed at will by means of ideas; that ideas create the real material conditions which are the outward manifestation of the absolute idea.

Marx discovered Hegel walking upside down on his hands. He turned him right side up and planted his feet on the solid earth. Marx proved in practice that ideas and ideals are nothing more than ideological reflexes and forms of consciousness "transposed and translated inside the human head" from the material basis of real life. Great men do not make history; they are the product of great times.

"The progress of ideas depends on the progress of things", said G. B. Vico. The great man is a symbol riding on the tide of material and social forces of the ocean of history. Individual personality is only foam on the crest of a wave.

The crises of history throw up the great men. When Hegel saw Napoleon near Jena he said Napoleon was "the world soul on horseback". But Hegel was in agreement with Engels that if it had not been Napoleon someone else would be sure to have arisen.

Material conditions and chance have domination over individuals. Men are the creatures not the creators of their age. King Canute tried to hold back the sea but it was King Canute who was forced to retreat before the rising tide.

The theological determinists as in the present day instance of the Pope of Rome and the pill, attempt to impose their ideas on world society but the inevitable tide of history sweeps them aside. The Roman Catholic church is forced to retreat and reform its teachings to survive and remain in business in our rapidly changing world.

On arriving at the Finland station April 1917 Lenin in his speech of welcome said: "We will now proceed to construct the socialist order". In his later attempt to establish socialism in Russia Lenin acted as an Hegelian and utopian, not as a Marxist. Had he appreciated the truth of the laws of economic necessity he would have accepted the fact that socialism was impossible in backward feudal Russia.

Mao Tse-tung is behaving in a similar Hegelian manner in imposing his thoughts and ideas on the masses with his little Red Bible the circulation of which must be competing in published copies with the Holy Bible.

The cockcrow proclaims the dawn, it is not the cause of the rising sun but the break of day that caused the cock to crow.

Winston Churchill said: "We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's first minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire". But the sun was setting on the British Empire and there was nothing Churchill could do about it.

Where nothing is happening there is no call for great men. In the well-known cinema film *The Third Man*, Orson Welles dramatically draws our attention to a period of European history dominated by war tyranny, bloodshed and chaos "and it produced Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Switzerland had brotherly love and 500 years of peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock!"

In the present period of world anarchy, chaos, crisis and conflict the capitalist class do not rule over their bourgeois system, the laws of development of world capitalism is ruling them. "Things are in the saddle", said Emerson, "and riding mankind". But the great men of this historical period are notably absent.

However, from the material forces of historical change and social relations of men a new hopeful spirit of freedom is in the air in a changing world consciousness of the youth of the world. Could this become the spirit of socialism, a socialist consciousness?—the urgent need of our time.

Socialism is a theory "but theory becomes a material force when it has seized the masses", said Marx. And Goethe wrote, "For that which is in the air and is demanded by the age can arise in a hundred heads at once without any borrowing by one from the other". And

> "What you the spirit of the ages call
> Is nothing but the spirit of you all
> Wherein the age are reflected."

Such is one aspect of the materialist conception of history.

J. M. ROBERTSON THE LITERARY CRITIC

MARTIN PAGE

J. M. ROBERTSON (1856-1933) was not only a great freethinker: he was also one of the most versatile and stimulating literary critics of his time. His career as a writer—which spanned half a century—opened, as it was closed, with studies of some great English-speaking poets. *Winnowings from Wordsworth* (1883) contains an introduction by him, and with his first full-scale book, *Walt Whitman, Poet and Democrat* (1884), he established himself as one of the few literary critics in the British Isles who appreciated Whitman's greatness at a time when that poet was almost a figure of fun on this side of the Atlantic.

Robertson was also among the earliest literary scholars of his generation to acclaim the brilliantly iconoclastic work of Charles Bradlaugh's artistic friend James Thomson. Robertson's edition (1892) of *Poems, Essays and Fragments* by Thomson was apparently the first to give a broad selection of both his prose and poetry—it included five essays not previously collected in one volume—and his estimate of Thomson has stood the test of time: "In his prose, he is almost always a quite secure and accomplished craftsman; in his verse, even the greatest, he was always capable of lapsing from perfection, of eking out his gold with putty".

Although Robertson did not share the mysticism of W. B. Yeats, he admired him as "a stray Druid, with a witchcraft of rhythm"; and he was one of the first British scholars to undertake, from a non-Christian standpoint, a detailed study in comparison of Browning and Tennyson as moralists. "The very acceptance by Christians of Browning's quasi-concrete theology is an admission of the breakdown of their own", he wrote, adding: "Browning is intellectually less primitive than Tennyson, and brings to Tennyson's theological purposes an ingenuity of pleading that Tennyson wholly lacks. Tennyson's effort has gone to what is most special to his art, melodious expression, beauty of cadence, golden speech" (*Browning and Tennyson as Teachers*, pp. 157, 159).

Robertson once admitted to a literary friend: "Perhaps the poet I oftenest go back to for sheer pleasure is still Tennyson", adding, with characteristic candour: "But I always keep shrines for Keats and Coleridge, and Poe. In prose, Lamb and Montaigne come closest to me. Sir Thomas Browne is a kind of music always on tap. Serious fiction, since Conrad, rarely satisfies me. The novelist I have oftenest re-read is Jane Austen, for the sheer finish of her art. Dickens I can't re-read. Thackeray I can, with much of my old admiration. For the rest, Turgenev remains one of my most esteemed masters, Flaubert next".

For JMR, Jane Austen was among the first of the moderns in fiction: "While the possibility of the non-romantic novel was barely realised, and when the importance of observation in fiction was only vaguely acknowledged, her eye spontaneously found in the little drawing-room life of provincial England a whole world of intellectual light and shade" (*Criticisms*, 1902, pp. 24-25). But he was equally conscious that her concentration on the upper middle-class and on "the drawing-room section of their inner life" also defined her limitations as an artist.

In an illuminating aside in his *'Hamlet' Once More* (1923), Robertson sharply rebuked "the devotees of Dickens, who canonise puerility itself in gratitude for the alternate lusty ministry of farce and fancy, and who are ardently respectful alike to cheap mannerism and to caricature, to crude melodrama and cruder propaganda" (pp. 187-8). He credited Dickens with being one of the first to popularise the taste for blood in English fiction and declared: "In Dickens, Jonas Chuzzlewit murders with an amount of mental strain that communicates itself to the reader, so that the episode looms in memory as something lurid and frightful; and, similarly, the crime of Bill Sykes bulks blackly and oppressively across the tale. A murder *was* a murder, so to speak, in Dickens. And in Thackeray, so much less melodramatic, so fastidious about sensation, we never get a murder at all, save by way of a duel" (*Criticisms*, 1902, pp. 123-4).

J. M. Robertson.

"To something of the Dickens faculty of humorous imagination he adds a much wider intellectual grasp than that of Dickens." So said Robertson of G.B. Shaw. He first met Shaw soon after his "translation" from Edinburgh to London in 1884, and as Mrs Besant's editorial assistant, he was instrumental in getting Shaw's novel *The Irrational Knot* serialised in *Our Corner*, after it had failed to find a publisher. Robertson, however, frankly told Shaw of his doubts about the novel: *"Irrational Knot* is irrational; it is knot in the knature of knots to be rational or irrational"; the plot he called "one of those impossibilities which are understood to be reserved for the stage", and he added: "If you stick to those seven hundred 'Humph's, your blood be on your own head". Robertson preferred *Love Among the Artists*—which was eventually printed in *Our Corner*—and Shaw credited him with being the only reviewer who really understood *An Unsocial Socialist*. Years later, when Shaw had found "success" in the theatre after failure in the novel, Robertson, whilst acknowledging him as "the most gifted master of stage farce in our day", was highly critical of his "masterpiece", *St Joan* (1923). For Shaw, said JMR, "Jeanne must be a she-Napoleon, a Marie Bashkirtseff, born out of due time, with an inoculation of

George Eliot", and he was further irritated by Shaw' highly misleading presentation of trial by the Inquisition.

Robertson also retained a constant interest in the work of Shaw's great contemporary, H. G. Wells. *The Time Machine* and *When the Sleeper Wakes* were, said JMR, strikingly imaginative in their prediction of the future and "seem notably fitted to arouse men newly to the possibilities of evil germinating in a system of uncontrolled capitalistic production". In the hey-day of British imperialism, Robertson not only published—appropriately, in India—a critical study of Rudyard Kipling: he also compared him disadvantageously with the unknown Russian writer Potapenko. In days before the American novel had come of age, Robertson admired the incomparable Hawthorne, who, "exhibiting in his greatest work his psychological penetration into the Puritan past, dissolved instead of making good its conventional prestige"; and when JMR met Mark Twain, he doubtless told him how much he enjoyed *Tom Sawyer*, which always appealed to him. Once, in the presence of Edgar Wallace, he lavished praise on the African story *Sanders of the River*. The "natural" style of Edgar Wallace and Mark Twain—not to mention Robert Burns— was no doubt one reason for his appreciation of their work. Preciosity Robertson regarded as a deformity of language, a sign of decadence.

"The fortunes of the drama", he said, "are connected more intimately than those of any other art with the fortunes of the mass of the people." And "just because the dramatic is the most popular of all the arts, it develops the most slowly in almost any given civilisation"; but "perhaps its best work would be to so enlarge and enlighten human sympathy as to forward that general elevation in a way no other art can do". This dramatic paradox emerges from JMR's remarkable essay on *Evolution in Drama* (1886), where his abundant knowledge and profound insight are almost Shakespearean in their stimulating and cathartic effect. In this essay, Robertson traces the development of the drama from primitive man to Henrik Ibsen, with particular emphasis on England and France, and he explains the state of the theatre as the perpetual product of various social, political and economic forces.

In 1886, when Ibsen was scorned in England and it was difficult to gain a balanced assessment of that still productive artist, Robertson gave due weight to the Norwegian dramatist, and his criticism was notably discerning: "If we turn to what is, taken all over, the strongest body of dramatic work of modern times, the plays of the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, even there we find a distinct element of romanticism, in addition to much subtle analysis and faithful observation. That strong and bitter spirit is partly warped by his own keen perception of human weakness and baseness, and tends always to enforce his portraits of unworthy men with the foil of peculiarly worthy women, thus producing a general impression which will not square with experience".

Robertson was certainly cosmopolitan in his literary tastes: he appreciated "the dainty and delightful comedy of Marivaux"; Racine he called "that delicate and accomplished artist of a strait convention"; and in his lively book on Voltaire he made the perceptive observation that the dramatist whose tragedies made men weep failed almost entirely in comedy, though he was the greatest wit and humorist of his time—"the best proof of Voltaire's lack of the highest dramatic gifts". As for Voltaire's fellow humanist, Montaigne: "ranging from the frankest coarseness (outdone only by our own Chaucer and some of our later clerical classics, as Donne, Herrick, and Swift), to the most earnest brooding on life and death, the most heart-searching study of the human soul, he is one of the living voices of the past". Of "the irresistibly inspired Balzac" Robertson truly said that his great achievement was to raise the novel to a new austerity of criticism of life, and that if his picture of the world was over-charged with pessimism, it was nonetheless arresting; yet "almost no novelist—certainly not Balzac—saw more clearly than Flaubert into the religious psychosis". Ironically, the superb novels and stories of Flaubert's fellow atheists Stendhal and Maupassant appear to have been outside Robertson's aesthetic experience; but at least he admired much of Zola's "masterful" work, and he bitterly opposed the British Government's suppression of Vizetelly's translation of *La Terre*.

But Robertson owed a profound debt to German culture no less than to French; and two German authors he particularly admired were Heine and Heinrich von Kleist. He championed Kleist (1777-1811) at a time—the end of the 19th century—when this writer was virtually unknown in England; thirty years later, he was still acclaiming "this unhappy but masterly dramatist, one of the truest geniuses of his time". Subsequently literary scholarship has endorsed that estimation. The self-educated Scot who wrote essays on Heine, Kleist and Nietzsche, who was fascinated by Goethe's *Faust* and who cited marvellous examples of "the untranslatable cadence" of Leopardi's Italian verse, was the very man who admired, so consistently, the great Russian novelists.

Turgenev he regarded as an incomparable artist, "the Sophocles of the modern novel", but: "Turgenev would have balked at an Iago as at a Falstaff. Shakespeare could pass into both". Robertson's rejection of Dostoyevsky's anti-rationalism co-existed with his awareness that "Dostoyevsky comes to the pitiful theatre of life in a spirit of sympathy so intense as at times to transform him into a seer, yet without his ceasing to be a co-ordinating artist". Certainly he was profoundly impressed by *Crime and Punishment*, though it is doubtful whether he considered it "the finest book written", and so D. H. Lawrence's wild denunciation of J. M. Robertson on this score seems entirely misguided.

Tolstoy's work—said Robertson—is more diffuse, less profound than that of Turgenev, and less tragically great than that of Dostoyevsky. At his finest, especially in his epic portrayal of humanity, Tolstoy invariably transcends his captious moral prejudices: "What is totally characteristic of him is the gigantic panorama of *War and Peace*, with its astonishing host of sharply individualised human beings; the quick and violent series of lantern-views of the lurid life of besieged Sebastopol; the unsparing sardonic etchings of *The Cossacks* and *Resurrection;* the incessant transitions of scene and subject and portraiture in *Anna Karenina*. When he aims at a small canvas he is successful only by a sharp curtailment of his action, as in *The Cossacks*" (*Explorations*, p. 110). Thus wrote Robertson in 1902, and the directors of a matured art form have since exploited—for the mass audiences of a celluloid culture—the very qualities in Tolstoy that he had emphasised.

Art is long, and life is short. But for Robertson the *raison d'etre* of art lay precisely in its perpetual ability to

(*Continued on page* 359)

ORIGINS OF PLANETS, LIFE AND MAN

GONZALO QUIOGUE

ABOUT six billion years ago, there was an enormous concentration of hydrogen gas and dust at the edge of our galaxy, the Milky Way. This astronomical blob of gas and dust, a hundred million miles in diameter, was being squeezed into itself by the pressures of the surrounding starlights. As countless centuries passed, terrific gravity in the huge concentrating gas helped the starlight pressures to form an incandescent core wherein a continuous nuclear reaction was going on. This proto-sun in due time became our sun; and the nine small swirling blobs of gas and dust around it, not having enough mass and pressure to generate stellar heat, condensed into hot planets.

At that time the atmosphere of the newly-born earth consisted of methane, ammonia, hydrogen and water vapour. These gases, in correct proportions, could have been a source of amino acids washed down to earth by the rains.

The young earth was often shaken by many volcanic eruptions that brought forth to the surface interacting chemicals that formed into hydrocarbons and ammonia; these reacted with water and became amino acids. They flowed into the seas and became proteins. Protoplasm, with nucleic acid the reproducers developed in the proteins. After thousands of years small clusters of protein molecules, called coacervates, developed into tiny one-celled animals.

The one-celled animals, after millions of years of mutations, became fishes, crabs, shrimps, whales, etc. Some of the fishes became reptiles on land. And later some of the reptiles became birds and mammals. Organic evolution was so slow that millions of years of mutations had to pass before it could arrive at the mammalian stage.

Seventy-five million years ago, during the paleocene epoch of the cenozoic era, many varieties of lemurs and tarsiers appeared in Africa. These had evolved from primitive insectivorous rodents.

Then after forty-seven million years, in the miocene epoch of the cenozoic era, monkeys appeared; also, apes in groups called Dryopithecus and Proconsul. The monkeys and apes had evolved from varieties of tarsiers and lemurs.

Then again, after sixteen million years, in the pliocene epoch of the cenozoic era, the Kenyapithecus group appeared in Kenya, east central Africa. Humanity in these creatures was beginning to show on their faces, heads and ways of walking. The Kenyapithecus, the Dryopithecus and the Proconsul were the evolutionary ancestors of modern apes and men.

After ten million years more, in the Pleistocene epoch of the cenozoic era (two million years ago), apes, more manlike, appeared such as the Australopithecus in South Africa, the Pithecanthropus erectus, the Sinanthropus in Asia, the Swanscombe and, after thousands of years at last, the Homo Sapiens called cavemen or stone age men.

It had taken nature more than a billion years to evolve man from the one-celled organisms of the archeozoic era.

It will be worthwhile for open-minded persons to read the following books: *Modern Science and the Nature of Life* by William S. Beck, *Man and the Vertebrates* by A. S. Romer, *The Antecedents of Man* by W. E. Le Gros Clark, *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* both by Charles Darwin, *The Evolution of Life* by E. C. Olson, *The Evolution of Life* by F. H. T. Rhodes, *From Fish to Philosopher* by Homer W. Smith, *The Road to Man* by Herbert Wendt, *Man: His First Million Years* and *The Human Revolution* both by Ashley Montagu, *From Galaxies to Man* by John Pfeiffer.

Origin of Life by A. I. Oparin, *The Physics and Chemistry of Life* an anthology of Scientific American, *How Life Began* by Irving Adler, *The Dawn of Life* by J. H. Rush, *The Origin of Life* by J. D. Bernal.

The Structure and Evolution of the Universe by G. J. Whitrow, *The Nature of the Universe* by Fred Hoyle, *The Universe at Large* by Hermann Bondi, *Biography of the Earth* and *The Birth and Death of the Sun* both by George Gamow, *The Stars* by Irving Adler, *Modern Theories of the Universe* by James A. Coleman, *Exploration of the Universe* by H. C. King.

Only empirical science can tell us the real truths in this world. Only fellow humans can help us. The best policy, therefore, is to put more love in our dealings with one another. Let us love our fellowmen as much as we love ourselves. It is never too often that we can continually remind ourselves of the wisdom in the Golden Rule. "Do unto others . . ." A good deed a day, will surely pay!

1868 **1968**

100th Anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's first election contest at Northampton

EXHIBITION

CENTRAL LIBRARY, ABINGTON STREET, NORTHAMPTON

Saturday, November 9th until Saturday, November 23rd

Open daily 9 a.m.—8 p.m. (Saturday 9 a.m.—5.30 p.m.)

Opening ceremony November 9th, 12 noon, by

RENEE SHORT, MP

Organised by the National Secular Society and Northampton Public Libraries Committee

PUBLIC MEETING

THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON

Sunday, November 17th, 3 p.m.

Speakers include

MICHAEL FOOT, MP
REGINALD PAGET, MP
The Rev.
LLOYD JENKINS
DAVID TRIBE

Singer:

DEREK WILKES

Organised by the National Secular Society

Sunday, November 17th: Coach leaves Central London at 9.30 a.m. Return fare 15/-. Bookings to the NSS, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717.

BOOK REVIEW

G. L. SIMONS

REPORT FROM IRON MOUNTAIN, introduced by L. C. Lewin, (Penguin, 4s).

ACCORDING to Leonard C. Lewin, who writes the foreword, this document (first published last year) was a secret report on war and disarmament submitted to the US government by a Special Study Group in 1966. The US government denies this.

Mr Lewin claims that a member of the Group decided through a feeling of social responsibility to make public the deliberations and conclusions of the Group. The conclusions are that war is advantageous for the nation state and that the alternatives to war are less satisfactory.

After the preamble the scope of the Study is defined, whereupon the specific topics are considered: Disarmament and the Economy; Disarmament Scenarios; War and Peace as Social Systems; The Function of War; and Substitutes for the Function of War. Conclusions and recommendations complete the document.

The advantages of war are found to be the stabilisation of the national economy, the solidification of national consciousness, the stimulation of invention, and various cultural and psychological benefits. Some of the points made are grotesque:

> . . . the efficiency of the modern methods of mass destruction. Even if their use is not required to meet a world population crisis, they offer, perhaps paradoxically, the first opportunity in the history of man to halt the regressive genetic effects of natural selection by war. Nuclear weapons are indiscriminate. Their application would bring to an end the disproportionate destruction of the physically stronger members of the species (the "warrior") in periods of war.

The author concedes however that this advantage may be offset by "unfavourable mutations" caused by "post-nuclear radioactivity".

Attention is given to the economic, political, sociological, ecological and cultural alternatives to war, and in the main they are found wanting. It is recommended that there should be "preparation for peace" not because "the end of war would necessarily be desirable" but because "it may be thrust upon us".

Two questions arise: Is the report, as purported, a government-sponsored document? And how valid is the analysis that it represents?

In common with most other observers I doubt the authenticity of the report. My main reason is the scale and general character of the document: in Penguin the report proper appears in about eighty small pages, and there is much repetition—small fry compared with the usual Study Group offspring! And the document is supposed to be the result of a two and a half year study with meetings about once a month. Nor does the paucity of detail and comment suggest the combined product of over a dozen articulate and intelligent minds.

Some points appear valid, others not—for example it is true that the US would have difficulty in converting its war economy to a peace economy, but untrue that all worthwhile art derives from war. There is no detailed argument and the conclusions have to be assessed in virtual isolation from documentation or factual support. To a large extent this document is an indictment of modern industrial society, particularly US society, but it is too superficial to be of use to the radical.

A curiosity that crystallises some bizarre thinking in certain US military/political circles, but not much more than a curiosity!

HUMANISM, CHRISTIANITY AND SEX, by David Tribe (NSS, 6d).

MR TRIBE points out that the sexual appetite exceeds what is biologically necessary for the survival of the species, and that this causes one or two problems. He also stresses that much of the Old Testament is far from puritanical, and concludes with the familiar humanist plea for knowledge and tolerance, stressing at the same time the need to prevent unwanted conception and the spread of venereal disease.

Mr Tribe comments that "This is a huge subject . . . to deal with in a quarter of an hour". I agree, and what may have been tolerable as a short address does not print very well either. To the freethinker the sentiments are obvious, and I do not believe that the pamphlet is sufficiently penetrating, witty or informed to affect an unsympathetic reader.

I was disappointed. Much of Mr Tribe's other work is far superior, in particular his excellent 100 *Years of Freethought*—and the necessarily different terms of reference of a short address and a detailed book do not entirely account for the difference in quality.

THEATRE REVIEW

QUENTIN SEACOME

HAIR (Shaftesbury Theatre).

AT the interval there was an apprehensive atmosphere amongst the quietly talking audience. The end came, the old were smiling their benignly adult smiles, the young were excited, and half the audience were 'freaking out' on stage. The overall result was, a huge success. The atmosphere had become one of complete happiness and frivolity: and what's more there were no comments about "the young of today". That there was little or no story was irrelevant, as the audience reaction and the obvious enjoyment of the cast showed. It was more like a well staged, musically superior, technicolour dream, than a theatrical production; though even more informal than a pantomime it was infinitely more entertaining. The publicity for *Hair* was either a cleverly contrived stroke of managemental genuis, or a lot of fuss about nothing. You can see, if you must, more nudity on any run-of-the-mill X certificate film than in *Hair*.

Everything the 'new' generation do: from taking drugs to free love, was there. Who cares what they do if they have the fun and carefree life they appear to, and do, have. The anti-establishment theme in general is hackneyed, and *Hair* is no exception on this point, but what was lost in the appalling dialogue (which was natural in so much that you can hear it in any 'hip' meeting place), was overcome by the clever song lyrics.

Without the fantastic lighting techniques of Jules Fisher, the show would have been reasonable. This is how much his talents added. Every scene sprung to life, and if there had been no songs, no words, the lighting alone would have made an exciting spectacle. For the limitations theatre lighting obviously has, this was brilliant, in both senses.

The music, as is the rest of the show, is of today and though there is nothing wrong with the music of yesterday it is refreshing to see a show so 'right here and now'. The opener—'Acquarius' was a good start to a musical schedule which became progressively better as the show continued. 'Air' and 'Initials' were short and topical with the appropriate music for the apt words, 'I got life', is so far the corresponding *Cabaret* song for *Hair*, but let's hope that there are not so many dreadful attempts at bringing it over—the cast did this well enough. Other numbers of note in the first half were the sad, 'Easy to be hard', and 'Where do I go'. The second act was electrifyingly started by 'Electric Blues' (another great lighting scene) and included my favourite 'What a piece of work is man' (words by courtesy of William Shakespeare). 'Good morning starshine' and 'Let the sun shine' finished off the act, which was even more exciting than the first.

The dancing and movement, to me, was better in the second act and was interspersed with several topical sketches, some of which were poor, but these again were lost in the whole aura of the show.

I had gone to *Hair* apprehensively feeling that I was going to see a lot of pseudo-intellectual 'crap' having seen the televised hour of it. However if anyone is not going because they saw the television pieces, change your minds, because once you're there you will be converted by a show which is a leader in its own right. It has broken the theatrical ice and could be followed up by even better 'now' shows. There is always room for progress, and *Hair* has set us off to a great start.

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evoke a new awareness, a psychedelic experience, even intimations of immortality, both in the artist and his audience. Art, in its constant interplay with life, has enriched and ennobled human existence itself: "as art of all kinds plays on sad as well as on happy experience, the sadness is made to pay tribute to joy, since every good artistic product, literary or other, is in itself a source of satisfaction." Perhaps Robertson's appreciation of universal literature was heightened by the experience he himself had derived from writing a novel as a young man; certainly it was stimulated by his insatiable curiosity and intense love of life, as befits a great freethinker.

LETTERS

Guinea pigs

I AM sorry to have given the impression that I was duped by the intended irony of R. Reader when he stated that the conclusion of religious neurosis is that "Man is above the beasts". In fact it had not eluded me—I was merely attempting, perhaps with some ineptitude, to extract it from its ironic setting and to explain why R. Reader is wrong in his mockery of what is an established scientific truth, which does not need "religious neurosis" or any other viewpoint for its support. As for the use of the word 'advanced' in relation to cortical development, I would have thought it obvious that I meant there is no other animal with comparable mental achievement, and hence Man's superiority over the remainder of the Animal Kingdom.

R. Reader's yardstick of the stage of an animal's cortical development is surely adrift; he says that Man's development, as well as advancing him in many ways, has also brought him to the verge of extinction (certainly an arguable point, and one which I consider to be highly unlikely on reflection), and yet a dog has made advances which are solely advantageous to its well-being. Thus the conclusion on his yardstick is that the dog is better adapted and hence, I suppose, the more advanced—that conclusion seems to defy a rational basis, and one can only assume that the original supposition is in error. If Man has brought himself to the verge of extinction, then it is not because he has NOT been able to adapt himself to his environment, it is because he has so completely done so that he now has time to consider other aspects of existence—the inter-relationships of Man in society, his beliefs, his politics, etc. In other words his evolutionary development has released him from the task of survival in an hostile environment (over which he now has almost complete control), whilst in other species this very struggle against the environment still persists and provides a tremendous unifying influence, since unification is the main strength of their effort to survive. I think it is fair to say that in very few of the lesser species is there a constant internal struggle for dominance within the species—in the mating season, of course, struggles may often develop between males for the right of mating with a certain female, but in general the struggle is between different species, since the species as a whole has an instinctive will to survive, the chances of which are considerably lessened by internal strife. However, what Man's development has not achieved is the removal from his behaviour pattern of the basic animalistic instincts: fear, aggression and the will to survive in particular. Thus the result is that these characteristics are directed towards the only element of life that now constitute a threat to Man—Man himself. This is the factor which brings Man to the verge of extinction if indeed anything does.

R. Reader goes on to contradict his original acquiescence to the belief that there are fundamental anatomical differences between Man and the Apes, and to state correctly what I said in my original letter that the differences are ones of detail, hence implying that structurally they have fundamentals in common. He then dismisses my statement about all mammals being basically similar as a facile generalisation, and hence invalid. Well, either my views about the specificity of classification and its inherent scientific value are completely misconceived, or R. Reader has missed the purpose of such an arrangement—personally my money's on the latter. Certainly there are differences between the species within a genus, but that still does not negate the fact that in terms of fundamentals they have the very great majority of factors in common. Taking his point, there may be differences in body temperature amongst the various species but that does not negate the fact that they are all warm-blooded animals—this is the important consideration when considering the validity of experimental results obtained.

His next point criticises my statement regarding animal experimentation as being directed towards the benefit of society. He uses as his weapon the post-war incidence of abnormal births and presumably means to implicate drugs in this situation. There is no evidence to support this—he may be thinking of Thalidomide in particular. Even in this most famous of 'villain' drugs there is no direct evidence to the effect that Thalidomide actually caused the deformities seen at birth of children to mothers using it—the contra-theory that it merely made birth a more likely and easy process, hence causing abnormal foeti, which under normal circumstances would have been voided in the process of miscarriage, to be born alive, is just as feasible a theory. Even if Thalidomide is eventually proven to be the causator factor in birth with abnormalities, this is strong evidence of the value of thorough animal experimentation. This at first may seem to be a contradiction of the obvious conclusion, but bearing in mind that one of the charges that face Chemie Grunenthal, the makers of Thalidomide, on trial in Germany at the moment, is that there was *insufficient* experimentation done before the drug was marketed, the position becomes easier to understand. He also scorns the recent facility with which drugs are being manufactured and distributed in all countries—well, I for one wish this was true in certain parts of Africa were Leprosy, now a curable condition, is still rife in about 18,000,000 people because of the lack of drug and treatment availability.

R. Reader next makes a point about the competitiveness in research in the Medical world. Certainly I believe this does occur, but then he goes on to indicate that the competitors in the same field searching for a cure for specific disease would think nothing of sacrificing painfully a few thousand animals a year to be the first to arrive at the answer, avoiding meantime the auspices of the Home Office. Firstly, a small point, but as I have said before, all animal experimentation is *not* painful—only a minority of experiments are necessarily so, and then the Home Office is aware of it. Secondly, if the doctors are working in a genuine cause then there is no necessity to hide it from the Home Office—they will condone the experiments if they are relevant and necessary, and I cannot really see a doctor conducting a series of experiments irrelevant to his general programme just for the fun of it, and risking the whole venture because of the illegality of procedure. It is also a time waster. Thirdly, if a cure for the disease comes out of the experimentation, then surely this is ample justification for the whole process.

The tendency towards sadism in animal experimenters is mentioned by R. Reader. I agree that it probably does occur in a small number of cases but is it really so serious that the whole future of animal experimentation should be considered in the light of it?

I must agree that advances of an extraordinary nature have been made in wartime because of the unusual conditions. However, R. Reader does not attempt to answer my real criticism of his original supposition that this is one of the factors that has formed the basis of Medical Science. On that score I remain unmoved from my original declaration.

With all that said and having read, as he suggested, R. Reader's previous three articles, which do not seem terribly relevant to the issue in hand, I feel that he has raised no significant points which are convincing enough to prove that animal experimentation is not a necessary force in the furtherance of Medical Science.

JAMES CROSBY.

"Genuinely Scientific Age"

R. READER'S article (September 28) and his letter (October 26) seem to disagree on whether "religious neurosis" or the "cortical development" of the human species has brought man to the verge of extinction. And to add to this confusion, Mr Reader seems to imply in his letter that a "genuinely scientific age" would solve the crucial problem of predicting the right use for our specifically human faculties.

I'm curious to know what it would be like to live in Mr Reader's "genuinely scientific age".

CHARLES BYASS.

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