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A STREAMLINED CHURCH?

A BODY called the Christian Organisations Research and Advisory Trust, or CORAT, has recently been formed for the purpose of advising Christian bodies on organisation and management. A good explanation of the need for this trust is supplied in the May 1 edition of *New Christian*, the ecumenical journal. "Virtually all the church's organisation has developed in response to certain needs—real or imagined—and little attempt has ever been made to evaluate the resulting structure in the light of the church's aims or of the particular challenges of the complex and rapidly changing society in which the Christian mission must now be carried out. The result is a high degree of inefficiency and there can be no doubt that the application to the church's life of some of the insights gained through the use of modern management techniques must inevitably lead to significant changes."

It is as yet uncertain as to which churches and church organisational units will use the services of the trust. However, the fact that it has been set up indicates that something substantial is in the air. Nor is it clear as to what exactly the Trust will do. *New Christian* speaks of "the lessons learned in the administration of a huge industrial complex like Unilever or ICI". Presumably this does not mean that time and motion study experts will be scrutinising the parish priest as he administers his bread and wine. Nevertheless, that something radical could come from the Trust's work is testified to by the *New Christian's* emphasis on the need for change and that paper's admission that: "Granted that the life of the contemporary church is a very long way removed from what it ought to be, and believing that new life can only come through the actual death of the greater part of the existing structure, might not the application to the church of efficient management techniques simply provide a reinforcement for the present corrupt organisation, thus delaying that death which is essential to rebirth?"

Industry uses "efficient management techniques" in order ultimately to make more money. Some of the additional profit is derived from an improved product, but a far greater proportion is derived from cutting the cost of producing that product. The same principle will apply to the churches though it is hard to see exactly what the product of churches is without descending into the world of rescued souls and harvest festivals. That by reorganising their management and so on, the churches will achieve more converts seems highly unlikely. They may save money by cutting out middle men like suffragan bishops and streamlining their pay scale, but it is surely impossible to gain converts by any other means than improving the product itself. And the product the church sells is a way of life—albeit an escapist one—which cannot be altered without destroying the whole object of the Christian movement.

It would seem therefore, that the prospect of a reorganised church is not as daunting as it might initially seem. They may save money by reorganising their internal working and sacking those who don't pull their weight, but beyond a measure of redundancy there seems little that CORAT can achieve.

TIME FOR ACTION

THE RESIGNATION of Captain Terence O'Neil as prime minister of Northern Ireland surprised no one, and serves only as a reminder that the forces of action and reaction will mount simultaneously until the bubble bursts. What matters is not that O'Neil is gone and Chichester-Clark has come, but whether the bubble will burst with a large bang or a small fut. Chichester-Clark may push through a few reforms, though even this seems unlikely in view of his resignation from O'Neil's cabinet on the grounds that the passing of the 'one man, one vote' legislation might provoke the extreme protestants to bloodshed. He may even be able to pacify the country with a subtle blend of strong-arm tactics and soft-soap legislation. In the long term however, it seems inevitable that the Civil Rights Movement will escalate its campaign of disorder and demonstrations until the rights of individuals are brought at least into line with the situation in the rest of the United Kingdom. And as the forces of revolution mount, so will the forces of reaction, and with them comes the danger of large-scale bloodshed.

This could happen very soon. Chichester-Clark will have to exceed all assessments of himself to delay it. And there is the added danger of the impending release of the Reverend Ian Paisley from gaol. Even if the new prime minister can keep the situation merely simmering, there seems virtually no chance that a solution will ever come from the Unionist party, and no chance at all that any other body will ever be in a position to effect an answer. The so-called progressive Unionists are too weak and the rest disinclined, to redress the grievances of the Catholic civil rights agitators.

The solution must come from Westminster, and come fast, for already many informed observers consider that bloodshed cannot be avoided. But what can the British government do? It is within their power to impose a policy reform. They must work with the Stormont government, the Civil Rights leaders, and all representative bodies including for diplomacy's sake Paisley's New Presbyterian Church, to draw up a policy designed to halt the escalation of hostility and to redress all grievances as quickly as is diplomatically possible. The intervention of the British government will of course aggravate everyone from the extreme nationalist Catholics to the arch conservative

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Protestants. A military peace force would almost certainly be needed to keep the peace, and possibly have to remain for a period of years. However, it is better that the peace force should be British and impartial, rather than Northern Irish and recruited from the extreme protestant orange lodges, as will happen, and indeed is already happening.

It is thus to be hoped that Mr Wilson and his colleagues will face up to the fact that they have a duty to perform, before the loss of limbs and even lives compels them to act.

A LESSON FROM BELFAST

NORTHERN IRELAND as everyone now knows, if they didn't know last September, is a country where religion is deeply ingrained and indeed where it is fostered by an irrational hatred of the opposing religious group. In such a country one is bound to wonder about the activities of the Belfast Humanist Group and just how active it manages to be.

Their Annual Report has just been published and one is immediately struck by the high quality of its production. Entitled 'A Year of Activity and Consolidation', to the outsider it serves as a testimonial to the group as a whole. Founded in 1965 with 37 members, the group has grown to 112 members, 21 of these having joined during the past year. The group meets regularly twice every month. Once at the Northern Ireland War Memorial Building when a talk by an outside speaker is followed by discussion and once at the home of Michael Villiers-Stuart where informal discussion meetings are held and members are enabled to meet socially. In addition to these regular functions there are many irregular meetings which are described under the heading 'Entertainments'. These include such items as 'Point to Point Meeting', 'Ulster Folk Museum Visit', 'Weekend Trip to the Isle of Man' and 'Cocktails Un-

COMING EVENTS

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.

INDOOR

- Belfast Humanist Group: NI War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Belfast: Monday, May 12, 8 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.
 South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, May 11, 11 a.m.: "Humanism and the Protest Movement", David Tribe.

limited'. Including these irregular meetings the group meets at least three times very month.

The group has a Social Action Committee, which is concentrating on Day Nurseries, Abortion Law Reform, and Body and Eye Donations.

Perhaps the group's greatest success in the past year was their public meeting at which Dr Alan Milne and John D. Stewart spoke on 'Mortality without religion'. The meeting, which was attended by 175 people, was preceded by a poster campaign and a press conference and gained a good deal of publicity. During the year members of the group have appeared on television four times and members have given talks to various different organisations ranging from Belmont Presbyterian Young Wives to the Theosophical Society. In addition to this already exemplary degree of activity the group produces a monthly magazine, *The Realist*.

Many people ask the question: "What do Humanists do?" And nod approvingly when told of the activities of the national humanist bodies. These same people, though sympathetic, do not become humanists or join the movement, because they can see little that they can do personally. I would suggest that such people are given the Belfast Group's report. There are a few other groups, which are equally active. It can be, and must be, done everywhere.

IT AND HOMOSEXUALITY

THE RECENT police raid on the offices of *International Times* are a set back to those who thought that the police had discarded this sort of practice. Even those in favour of a limited censorship must groan at the reasons for the raid. Apparently there have been complaints from MPs of both parties—one would like to hear publicly who they are—about IT's making its columns available to lonely homosexuals. Surely, now that this much beleaguered and long-suffering section of society has at last been allowed to exist legally, they can be permitted to advertise for friends in the same way as heterosexuals. To deny them this service is no different from refusing a cripple a crutch.

It is to be regretted that despite the legality of their way of life, homosexuals still carry a stigma, which lays them open to blackmail. But even if this were the reason for the MP's concern, which it clearly isn't, people should be permitted to take risks of this sort if they want to.

As well as seizing the publication, and files, the police took away sixty letters addressed to box numbers. This is not only an untenable intrusion into the lives of those who wrote the letters, but brings to light the fact that there is nothing to protect people, who have advertised with box numbers, or written to box numbers, from being put on police records, and made to undergo an investigation, which would perhaps involve relations and employers, even if they are not guilty of any crime.

In addition to this IT's revenue from classified advertisement will very likely suffer, and it is well known that the paper depends heavily on the revenue it receives from this source.

It is time for the police's powers of search and arrest to be thoroughly overhauled and one earnestly hopes that the forthcoming government commission sub-committee report on this, will meet with more sense, and indeed courtesy, than did the report on cannabis. That such embarrassment could be caused to individuals, and hardship to organisations, merely because some MPs still disapprove of homosexuality, renders the law proverbially an ass in desperate need of a veterinarian.

THE SOLITARY SIN

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH has always done everything in its power to suppress every expression of sexuality. Since the first overt sexual expression is usually infantile masturbation, it is not surprising that the sin on which the greatest stress of all was laid was 'self-abuse'.

But at some point, masturbation ceased to be thought of as merely a sexual sin and came to be thought of as the specific cause of mental and physical disease, of madness and decay. The Church welcomed this view. It was obvious, they argued, that masturbation would lead to degeneration, since God would be bound to revenge himself on such sinners. It was for this same reason that Christians opposed any attempts to cure or prevent venereal disease.

In the case of masturbation, the Church did not need to rely on the pulpit and the confessional to spread the word—the doctors were only too willing to do the job for them:

"In order to prevent the repetition of the act of masturbation, and if possible permanently to cure the victim of this vice, boys often have to be put in a 'strait-jacket', sometimes have their hands fastened behind their backs, sometimes their hands are tied to the posts of the bed, or fastened by ropes or chains to rings in the wall; and in various other ways extreme measures have to be resorted to in the effort to save the person from total mental and physical self-destruction."

That description of the evils of masturbation was written by a doctor in 1897. Seventy years later we now know that masturbation is not only a natural but also a universal practice. This means that such hysterical outbursts as the one I have just quoted were not only absurd and harmful but also hypocritical, since the vast majority of those who condemned this 'vice' must themselves have practised it. Of course this knowledge has made no difference to the traditional Christian attitude; Catholics must still confess this 'mortal sin' to their priests or else they will burn in Hell.

Dr Alex Comfort devotes a whole chapter in his book *The Anxiety Makers* to the harmful absurdities that were written about masturbation in the previous centuries and in the early part of this century. But he gives no examples from the present. Does this mean that today's enlightened writers of advice to the young are no longer peddling this sort of pernicious nonsense? Not at all.

For example, Kenneth Walker in his book *The Physiology of Sex* (Pelican Books) writes:

"Unless control is exercised, the habit is likely to grow. He who practices it then feels that he is in the power of something that is stronger than himself. Self-reproach, shame and fear add their burdens, so that the masturbator becomes affected with the mentality of the slave and the lackey. He hates himself and his vice, and, fearing that his condition must be obvious to the whole world, tries to escape from his fellows."

It would seem that Mr Walker's purpose, with his use of words like 'slave', 'lackey' and 'vice', is the same as that of the doctor writing in 1897; he deliberately aims to frighten the young.

For another example here is an extract from Edward Griffith's book *The Road to Maturity*:

"Self-stimulation cannot be discovered by simply looking at a person, although it often accompanies a general slackness of character which can, of course, be noticed by friends and masters.

"It does not cause impotence in later life, although it cannot be denied that many people who have this trouble may have practised the habit at some time.

"Don't worry about it! However, it is advisable to avoid friends, books and situations which are likely to arouse sex feelings. There is no need to make the job more difficult by playing into the hands of the enemy."

This is an obvious case of double-talk. "Don't worry about it", says the author, and in the same breath informs his readers that masturbation is often a symptom of a character disorder, that many people who are impotent started off by masturbating, and that masturbation is an "enemy".

This sort of nonsense is all the more dangerous because it is often concealed behind a pseudo-liberal approach.

There is no such liberalism, pseudo or otherwise, in this example from J. A. Hadfield's book *Childhood and Adolescence* (Pelican Books):

"It is also necessary to mention another unfortunate effect of masturbation which applies to the girl rather than the boy; it is sometimes the cause of frigidity in intercourse. The fact is that in female sexuality the focus of sexual excitement before puberty is external, in the clitoris, and after puberty passes internally into the vagina in anticipation of sex intercourse. If, therefore, a girl masturbates by external stimulation before puberty and continues to do so after puberty, the centre of excitement tends to remain external, which means that although the girl as wife enjoys external stimulation and may get an orgasm that way, she has no particular pleasure in sex intercourse within the vagina and has no orgasm. Marriage may therefore be a disappointment to both husband and wife."

Dr Hadfield's words remind one of the nineteenth century English surgeon who, in order to prevent a girl from masturbating, would amputate her clitoris. It is bad enough to hear this kind of old wives' tales from anyone, but from a doctor it is inexcusable.

Despite all the evidence that masturbation is normal, which all the writers I have quoted admit, the basis of their attitude is still to promote guilt. This attitude towards masturbation is typical of the general desire to suppress all forms of adolescent sexual activity. They all believe that restraint is good for one:

"Most of the great achievements of the human race have come out of conflict; they haven't come out of an arm-chair life, in which you get things just when you want them. The struggle that results through having to postpone sex experience until long after we want it is part of the process that makes us into persons." Kenneth Barnes: *He and She* (Penguin Books).

This, of course, is merely a re-statement of the traditional Christian attitude:

"The men and women who are chaste in deed and thought are not to be pitied as immature and ignorant;

(Continued on page 151)

GOD AND LOGIC IN LANGUAGE

G. L. SIMONS

SECOND OF TWO ARTICLES

THE IDEA THAT religious statements are meaningless is an old one. It can be found in Hume, and modern philosophers who are sympathetic to this notion have acknowledged their debt to him. It was not, however, until the nineteen thirties that this idea was developed extensively to provide a conclusive repudiation of religious thought. The notion that religious propositions lack significance was first developed among the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle—such men as Carnap, Neurath, Godel, etc. Almost without exception they had an engineering or scientific background and it is hardly surprising that they developed a position hostile to metaphysics and theology. A. J. Ayer popularised their ideas in England with *Language, Truth and Logic* (first published in 1936).

The essential ideas of logical positivism consist in a tight definition of the two types of propositions which are capable of being meaningful: according to this schema significant propositions can be either empirical (the statements of science and common sense) or tautological (the statements of logic and mathematics). If a statement was not tautological (i.e. of the type "two plus two is four" or "all Englishmen are men") then it could only be shown to be meaningful by specifying what empirical evidence was *relevant* to its truth or falsehood. What was required here was not a conclusive proof or refutation of the proposition, but an indication of what conceivable evidence would be relevant to its validation.

From such principles the Principle of Verifiability was derived. Unless one could define the manner of verification of a statement then the statement was not simply false, but meaningless. And subjected to such a test the statements of metaphysics fared very badly. But curiously enough, atheism and agnosticism were also ruled out. I quote from *Language Truth and Logic*:

"... if the assertion that there is a god is nonsensical, then the atheist's assertion that there is no god is equally nonsensical, since it is only a significant proposition that can be significantly contradicted. As for the agnostic, although he refrains from saying either that there is or that there is not a god, he does not deny that the question whether a transcendent god exists is a genuine question . . . But we have seen that the sentences in question do not express proposition at all. And this means that agnosticism also is ruled out."

Despite this it is clear of course that the arguments favour the atheist case more than the religious. It is the theist who is trying to establish the existence of a supernatural order; most atheists would be quite satisfied if it could be conclusively demonstrated that it was impossible *in principle* to accomplish any such thing.

Today, however, for several reasons, the Verification Principle is in disrepute. A typical attack on it was based on the effort to ascertain whether it was meaningful according to its own criteria. A passage from Dr Frederick Ferré's *Language, Logic and God* is representative of this mode of attack:

"An embarrassing example of an assertion which is not meaningful when tested by the verification principle is—the assertion of the verification principle itself! . . . if the verification principle is not itself analytic, what actual or possible sense-experiences could be relevant to its verification or falsification? . . . sense experiences alone cannot even recognise the elementary logical distinction between 'analytic' and 'synthetic' statements *qua* marks on paper or noises uttered by the larynx; much less can it verify assertions about the logical character of their significance."

With this sort of objection the Verification Principle more or less expired, and attempts to resurrect it were unconvincing. From verificational analysis, linguistic philosophy swung to functional analysis—which is a completely different kettle of fish. Functional analysis is based on the premise that if language is used it is significant and furthermore "its meaning is its use". Put simply, this approach suggests that if two theologians are talking together then this very fact shows that their language has meaning. The task of the linguistic philosopher is to investigate this meaning according to the use of the language.

I personally have little sympathy with this approach. If the functionalist looks for the use and thus the meaning he will inevitably tend to assume that the meaning is related to the intentions of the users in a straightforward way. When people pray, for example, is their belief that they are communicating with a transcendent being meaningful or are they simply uttering certain sounds with a feeling of peace and comfort? The functionalist has no way of opting for either alternative unless he has a pre-conceived theory of meaning—which is the exact sin of which he accuses the verificationist. The functionalist cannot assess information that he derives from listening to various speakers unless he has a reference outside their immediate speech—and this he cannot have. In his eagerness not to prejudice the issue, he sacrifices the right to judge it at all.

Modern functional analysis is still fashionable, particularly at Oxford—but it is still open to effective criticism. (See, for instance, Gellner's *Words and Things*, which carries an approving introduction by Bertrand Russell. Russell, incidentally, also objected to logical positivism, and he outlines his criticism in a splendid essay towards the end of *Logic and Knowledge*.)

Thus although logical positivism, as a complete philosophy, has been refuted, one cannot turn to modern linguistic analysis for an effective repudiation of metaphysical language in general, and theological language in particular. I believe it is possible, however, to establish the conclusions of logical positivism without recourse to what was formerly its foundation, i.e. the Verification Principle. Such a procedure involves a close look at the logical nature of language and the way in which it began.

Words may be defined *ostensively* (by pointing at an object and saying the word) or *verbally*. Verbal definition necessarily implies that some words have already been defined ostensively: this means that ostensively-defined words are logically prior to verbally-defined words, and that a hierarchy of languages exists. Each language in the hierarchy depends for its meaning on an established language which is lower in the hierarchy, and since the ostensively-defined language is at the bottom of the hierarchy it is logically impossible for higher languages to attain meaningful concepts which are different in kind to those at the ostensive level. Thus, bearing in mind the early growth of language (as for example in the learning of a child) it is impossible to establish how a meaningful concept of transcendence can ever enter language at any level.

It is not open to the religious thinker to suggest that theological language may in fact acquire meaning in the manner we have suggested, since it is characteristic of religious language to stress the essential "otherness" of the important theological concepts. If the concepts are to be given meaning then they must be granted an empirical

connotation—and this fact has odd consequences for the religious believer. It means that “God”, for instance, denotes an entity that is limited by natural law, that is amenable to scientific examination, that can be changed or destroyed (granted an adequate hostile technology). For the theologian, therefore, “God” is a lump of energy or matter with physical attributes. There is no logical place for the transcendent, all-knowing, all-everything-else creature, so beloved of religious believers. And this point does not simply mean that such a being cannot exist—it means that *all talk about it is literal nonsense*, meaningless grunts and meaningless signs on paper. A conclusion from *Language, Truth and Logic* states the case, although Ayer arrived at the point in a different (perhaps invalid) way:

“The mere existence of the noun (God) is enough to foster the illusion that there is a real, or at any rate a possible entity corresponding to it. It is only when we enquire what God’s attributes are that we discover that “God”, in this usage, is not a genuine name.”

THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE “NATIONAL INTEREST” MICHAEL CREGAN

IF WE are to believe the well-harmonised voices of the Labour press, the Tory press, the Labour government and the Tory party, the whole of this country’s ills spring from a single source—strikes. And as the antidote, the government has prescribed a stiff dose of *In Place of Strife*.

But how badly is this country infected with “strike madness”? The protracted anti-unions campaign is (not surprisingly) unenthusiastic about pointing out that there are, believe it or not, other countries worse off in this. Australia, Canada, Italy, and the USA, for example, lose more working days than the UK through strikes. Nor, in the clamour for legislation, is much attention drawn to the fact that while Australia has had compulsory arbitration for some fifty years, and the USA has had, through the Taft-Hartley Act, a “cooling-off” period since 1947, the comparative figures of days lost per 1,000 men from 1958 to 1967 were:

USA—1,060	Australia—325	UK—250
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And *a propos* of the complaints about increasing strike losses in the UK, the figures are:

1958 to 1962—316	1962 to 1967—184
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In the light of these figures, why are the British Unions portrayed as more “irresponsible” than those elsewhere? And why—even if they are—is so much faith put in legislation to make them “behave themselves”?

More important than all this, however, is the tacit acceptance by advocates of *In Place of Strife* of the idea that society is so constituted that we can legitimately speak of, and act upon, the *national interest*.

A favourite illustration of this supposed interest is the homely image of the communal cake: we all get our slice of it, and so we all have an interest in making it larger, for in that way our own slice is bigger. And if this can be done by, say, anti-union legislation, the unions would be well-advised to acquiesce; after all, the result would be an increased portion for their members. This is the attitude which reached its apogee with the whimsical contemplation of a “Great Britain Ltd.” government some time ago.

It sounds plausible; but it rests on the assumption that in this country there are not conflicts of interest or fundamental antagonisms in society; or, to take over the image,

Think what the theologian does to talk of God as the “Supreme Being”. We derive our concept of a being from sentient creatures in the physical world. We can touch them, talk to them (and get a public verbal response); they eat physical food, procreate and die. None of these conditions is satisfied by the “Being” that the theologian calls “transcendent”. He subtracts all the qualities that make a being a being, transposes it into a purely fictitious realm, and give it a capital “B” to make it worthy of worship. But if our argument is sound all such attempts degenerate into literal nonsense.

When these points are fully understood I believe that they are seen to be inescapable. Religious argument is a non-starter simply because the essential concepts can never be made significant in language. The religious thinker tries to make a jump from the empirical ground of language to the “transcendent heights”. But what he attempts is, by its very nature, logically, linguistically and conceptually impossible.

that no section of the community is taking out of the cake more than its due share.

Unless this condition is met, appeals to the “national interest” are on a par with the appeal of a slave-owning planter’s exhortation to his slaves to work harder on the plantation as this will bring in increased profits, enabling him to give higher payment to those slaves. Undoubtedly it *would*; but the slaves would be misguided to identify their interests with that of the plantation. For there is no “plantation-interest”, merely the opposing interests of master and slave. When the unit contains irreconcilable antagonisms, appeals to its welfare are basically unreal.

If anyone objects that this analogy is far too exaggerated to apply to this country, I would reply that I have deliberately selected it as it illustrates with particular starkness the situation which obtains in our society. The welfare state has pulled a lot of the teeth of capitalism, and clad the nakedness of its selfishness; but that economy is still the economy of exploitation of one group by another. And while it remains this nation’s economic system, there can be no real *national* interest, only the interests of *groups within the nation*. A government which decides to end the economic struggle in the name of the over-riding interests of the nation must therefore decide to “freeze” the *status quo*, and perpetuate it; and in so doing freezes and perpetuates its injustices. It takes as its concern such questions as “What is the national income?” and not the vital ones such as “Who gets what from that income, and why do they get it?”

We should not be led away from the objects of social justice by the myth of the national interest, still less by its more emotional paraphernalia of flag-waving patriotism. Let us indeed have a bigger cake; but let us not forget that at present its division is a complete carve-up.

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FREE WILL A NECESSITY

R. STUART MONTAGUE

AT THE DAWN of human history the first men were in complete subjection to the natural elements. It was an epochal leap of freedom over physical necessity when man discovered fire by friction. The growth of consciousness was another qualitative leap in man's freedom of action: he became a tool-making animal and broke further away from his animal ancestry.

Like the animals he had adapted himself to nature and now he was able to transform it by his increasing knowledge of the laws of nature. Through the ages he struggled on in the labour process his freedom of will and action always relative, never absolute. Emancipating himself from the laws of nature he passed into a new realm of necessity, i.e. economic necessity.

Man became a slave to new laws of his own creation in social relations with his fellow man in producing the means of life and existence. The more he developed his forces of production the greater grew his subjection to the laws of economic necessity.

From primitive communism had arisen private property and class society, feudalism and our present bourgeois society. A world capitalist jungle of anarchy of production, world wars, conflict, contradictions, chaos and poverty in a world of potential plenty. This mode of production is doomed to extinction like its predecessors.

Social man will emancipate himself from economic necessity discovering the laws of his enslavement to the forces of wealth production. This will be the final triumph of man's consciousness over necessity and the leap to a new realm of freedom of world socialism which in turn proves to be necessity.

"The prologue of human history is played out and history begins" for man discovering the laws of motion of social history has learned how to use them to serve his mental and physical needs in the pursuit of happiness and a full life for all on this planet.

Another aspect of man's free will is what determines his choice of action. Primitive man's actions gave rise to ideas, ideas did not give rise to action or as Goethe says in Faust, "In the beginning was the deed" (action). From the material basis of primitive life arose consciousness and ideas and man changed his material conditions which generated new ideas.

Our bourgeois philosophers regard man free today to make any decision of action in disregard of his basic social existence. But why have groups of people thought and behaved differently during different periods of their social history? People only believe they choose freely to think this way or that or that it is human nature to act one way and not another.

The illusion is similar to the fable of the Weathercock and the Magnetic Needle of the Compass. "I am free, I turn in different directions, wherever I please, today this way, tomorrow that way", boasted the Weathercock. "And you, whatever way they turn you, you again come back to show the same fixed direction." "What freedom you have!" objected the Magnetic Needle. "Without your will you are dangled here and there. You are ordered around by the winds. There you turn at their will. Your freedom is short—from one puff of wind to another. You are influenced by the first and nearest wind, but as for me, I do not depend upon the caprice of nature and I maintain one direction

always. With my aid anyone may find the correct way." And the drop of rain would say, "Of my own free will upon the thirsty field below swiftly I fall".

In the same manner people believe their actions and ideas are completely and independently free. From social history and personal experience there are numerous examples illustrating that man's ideas, standards of value and behaviour are determined by the external world of his social existence.

The means of life of primitive society consisted mainly of hunting, fighting and fishing. The dominant ideal was bravery. In the ancient feudal regime the dominant ideals and standard of behaviour were chivalry, honour, loyalty. The concepts of bourgeois capitalism are again different reflecting the changed mode of wealth production.

There are instances where ideological concepts have remained constant in different historical modes of production. The social system of ancient Greece and Rome was based upon a slave economy. Wealth production being performed by slaves, free men were ashamed of such crude, degrading manual labour. There was a contemptuous attitude to important mechanical inventions in the process of such a method of production.

The same ideological concept can be seen in modern bourgeois society. However, it is speedily passing owing to the death struggle of the British capitalist class for world trade and markets in competition with new industrial giants such as state capitalist Russia, Japan and USA.

Until recent times the study of practical science and engineering was neglected and ostracised in the British public schools and universities. Developed material conditions of economic necessity have reflected a changed concept in the ideological superstructure.

One bourgeois periodical wrote three years ago: "Eton, for years regarded as symbolic of the public school anti-science bias, is now up-to-date and flourishing with a new science block costing £150,000".

One example from personal experience. When a young man I lived for sometimes in Buenos Aires. Riding in a city street car one day I noticed the Argentine conductor had a long nail on the little finger of each hand. Tactfully inquiring the reason for the two long nails he said it was to show that he was not a manual labourer.

This recalls the ancient custom of wealthy Japanese of binding the feet of their female offspring to arrest growth. Lord Donothing and Lady Doless command respect for their wealth and idleness while bourgeois society condemns the idle tramp. Again this traditional concept is doomed to the dustbin of history with the feudal system of which it is a relic.

However, while capitalism remains the mode of production it reflects our false standards of value and behaviour. Its dominant concepts are wealth and material possession, property and financial success. One of my oldest friends belongs to a well-to-do family. With capital plus thirty years of hard endeavour and the dominant will to become successful financially, he retired a few years ago a wealthy man. Continuing to speculate on the Stock Exchange he is doing very well indeed. He values men not by any qualities of character, intellect or moral concepts but by their material possessions. This is so typified in his graphic expression "Is he a man of substance?".

If the person in question owns property, a big house, land, stocks and shares and a large banking account then he is a valuable citizen and has my friend's deepest respect. Whereas if the said person is rich in intellectual accomplishments or a man of great character but poor in material possession then he is of no consequence.

My friend would be proud to admit he is no intellectual. There are no books in his big house in Somerset. The only reading matter I have ever seen there was the *Daily Express* and the current number of the *Stock Exchange Gazette*. (D. H. Lawrence once wrote: "A mosquito sucks your blood but he doesn't put it in a bank".)

From this brief outline of the materialist conception of history we see that "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness".

The future socialist world will be a new way of life resulting from the changed social relations in the forces of production. All the peoples of the earth will be occupied in free association producing wealth in abundance according to their varying abilities with free distribution throughout the world according to their various needs. (Today scientifically possible.)

Millions of people (bank clerks, insurance clerks, advertising agents, etc., and the millions in the world's military, naval, air and police forces) employed in useless work will be occupied in constructive pursuits. There will be no buying or selling, no world trade so money would be useless.

Readers of this brief essay might find it of interest to attempt to visualise the new concepts of value and standards of behaviour and the general socialist ideology in such a changed world society. The dreams of today are the realities of tomorrow.

BOOK REVIEW

PETER LEECH

FREEDOM AND RIGHTS: A. J. M. Milne (George Allen and Unwin, 60s).

ANYONE WHO might require a thorough account of the problems that are likely to arise in discussing freedom and rights will find Milne's book quite uniquely comprehensive. Any humanist who requires such an account will probably find himself very much in sympathy with the solutions Milne offers. The book is a paradigm of what humanist philosophy ought to be.

The plan is twofold: first, to examine the theories of freedom and rights that philosophers from Hobbes, Locke and Mill have offered; second, Milne himself wants to offer a theory constructed in the light of the difficulties raised in his historical account.

Freedom and rights have formed very much a backwater of philosophical studies in recent years, and it has been a worthwhile exercise to collect together, as Milne has done, some of the important ideas in one volume. The expositions are fair, and Milne's criticisms provoking.

But it is the synthesis which arises out of the historical account which is perhaps the more interesting. The theory is worked out in three phases, corresponding to three parts of the book: first, rationality in its relation to freedom and rights; second, humanism, the concept of humanity in morals and politics; and finally freedom and rights viewed in a perspective of critical humanism.

Rationality is not often considered a central feature of the moral life. 'Is it even rational to be moral?' we might ask. Milne answers:

"Because he is already a member of a particular society and is already caught up in its way of life, a rational agent has good reason, in determining his conduct, to take into account not only the maintenance and development of his personal well-being but also the claims of morality. If and when these come into conflict, he has good reason to give priority to the claims of morality. While it is rational for him to make his personal well-being a leading consideration in determining his conduct, it is not rational for him to make it an overriding one. That posi-

tion belongs to morality by virtue of his inescapable commitment to social living."

What is going to determine the agent's conduct, according to Milne, is how far the agent is prepared to accept a society's way of life as reflecting an adequate understanding of the world and of human life. The extent of this acceptance will of course then depend on the sort of concept of humanity the agent has (hence humanism). Freedom will consist in the self-determining nature of the agent deciding how far society is reflecting an adequate understanding of human life.

But a short notice can't do justice to *Freedom and Rights*. I would just further mention a substantial gesture Milne makes against the sort of question that humanists often encounter: 'Why be rational?' For Milne the question is meaningless. It asks, he says, 'What good reason have I to do what I have good reason to do?'

According to the author, *Freedom and Rights* is 'an essay in philosophical synthesis rather than mere philosophical analysis'. And it is refreshingly positive. Certainly it is a work which humanists in particular should find good reason to buy.

THE FREETHINKER FUND

WE WOULD like to thank all those mentioned below, who have contributed to the Freethinker Fund. In particular our gratitude must be extended to Mr R. G. Morton and Mrs N. Henson who have donated £247 and £102 respectively. The value of these kind gifts cannot be over-stressed. We are hoping to spend more money on advertising in the future and this in particular will make any further donations more than welcome. The following list includes all donations received during the quarter ending March 31.

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(Continued from page 147)

they are to be envied as healthy and strong, with their latent powers still unspoiled. It is very doubtful whether anyone has ever suffered psychological injury by a sound discipline when it is coupled with a positive and biblical ideal of sex." A. N. Triton: *The Christian View of Sex*.

The Christian attitude towards sex is undoubtedly immoral. Since this attitude is dependent on ignorance and fear, the answer is to face up to the realities of sex education.

There is nothing wrong or harmful about masturbation; it is a natural function. If we are to be honest with our children we must make this clear to them before adolescence—by the age of nine at the latest.

The attitude towards masturbation is typical of the general desire to suppress all forms of adolescent sexual activity. This is one of the reasons why our society is so sexually unbalanced. These attitudes must change. Of course it is better to copulate than to masturbate, but this means, not that we should pass on foolish advice about the dangers of 'self-abuse', but that we should help teenagers in their efforts to form sound sexual relationships.

LETTERS

Free Speech

WITH REGARD to Mr Simons's rambling "reply" of 26/4/69 to my two letters concerning free speech in Britain: it is pathetic that he should introduce a flaming red herring into the debate when he discusses, not free speech as such, but an article of mine that appeared four months previously on an entirely different subject! Yet even here Mr Simons blatantly perpetuates his distortions of my views—distortions which, ignoring the evidence, he calmly denies making. Referring to my article of 28/12/68, Mr Simons says: "To Mr Page our school- and housing-shortages are solely due to our population explosion". I challenge Mr Simons, or any other readers of the FREETHINKER, to demonstrate that I have made this sweeping and simplistic assertion. Mr Simons commits an equally gross blunder when, referring to the same article, he grandly declares: "Mr Page never once refers to the concept of class war". Had Mr Simons read the fourth paragraph of my article, he would have noticed an unequivocal reference to "a class war on a world scale"!

Mr Simons claims that in my article I say "nothing about the naked exploitation of workers". I would like to know how Mr Simons generously concedes that social progress has been made in the same paragraph, that I had explicitly alluded to "ruthless economic exploitation" as frustrating the aspirations of "mankind at large" for a higher standard of living; and Mr Simons seems impervious to the fact that my plea, in the same article, for "citizens to explore avenues for the more democratic control of their resources" was, in itself, tacit recognition of continuing exploitation and inequality. But Mr Simons is well aware that as my closely-packed article (prompted by Lord Ritchie-Calder's ecological address a few weeks before) was specifically devoted to problems of world population and natural resources, inevitably fleeting references to "economic exploitation" (in the Marxian sense) do not prove indifference to class conflicts or lack of awareness of them.

"Militant, articulate, knowledgeable and eloquent revolutionaries are completely excluded from all channels of mass communications". On that basis Herbert Marcuse is a running dog of Anglo-American capitalism and imperialism; on that basis the publication and popularisation, for a mass market in Britain, of works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao Tse-Tung, Che Guevara, and Cohn-Bendit become mythical or inexplicable. Mr Simons generously concedes that social progress has been made in Britain in the last 50 years; yet he refuses to believe that liberal forces have weakened and undermined British capitalism! What! Is Britain today the capitalist society that Marx so powerfully described and condemned? Mr Simons implies that he, GLS, would sanction the working-class (which he refuses to define) being urged to take up arms to end exploitation by para-military means. But where are the heroic bands of workers, armed to the teeth and ready, at a word from Chairman Simons, to purge their increasing misery in a sea of blood?

Mr Simons's avowal that the "working-class" will largely vote Tory at the next General Election is, in itself, an eloquent admission of the lack of revolutionary consciousness on the part of the British workers, and without that revolutionary consciousness class-war is a hollow concept. Yet Mr Simons claims the class-war is a "reality in most human societies today". By implication Mr Simons claims to be a Marxist; yet he fails to point out that the Maoist revolution (which he evidently admires) falsified Marx's theories of historical transition, and that Marx himself would hardly have echoed his fatuous support of a regime which seems determined to emulate its rival America in its violent internal dissensions and imperialistic foreign policy. Besides, what access do Mao's opponents have to the Chinese State media of mass communications to present their criticisms of the august decrees and personality cult of this quasi-divine figure? It is profoundly significant that a self-avowed Maoist should admit that social progress can be made under capitalism. The British Tories really should grant Mr Simons every facility for the public expression of his views: his flair for answering questions, his scrupulous regard for accuracy and his capacity for rational argument should guarantee Mr Heath an even more handsome majority at the next election.

MARTIN PAGE.

Worthwhile argument

I LISTENED with interest to the discussion on 'Religion in Schools' on the television programme *Today with Eamonn Andrews* on

April 25. One very good point was however, missed which I think is very important. One argument for keeping RI in schools was that it taught children the difference between right and wrong. But apparently all other religions and sects except the Church of England are allowed to abstain from attendance, so these children apparently would not be taught right and wrong in schools. However, the Humanist idea of teaching morality, ethics and good citizenship, which includes of course right and wrong (irrespective of any religion) would apply to everyone, as there could not possibly be any objection to such teaching. I hope humanists will take notice of this argument and bring it forward in any other discussions on the the subject.

LILIAN MIDDLETON.

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OBITUARY

THE DEATH of Ronald Standfast of Wallasey leaves a gap in the forces of Freethought in the Liverpool and Merseyside area where he was an active worker for the "Best of Causes" for over 30 years.

A journalist by profession he came to the Liverpool area from Bedford. Though ill-health dogged his footsteps it did little, until the last few years, to diminish his activities. A thorough going Freethinker demanding the freedom of expression on platform and in the press he was adamant on the rights of his opponents to equal facilities.

It was the privilege of the writer, on behalf of the Executive, to pay the final tribute to this warrior for Freethought at the Llandican Crematorium on April 19, and convey their sympathy to his widow and son.

W. COLLINS.

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