

Freethinker

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VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION

IN RECENT MONTHS protests have come from several quarters about the screening policies of the television companies. Conservatives have asserted that the BBC gives too much credence to progressive and leftist views. Mr Wilson and the Labour party have been angered on more than one occasion. Humanists continue to call for a reduction in the time allotted to religion. And, of course, Mrs Mary Whitehouse, her National Viewers and Listeners Association, and COSMO, the body which pulls in the other direction, continue to soldier on.

Recently too an Independent Television series, *Big Breadwinner Hog*, aroused so much protest due to the degree of violence screened in its first episode, that subsequent episodes were altered. Last week a booklet, entitled *Orange and Green*, was published by a Quaker body, the Northern Friends Peace Board. It is the result of five years study of the situation in Ulster and amongst other matters considers the relationship between violence and publicity in Northern Ireland. In his epilogue to the booklet the editor, Mr Arthur Booth, writes: "Television now brings violence right into our homes and thus accounts for much of the increased interest in Northern Ireland's affairs. Camera teams and pressmen tend to be more interested in situations which produce a punch-up or some similar news-worthy spectacle".

That what they see on television has a major effect on the population as a whole is perhaps best borne out by the fact that many thousands of pounds are paid out every night by companies who wish to advertise their products on the commercial network. The responsibilities of the men, who dictate the television companies' policies, are thus enormous and far in excess of those of any newspaper editor or proprietor. One can choose one's newspapers according to one's views and what one wants to read. There are only three television channels, and there is little or no difference in their policies regarding either their serious programmes or what they serve up as entertainment. Of course one can turn the television off, but in practice a great many people don't, either because they have nothing else to do, or because they are not in a position to discriminate a bad programme from a good one—a loaded argument or discussion from a fair one.

It is hard to accept that the small group of men, who decide what is screened should have so much power vested in them—particularly as they are not elected to their posts. However, this has to be accepted as inevitable. All one can do is plead that the views of as many people and bodies as possible are taken into account by the television potentates, and suggest fundamental criteria, which though acceptable to the vast majority are not always strictly adhered to by the policy-makers. The FREETHINKER has no need of a battle-cry, but once again may one call for the presentation of the truth, and adherence to the dictum that facts are facts, opinions are opinions and the two should never be confused. At present this principle could be more assiduously applied to discussion programmes. However, when news coverage and documentaries are con-



sidered the principle may not provide a panacea, because a dilemma arises between Mr Booth's point that continual live presentation of violence is liable to engender more violence, and the point that individual consciences are more likely to be aroused by the sight of violence and bloodshed, than they are if they just know about its existence. This last is borne out by Oxfam's policy of utilising heart-rending photographs in order to appeal for funds. As Mr Booth has said camera teams tend to focus on anything violent, but one wonders whether, were they to present violence in a true ratio to its part in, say, a demonstration, there would not be an increase in the apathy of the public towards the need for peace. Thus, a shadow is already cast on the call for truth, because a biased news report may well awaken more awareness than a strictly factual one.

There can be no solution to this dilemma, save to exhort the man in command, who in a live news broadcast will be a fairly minor director on the spot, to consider the effects on the viewers of what he screens and of the balance he makes between, say, small scuffles and an orderly march.

On the more general question of violence on television as it appears in films, series and plays, one decries all violence shown just for the sake of increasing the adrenalin output of the viewers' glands. At the same time, one is

(Continued overleaf)

Freethinker

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The views expressed by the contributors to FREETHINKER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

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well aware that something in the order of a general strike would result from the sudden withdrawal of all programmes which use violence in this way. The alterations made to *Big Breadwinner Hog* are however, a sign both that the authorities are moving in the right direction and more important that public protest does have an effect. In this light one feels justified in pointing out to the policy-makers that aggression is something, which most thinkers are agreed should be subdued in any way possible, and therefore that the more adrenalin they can cause to flow by other means the better.

A PARABLE?

IN PAST CENTURIES many deaths could be blamed directly on the activities of religious fanatics. Crusades, holy wars, inquisitions, and the burning of heretics were commonplace. Part of the apathy currently noticeable amongst modern freethinkers can be put down to the fact that the evils of religion have become far less noticeable. There is, of course, much under the surface, and indeed most of the wars in progress today can be traced to fundamental differences of religious ideology. The harm done by religious fanatics is also revealed by a close scrutiny of the results of the rabble-rousing of such self-styled evangelists as Billy Graham.

But even these examples are too subtle for the public, and it is thus small wonder that it is hard to get across the more obscure, but nonetheless real, arguments against religion in practice—such arguments as stem from the fundamental fact that religion shackles men's minds and leads to wrong decision taking, suffering and unhappiness.

Because of this difficulty in bringing to the surface the evils of religion, it is justifiable to draw attention to a

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, July 14, 8 p.m.: Tape recording and discussion.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, July 13, 11 a.m.: "Moral Education" H. J. Blackham, BA.

recent occurrence, which could perhaps be thought so extraordinary as to be unworthy of comment.

Mrs Alice Couch had been suffering from depression for some months since the death of her husband. Recently her condition had been improving. Two Jehovah's Witnesses called at her home, and in the opinion of her son, "she invited them in because she wanted someone to talk to". In the course of a conversation, which lasted two hours, the Witnesses told her that the world would end in eight years and that she "would meet everybody again then". The next morning she was found dead in her bed, having taken an overdose of drugs. At the inquest the coroner suggested to her son that the visit of the Witnesses "must have stirred things up a lot". Her son replied, "Yes. It was the final straw". The coroner recorded a verdict that Mrs Couch had killed herself while suffering from depression. He added: "This lady seemed to be recovering when she had a visit from the Jehovah's Witnesses. It appears it may have been well meant but if you knock on someone's door you do not know the state of their health".

Now, the point of regurgitating a story which is both distasteful and horrifying, is not to offer a direct counter to the argument that the religious life is one of altruism and leads to fulfilment. For the Jehovah's Witnesses are not the general run of religious people. Nevertheless, it is undeniably true that the irrational beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses are of precisely the same type as those of all religious people. Mrs Couch's death was greatly contributed towards by the irrationality of those two Jehovah's Witnesses. As her son said: "... they talked her round to their way of thinking". The irrationality of most religious people is less blatant than that of the Witnesses, but it is still irrationality, and as such no less deadly. If anything the more subtle forms of unreason are more dangerous than the relatively obvious ones. Most people can see a bus bearing down on them and get out of the way in time, but something which doesn't show itself like a slate falling off a roof is much more likely to claim a victim.

One could make loud protests and support Mrs Couch's son who said after the inquest: "I think it is very dangerous sending these young boys round to visit people without knowing anything about them". One could demand the restrictions be placed upon the activities of such as these Jehovah's Witnesses, but far more important is to draw attention to the more insidious danger represented by the more devious forms of religion.

"WHATEVER IT WAS"

FREETHINKERS MAY have been somewhat galled by the religious ritual which played a part in the investiture of Prince Charles, especially since the ceremony was broadcast to most parts of the world. However, those who feel strongly that a ritual to which the majority of Britons attach no significance, should not appear as an example of the British way of life, may feel that a remark made by the Prince during his television interview with Brian Connell and Cliff Michelmore redresses the balance.

Saying that he sometimes found it hard to be sympathetic to minorities, Prince Charles went on to say: "It makes one very angry sometimes and annoyed that people should get worried about something seemingly so trivial. Like for instance, the Sunday Observance Society, whatever it was, with our performance at Trinity which was stopped. It did seem rather silly".

So the Prince, who has recently won the hearts of most of his countrymen, has made an enemy of at least one group, even if he isn't quite sure what they call themselves.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

ERIC WILLOUGHBY

THE THREE most important virtues Christians should possess, according to Paul, are faith, hope and love (translated charity in the King James version). Of these, says Paul, the most important is love, provided it fulfils a multitude of conditions. These could be summarised to mean that the love Paul speaks of should be sincere, but towards all mankind.

From the original quotation it would seem that faith, which one would presume to be the primary element of a religion, takes second place. As for hope, it would be nice to think that this was the only commodity Christians have remaining to them. Their arguments for the existence of God, divinity of Jesus, Hell, and so on are no longer valid. The power of the church in modern society, though still considerable, is diminishing and only a small percentage of education is now in religious hands entirely (what little there is, however, is heavily subsidised from the national economy).

Faith and hope having been summarily cast aside, let us try to examine this love, which surely must be of an extraordinary nature and very desirable. The love Paul speaks of can, according to him, be both sincere and universally applicable, that is to say it can be extended by one person to all other people, familiar or unfamiliar to him. I find it difficult to believe in such love. The kind of love which one has for all and sundry cannot, I contend, be as sincere as the love for one's wife or children. Some religious apologists have made themselves unpopular by suggesting as an excuse for the very point I have made that perhaps Paul was thinking about the sort of love a person may have for a particular holiday resort or building. But this connotation is merely an example of the way in which a word's meaning changes or diversifies over the years and can be hardly accredited to Paul.

Before examining whether or not the love we are seeking is evident in the church today or in its history, the point of view should be mentioned that sincere love ("without dissimulation" in the Bible) can only be strictly personal, as many learned people would contend. Love for a fiancée is an example, although love for one's parents may be in many cases grudging or insincere because of a personal grievance or even ill-treatment. Yet even in these extreme cases sincere love shows itself in times of illness or death of the parent.

What I am concerned to discover is the source of the love Paul mentions, and whether the intimate love we have for our closest companions and relatives can be communicated to those people of whom we only have any knowledge from newsfilm and the press. Psychologists could perhaps provide the answer.

At the beginning of our quest perhaps we should examine the life of Paul to test whether sincere, universal love becomes obvious. We are told how fiercely he persecuted Christians before he joined their number, so it is at least possible that he had sadistic tendencies of the variety sometimes seen in religious fanatics. Studying his letters, or more correctly the portions of the Bible attributed to him, one can hardly fail to sense an atmosphere of dominance. The writer seems to revel in his own power to give instructions; he frequently refers to his addressees as "little children" and it could well be that he was a megalomaniac. Certainly Paul had many neuroses. Prior to his "conversion" he is depicted as a statesman, with the power (frequently exercised) to put people to death at will. On be-

coming a religious, his former glory was deprived him and it would seem logical that he was hungry for authority as a result. Hence any expressions of love in the letters of Paul to his converts must be viewed in the light of a power lust. The love we are seeking is not exemplified by Paul.

The next avenue for our search could well be the church as it exists today. I do not believe there is a great deal of love evident here. It seems to be as much as he can do, for a Christian of one denomination to pass the time of day with a Christian of another, let alone show any signs of love for mankind generally. If the church does hold the key to the love store, is this the type of love which divides Northern Ireland today? Can it be the love which launched the Crusades? Can it be the love which conducted the Inquisition? And can it be the love which thirsts to indoctrinate our children at every opportunity so that they will grow in fear of everlasting punishment after death? No, I do not believe the church helps us at all in our quest.

What are the modernist religious approaches to Paul's oft misquoted phrase? Throughout history, Christian theology has become more and more complicated, with internal disputes, splinter-groups and, it is to be hoped, its casualties in the battle against freethought. The result is, need I say, that each denomination interprets Paul's words differently. The non-conformist would maintain that love was the basis of Christianity, forgetting for the time being the derivation of the name of his religion. Yet the non-affiliated Christian is probably the most non-loving Christian of all. He is the most arrogant of believers, maintaining that all denominationalism is wrong, and that God likes to be worshipped individually, on a freelance basis, as it were. Which of course may be true. Another blind alley.

Where do we go from here? The thought springs to mind that our quest need never have taken us beyond our own doorstep, perhaps. In short, freethought/humanism may be the custodian of the commodity we have been seeking.

Certainly the principles of humanism seem to meet the criteria detailed at the outset, advocating as they do so many features designed to foster better relations between people generally. By no stretch of the imagination, however, could every individual who identifies himself with humanistic principles be said to sincerely love mankind as a whole, but then neither can it be said of Christians, as we have seen. Humanists do, as a rule, exhibit the kind of concern for their fellow-men which could reasonably be expected from someone who professes to love all mankind sincerely, whereas Christians do the latter perpetually, and the former never.

It would be not quite logical from this brief examination to conclude that Paul was a humanist; for one thing, I am not quite certain that modern humanists would be happy to count him among their antecedents. But once again Christianity has unwittingly laid the foundations for an ideal which it alone could never achieve, for this is the realm of humanism, both in concept and culmination.

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RUSSELL AND VIETNAM

G. L. SIMONS

EIGHTH OF NINE ARTICLES

TAKE A FEW hundred thousand children—blow their limbs off with high explosive and burn them to death with napalm where possible; torture and rape their mothers; torture and kill their fathers; burn their villages; terrify their grandparents into insanity; drop chemicals to kill the crops, to kill sick people, pregnant women, old people; slaughter the cattle; accelerate the spread of disease; bomb a simple people incessantly; steal their possessions and destroy their institutions; and all the while—torment, terrify, abuse and kill. Do all this in the name of Christian charity and Western freedoms—and you have Vietnam. It is natural that sensitive men and women should react with revulsion and horror at what the successive American governments have decided to do with Vietnam. With Bertrand Russell's passionate concern for suffering mankind his involvement with the fate of the Vietnamese people was inevitable.

His first opposition to American policy came under the auspices of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation—a device constructed to examine ways in which the world could be induced to move towards sanity and peace. The Foundation was created with general terms of reference; there was no special preoccupation with Vietnam. But when the Vietnam conflict grew, Russell's energies became focused on the most serious threat to mankind and the most serious persisting crime against any people. His disgust with American policy and the tacit support it received from the British Labour Government led him to tear up his Labour membership card, organise The International War Crimes Tribunal, and write a host of pamphlets and articles which were to circulate throughout the world.

The Tribunal had Russell as Honorary President, Jean Paul Sartre as Executive President, and Vladimir Dedijer as Chairman and President of Tribunal Sessions. The members of the Tribunal were internationally acknowledged writers, philosophers and scientists, and they included Gunther Anders, Simone de Beauvoir, Stokely Carmichael, Isaac Deutscher, Amado Hernandez, Kinju Morikawa, Shoichi Sakata, and Laurant Schwartz. Tribunal Commissions were created with particular interests. In due course, hearings were held after great difficulty in finding a site. At one stage the hearings were to be held in Paris, but at the last minute the French government refused permission. They were finally held in Sweden. Witnesses were heard and verdicts were reached, and no-one was surprised at the conclusions. The American Government was condemned and there were cursory references to the verdict in the Press and broadcasting. People hostile to the Tribunal made much over the fact that the outcome was predictable—a point not thought to tell against the Nuremburg Nazi trials. Bertrand Russell supplemented the work of the Tribunal by producing a range of articles, arguing the factual case against American aggression, preaching with passion, and struggling with unflagging zeal to make the world—and particularly the American people—aware of the atrocities that were being committed in the name of decency and freedom.

The Russell appeal was essentially one to the conscience of mankind. A leaflet was put out asking for support for the Tribunal and included the following:

"We command no state power; we do not represent the strong; we control no armies or treasuries. We act out of the

deepest moral concern and depend upon the conscience of ordinary people throughout the world for the real support—the material help, which will determine whether people of Vietnam are to be abandoned in silence or allowed the elementary right of having their plight presented to the conscience of mankind."

And Russell also produced specific appeals to Americans serving in the armed forces in Vietnam, and to the American people as a whole. One appeal was entitled 'Message from Bertrand Russell to American Negro Soldiers in Vietnam', in which Russell pointed out that the percentage of Negroes sent to Vietnam was very much higher than the percentage of Negroes in the United States:

"You know that 30 per cent of the US army in Vietnam consists of American Negroes. You are used to fight the dirty wars of the Johnson Government, not only because the US Government assigns to its Negro population the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs, but because the Johnson Government fears courageous and alert Negro men in the United States, who will defend their people against racism, poverty, police brutality and death." (The document in which this appears is dated 19/9/66—Russell was 94 years of age.)

And in an *Appeal to the American Conscience, The Western and US War Crimes, and Free World Barbarism: The War of Atrocity in Vietnam*, Russell catalogued the actual horrors that were being committed against helpless prisoners and civilians in Vietnam. Many of the examples that Russell cites have been published in Western newspapers and have been verified by quite independent observers. The following example, which is by no means untypical, was verified by the International Control Commission (I am quoting only one example but I could include many more—the text is by the Australian journalist, Wilfred Burchett):

"The girl bared her right shoulder. I wanted to vomit. The satiny skin ended in small, cauliflower-like eruptions, where the flesh had been torn out with red-hot pincers. There were half-a-dozen searing scars on the upper part of the arm. The girl was tortured for months. She had soapy water and urine forced down the mouth and nostrils, electricity applied to the vagina and nipples, flesh torn from the breasts, thighs and shoulders by red-hot pincers, a ruler thrust into the vagina. These were interspersed with beatings, starvation and milder forms of torture."

On the 24th May, 1966, Russell issued a statement to the people of South Vietnam in which he praised them for their heroism. The statement was broadcast on the radio of the National Liberation Front, and it contains a significant sentence: 'You have given hope to the oppressed people in three continents, by the example of your courage and the astonishing successes you have recorded'. Clearly Russell sees the Vietnam struggle in the context of the world scene and in the context of American imperialism.

In 1967 Russell published *War Crimes in Vietnam*, an Unwin paperback. In it are collected some of the articles to which I have referred and additional ones were written for publication. To me one of the most interesting essays in this book is 'Peace Through Resistance to US Imperialism' (pp 94 to 100). Here Russell recognises the oppression of underdeveloped countries by America: the indictment is clear and unmistakable, and it represents the final stage in Russell's long political development. The new phrases in Russell's political writings are far removed from the days of *German Social Democracy*: the phrases are no longer those of the comfortable liberal.

"Unimaginable vast quantities of foodstuffs are calculatedly destroyed by the rulers of US capitalism, for no other purpose than the continuation of their profits and the retention of their power. Like vultures the handful of the rich batten on the poor."

the exploited, the oppressed. . . . The industrial production of Western capitalism is consciously employed not only to perpetuate the hunger that exists in the world, but to increase it vastly for profit. . . . When US capitalists hoard food and poison it they not only deprive the starving, but force the developing countries to buy food at high costs. The riches of the earth are destroyed, wasted, stolen by the few and used to murder the millions. 3,300 military bases are spread across the planet to prevent the people from destroying this evil system. . . . Wherever there is hunger, wherever there is exploitative tyranny, wherever people are tortured and the masses are left to rot under the weight of disease and starvation, the force which holds down the people stems from Washington. . . . A world free of exploitation and foreign domination, a world of well-being for the masses of all continents, a world of peace and of

fraternity, has to be fought for. . . . Let us join together to resist US imperialism."

Vietnam has opened many eyes as to the meaning of American power. Vietnam has helped to educate the American people about the evil nature of the system under which they live. Vietnam has united true radicals the world over, and given heart to millions of people in scores of countries in their fight to throw off exploitation and oppression. A substantial part of the awareness in the West as to the significance of Vietnam has been made possible by the work of Bertrand Russell and his colleagues.

THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

KATHLEEN BAL

ROBERT OF CLARI was a knight and vassal of Pierre of Amiens who took part in the fourth Crusade (1201-1204). This crusade was diverted from its apparent goal, the Holy Land and the French united with the Doge, Dondolo, and the Venetian fleet of two hundred ships to restore the Byzantine Emperor, Isaac Angelus, to his throne. They attacked the Christian Greek city of Constantinople.

Robert of Clari was an illiterate man, as were so many of the knights of his time. But he was very observant and had a good visual memory. He fought outside the walls of Constantinople in July 1203 and was in the final attack in April 1204. He saw the destruction of the great palaces and halls, and the pillaging and looting of great art treasures, many of which were brought to Europe.

Eleven years later Robert of Clari recalled the events he had witnessed and the sights he had seen, dictating his story.

"When the city was captured and the pilgrims were quartered and the palaces were taken over they found riches more than a great deal."¹ He describes the Church of the Blessed Virgin of the Pharos, "which was so rich and noble that there was not a hinge nor band nor any other part such as is usually made of iron that was not all of silver and there was no column that was not of jasper or porphyry or some other rich precious stone". He goes on to tell us about the relics (bogus or otherwise) which the chapel possessed and about the image of St Demetrius which was painted on a panel.

"This image gave off so much oil that it could not be removed as fast as it flowed from the picture." Maybe the panel painter had struck an oil-well, better still, one can envisage a cistern of oil concealed behind the panel, duly replenished by the monks, while the gullible and miracle-seekers, flocked to the chapel with their pitchers, filling the vessels with oil and the coffer with donations in thanksgiving.

The Church of Saint Sophia defies description in its richness and treasures. In the church there were domes "round all about which were borne by great and very rich columns and there was no column that did not work cures. There was one that cured sickness of the veins when it was rubbed against, and another that cured sickness of the side, and others that cured other ills". The doctors of Constantinople must have been out of business.

"The master altar of the church was so rich it was beyond price, for the table of the altar was made of gold and precious stones broken up and crushed all together . . .

this table was fourteen feet long. Around the altar were columns of silver supporting a canopy over the altar which was made just like a church spire and it was all of solid silver and was so rich that no-one could tell the money it was worth."

The author describes the Hippodrome where the Greeks used to watch the Games, the area of which was hedged by gigantic bronze statues of lions, bears, other animals and human figures. "And the French looked at the Games of the Emperor in wonder when they saw it."

A rather amusing description tells us of the two columns elsewhere in the city on top of which hermits used to live in little shelters. "On the outside of these columns there were pictured and written by prophecy all the events and all the conquests which have happened in Constantinople or which were going to happen. But no-one could understand the event until it had happened."

However, the conquest of Constantinople had been realistically depicted. Words written on pictured ships said that a people with short hair and iron swords would come from the West and destroy Constantinople, and indeed it had come to pass. Two Christian nations purporting to be on a Christian mission to rescue the Holy Places from the Heathens, turned against a fellow-Christian city, famous for its fantastic wealth and art treasures, and broke its back.

Constantinople never recovered. Fires destroyed much of the city including its great library, invaluable and irreplaceable. Its wealth was lost.

¹ All extracts from *A Documentary History of Art*, Vol. I, by Elizabeth G. Holt.

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BASIC IDEOLOGIES

G. F. WESTCOTT

I USE the term "basic ideologies" to cover all those more or less organised systems of ideas and habits which influence human conduct by mediating between, on the one hand, our subjective instincts, tendencies, emotions and feelings and, on the other hand, our sense and our abstract more intellectual faculties.

Basic ideologies connotes more than comparative religions; it covers not only religions, but also agnosticism, atheism, political beliefs and those ideologies which cannot be expressed explicitly in words, such as those of some artists, mystics, etc. Everyone has a basic ideology, as well as other ideologies, more or less separate, which deal with his work, interests, hobbies, etc.

As I see the situation, man's behaviour, and attitude to life is controlled by a complex system, which has been evolved over millions of years, in which methods have been developed in succession, and in which the later methods generally exercise some control over the earlier ones.

Human groups appeared in very early times. Later, language helped to strengthen these with a clear, common ideology and purpose, and rapid communication; later changes in the mind and social methods were evolved which enabled larger and larger groups, nations and civilisations to be formed through indoctrination by making individuals exclusively dependent on, and have trust in, the ruling classes and particular ideologies.

The mental changes may have been evolved by extending to other people and to ideologies the very early instinct of the child to become attached to, and to become dependent on, its parents, particularly its mother. There is also the possibility that a tendency was evolved to think along certain lines, which Jung called archetypes, such as the myths of miraculous birth of the hero and of salvation by the sacrifice of a perfect victim.

Among methods of indoctrination are repeated assertions, the pleasure-pain principle and various kinds of mental suggestion, including social conventions.

These mental changes and social methods are inherited by modern man. They may be called "faith-producing factors".

Man has to react continually with his environment (including other people and society) and, usually, has to respond quickly. His mind is a marvellous instrument, but is limited in the amount of information it can store, recall and analyse rapidly so as to reach quick logical responses. Faith-producing factors, by simplifying problems, help people to make rapid socially-acceptable (even if erroneous) decisions on inadequate evidence.

Civilisations, in the past, were usually united and governed by a two-fold structure: (1) a civil government, relying ultimately on force, and (2) a religious organisation, usually supporting the civil government, by providing supernatural sanctions. Both these structures rely largely on the faith-producing factors to produce dependence on, and trust in, them and so ensure social cohesion.

Religions generally rely on the acceptance, as actual historical events, of traditions, myths and superstitions from the past, and on the acceptance of conventional morality as eternal ethical truths. This reliance is shown, for example, in most forms of Christianity, as is also the use of faith-producing factors. It is common experience that, with wholehearted faith, the believer will explain all his experiences in terms of his faith.

Perhaps the religious use of fear may be mentioned. This is easily produced, for example, by asserting that certain (perhaps quite natural) thoughts and actions are sins, forbidden by God, and therefore punishable unless forgiveness can be obtained by the services of the church, its ministers and its doctrines.

Today, owing to better education, improved communications (including television), and increased travelling, religions in this country are losing their credibility and social influence. Unbelievers must build up their own basic ideologies on evidence they can trust, such as scientific data capable of confirmation by experiment.

I suspect that the human mind, because of its capacity limitations and the distortions due to its faith-producing tendencies, is not capable of producing a satisfactory basic ideology for today's use by itself alone. Even psychologists, it seems to me, pick and choose elements of their theories from various sources by faith, and so differ from one another in their opinions.

Possibly "thinking machines" of the future will be able to store far more accurate information than the human mind, and be able to analyse it and provide objective solutions to problems, without the distortions and over-emphasis inevitable with human minds. One can imagine thinking machines able to change their initial programming in the light of experience, asking for additional information when badly needed and estimating the probable accuracy of the theories they create to cover the datories they have been given. There are almost unlimited possibilities. Man must, however, take the greatest care that thinking machines are kept completely under his control.

It must be realised that human beings are what they are, including their imperfections and obsolescent tendencies, because they have been evolved. We all possess faith-producing factors. I think it is probable that, for happiness and health, all our faculties should be exercised or satisfied. We must find out how to do this without harming others. Perhaps the arts and recreations will be developed for this purpose.

For the present, then, it would seem that, to improve human mental stability and increase happiness, we should: (1) develop sciences, particularly those relating to human nature, (2) improve the performances of our computers, and (3) expose unsupported myths and superstitions for what they are.

We will always differ from one another. Those who cannot be satisfied with the uncertainty and changes of the hypotheses and theories of science and its agnostics, where evidence is inadequate, will probably adopt some religious type of ideology; and so on. But life should be more enjoyable when we can understand why we differ and so make allowances for, and even, perhaps, communicate better with, one another.

BOOK REVIEW

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH WORKING CLASS: E. P. Thompson (Penguin, 958 pp; 18s).

THIS BOOK, which was originally published in 1963, is already a classic of Marxist scholarship. In the best tradition of Marx himself, Thompson's marxism is deeply humanist in its overriding concern for human freedom and its analysis of the way in which the institutions of class society warp that freedom. For Thompson, the making of the English working class is a record of the struggle of men to escape from the 'alienation' of class society and to

develop genuine liberty. Yet the concept of class, which is critical for any Marxist analysis, is not reduced to an abstract construct imposed by theoreticians on the complexity of human existence. For Thompson, class is an historical process in which men come to realise that they have certain interests in common, in a given social and cultural context, and proceed to act on the basis of this unity. The contribution of the working class to the making of history stems from the perennial struggle of real people in a real context, as Thompson puts it, against their rulers and oppressors. History is not a record of the multitude of human relationships and activities in all their diversity, but of the patterns formed by men in their relationships, ideas and institutions. And the nature of historical change can only be understood by reference to the power struggle between the various classes in society.

Thompson's principal argument is that between 1780 and 1832 most English working people began to feel an identity of interests between themselves, set apart from the interests of their rulers and employers. The development of a conscious and insurgent working class was the most important feature of English history in these years, and other changes (such as the pressure for parliamentary reform) can only be understood in relation to it. The new self-awareness of working people was derived from the changing mode of production—the industrial revolution—which forced agricultural workers to migrate to the new factories and cities, there to be herded in appalling squalor and misery.

The orthodox Marxist position is that capitalism brings about an objective deterioration in workers' living standards, which is an essential prerequisite for the development of class consciousness and the will to revolution. Hence Thompson's case rests on the assumption that such a deterioration did actually occur between 1780 and 1832, by which time he considers that the English working class were in a properly revolutionary mood. One of the central themes of the book is the quality of life for the mass of the people under early capitalism in England, and Thompson has sought to answer the defence of industrialisation developed by historians such as Ashton, Clapham, Hayek and Smelser. Broadly speaking, these historians have argued that the familiar economic indices of wages and prices demonstrate that the standard of living of the mass of the workers rose between 1750 and 1832, whilst Thompson's point is that living standards declined. The discrepancy between these points of view is explained partially by the different time periods taken (Thompson deals with the period from 1790, not 1750), but mainly by the disagreement as to what the phrase "living standards" means. Thompson argues brilliantly that the quality of life deteriorated, even if real wages improved. The onset of industrialisation made possible a vast increase in productivity and hence an eventual rise in real wages—but at the cost, as Thompson shows, of a sharp dislocation of the pattern of life of the new industrial proletariat. The earlier family-based economy gradually gave way to a factory-based capitalist system imposing unfamiliar and arduous work routines, involving not only the overcrowded and chaotic mess of urbanisation but also a reduction in the ordinary social and political rights of the newly urbanised workers. Old and remembered village rights, the careful paternalism of medieval society, the (limited) freedom of the village labourer to work for himself rather than another—all these were swept away and replaced by the "wage slavery" of capitalism.

Resistance to oppression such as that suffered by the English working class may take either political or religious forms. Thompson shows that a large number of English workers at one time placed their trust in the millennialist Joanna Southcott, who claimed to give her followers a special seal or, as Thompson caustically comments, "a sort of promissory note that the bearer should inherit the Tree of Life to be made Heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ". The Church of England came under attack from the radical Methodists and their working class supporters for its association with rich landlords conspiring to keep up the price of bread. The function of Wesleyan Methodism, according to Thompson, was to hivel off revolutionary fervour into religious and apocalyptic channels; this "ritualised form of psychic masturbation" provided an acceptable outlet for passions and drives which might otherwise prove dangerous to social order.

Discontent and disaffection also took a more political form. The revolt of the Luddites against the introduction of machinery and consequent redundancy was an example of the sporadic and intermittent class struggle continually breaking out in the late eighteenth century. Thompson points out that movements such as the Luddites shatter the fabian myth that social change in England is always "gradual", "constitutional" and peaceful, on account of the innate respectability of the English working man, etc., etc. On the contrary, Thompson demonstrates that the movement of the Luddites was widespread and had meaningful revolutionary aspirations. It led to a polarisation of the class struggle, as witness the state attack on the working class demonstration for electoral

reform at Peterloo in 1819 where eleven workers were killed and hundreds injured. At that time, with a reactionary government in power following the Napoleonic wars, it was inconceivable that there could be any concession to a working class movement on parliamentary reform; to move an inch would be to undermine the whole basis for rule by property. Yet by 1832 the pressures could no longer be resisted. The reform bill of that year recognised the strength of the workers' movement by granting the vote to the middle class and thus paving the way to the democratisation of society. Even though there were plenty of middle class reformers to put their own case by 1832, it is incontestable that the working class led the nation and provided the necessary agitation for parliamentary reform. Naturally, the pressure could not be lifted; and despite the gloomy forecasts of impending doom from Walter Bagehot and other classical liberals the franchise was further extended in 1867 and 1884 to give the vote to the workers, as a result of continuing ferment.

In a short review one cannot hope to indicate the scale of Thompson's work or to show the enormous range of his intellect and analysis; this book is a major contribution not only to the political, social and economic history of the period but also to historical sociology. Most Marxist writers seem in a mysterious way to remove all traces of humanity from their dry formulations; Thompson never forgets that historians deal with individual human beings, not statistical fodder, who managed in the face of great adversity to create a culture of life and vitality, and to assert their own identity as individual men who nonetheless came together as a class, to act in the interests of all. The whole book is a refreshing contrast to the prevailing ideology of our times that people are no longer people but objects for manipulation.

LETTERS

Russell, Simons and Subjectivism

I READ with great interest Mr G. L. Simons' lucid exposition of Bertrand Russell's ethical philosophy.

One can understand Russell's reluctance in his famous debate with Father Copleston to admit that our moral judgments are based only on feelings, for it is then impossible to escape from the conclusion that there is no rational way of demonstrating that the actions of the Commandant of Belsen are morally inferior to those of say, Albert Schweitzer. In other words as Mr Simons himself put it in a previous FREETHINKER article (19.4.69): "Moral views are a matter of taste just as a liking for strip-tease, Schoenberg or fish and chips".

Following on from this, however, I cannot understand how Russell, Mr Simons, or indeed any believer in a purely subjective ethic can logically try to convert other people to their views. I may prefer strawberry jam to raspberry, but if I began a serious campaign to try to persuade all raspberry jam eaters to transfer their allegiance to strawberry, I would soon find myself certified. Similarly, I may prefer Schweitzer's actions to those of the Belsen Commandant, but from the subjectivist standpoint other people are just as entitled to hold the opposite view, and I have no more right to try to make them adopt my own than I have in the case of the conflicting preserves. Mr Simons quotes Russell: "The person who judges that A is good is wishing others to feel certain desires. He will therefore . . . try to arouse these desires in other people". But why should he, any more than I should try to arouse desires in other people for strawberry rather than raspberry jam? It is no answer to this dilemma to maintain that the effects of Schweitzer's actions were good while those of the Belsen Commandant were bad. This is merely to push the question one stage further back, since once again according to the subjectivists it is only by my feelings that I determine which effects are good and which bad.

I suggest therefore that either Mr Simons should abandon his subjectivist philosophy of ethics, or that he should stop writing articles attacking racialists, capitalists and others whose moral opinions or behaviour he finds repellent. I sincerely hope he adopts the former course, as I would hate to think that I would never again enjoy a contribution from the pen of such a stimulating writer.

JOHN L. BROOM.

Powell

I BEG LEAVE of our editor to return to the subject of immigration. I want to persuade secularists that there is another and very rational view of this subject than that which a good many of them hold. I ask the tolerance of humanists for the view of as intense a humanist as themselves, who is unafraid to express convictions which court unpopularity. I am aware of the tendency of many secularists to level the accusation of racialism at those who think that Enoch Powell has reason in the policy he advocates.

(Continued overleaf)

LETTERS—*continued*

They will have read about his latest speech on the vexed immigration question, and formed, I hope, judgments upon it which are neither hasty nor biased.

I am going to say that that speech suggests to me nothing objectionable or inhumane. I regard it, in fact, as humane, both for immigrants and our own nationals. Mr Powell, on June 9, speaking at Wolverhampton, stated that we should repatriate 600,000 to 700,000 consenting immigrants, giving each family £2,000 for passage and resettlement. I submit that, to all really rational people, that proposal is a most generous and kindly one. The BBC poll revealed that nearly half of the adult immigrants are wishful to return to their native homes. When in business, several years ago, I had testimony of the desire of a good many coloured persons to depart for whence they came. Their only impediment to so doing, they vouched, was their lack of money. At that time, I had been instrumental in helping an Indian family to make their home in England, and stood guarantee for them in a large sum of money, which, had they not honoured their word, would have been ruinous for myself. This should restrain anyone from accusing me of racialism. Today, I would not assist in that way, as conditions have drastically altered, and, for the sake of many thousands here who wish to return home, and for our own people's sake, heartily endorse Enoch Powell's latest proposal.

The result of six or seven hundred thousands of immigrants leaving our shores—voluntarily, of course—would mean a great easing of our housing problem, besides greatly lessening the danger from a great increase, mainly through breeding, of immigrant populations in our already too crowded Isle. That danger Mr Powell stressed in particular regard to industrial towns, principally Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Bradford, Huddersfield and some London Boroughs. If Mr Powell's voluntary repatriation plan were implemented, and nearly half of the immigrants returned home, and we can avert the danger of our own folk being outnumbered in industrial areas, and our housing hardships, grievous now, being made much more grievous, will that not be sound and kind policy?

As a freethinker to freethinkers, I appeal for the quelling of sentimental prejudice against Enoch Powell, and a real Free-thought consideration of the immigrant problem. I am no political adherent of Mr Powell, I want a sound and strong Labour government, but champion the views on immigration of this Conservative stalwart, because they appeal to me as common-sensical—kindly for our own folk—and why not?—and, certainly in regard to his current proposal, kindly for the immigrants, who should be grateful to Enoch Powell for a policy that would comfort many thousands of them.

F. H. SNOW.

Editorials

I AM DISAPPOINTED at what appears to be a deterioration in quality of the FREETHINKER editorials of late. I would prefer a balanced comment to the very superficial one-sided articles which have appeared on the front page.

In particular the articles about Mick Jagger and drugs (June 7) and marriage (June 28) seem to be right out of perspective. Your reference to Mick Jagger's drug-taking said it "clearly harms no one else". The implication that drug taking in general has no antisocial effects is not at all clear. The local cafes reputed to be trading centres and the youths hanging around them are so dirty and smelly I wonder if drugs promote a health hazard. Do they diminish responsibility in driving? Let's not go over all the old points; it remains that there is a case for supposing that widespread use of drugs may inevitably increase some social hazards. You say that the police's action does not deter others. Well, it certainly deters me.

You cannot see a general need for legality in marriage but you only consider the abnormal stereotype cases of bliss or hell. Surely the common situation, of which you so often seem to lose sight, is neither. Without a real responsibility, which can be made more secure by contract, many may find they have a choice of staying with their partner in quite an agreeable marriage, or of taking another partner for a change may be marginally for the better in terms of age of partner or wealth. The grass in the other field often seeming greener, changes of no improvement may be common. Yet a change of no necessity for one may greatly upset the partner, or even leave him/her "heart-broken". It happens with youngsters courting all the time. Would the effect of a similar instability among adults, especially with children, be on the whole better for society? We haven't even mentioned economics, note.

The question of what types of marriage contract should be available is more important. The much simpler, and less important

to human welfare, situation over professional footballers requires contracts and laws dealing with match responsibilities as well as money.

Your worn comment about children suffering in a failing marriage is of little relevance. There is often no better alternative for economic reasons, and the more relevant situation is that of a mildly unsuccessful, or even 50-50, marriage where separation may be contemplated. Children may be better off in such a situation than with only their mother to look after them with strained time, energy and money. The recent TV dramatised documentary *Mrs Lawrence will look after it* was an eloquent indication of the demand from other sources for more state child-care, nursery facilities, etc., and this is a more worthy cause than the end of marriage contracts.

Your final remark about the wife and the scientist in the fire puts the finishing touch to your appalling display of non-appreciation of human needs and behaviour. From a purely abstract point of view even, the structure of stronger personal relationships and responsibilities to those closest may well be more beneficial than an equal-allegiance-to-all structure, given the restricted total capacity of humans for devotion to others.

Please try not to be so blind to the existence of an opposite case when writing front page articles.

M. J. O'CARROLL.

Open discussion

MR TINDALL asks for my advice on how to deal with offensive beer-swilling Australians who invade trains swearing freely and boasting of their sexual prowess. I have no experience of them, but I suggest: (a) ask them to stop, (b) move to another compartment, (c) complain to the guard.

Now to return to what we were discussing, Bob Tindall has offered no reply to the suggestion made in these columns that free and open discussion of sex is preferable to the old Christian furtive suppression.

The language we choose to conduct the discussion in is a matter of taste and convenience. For some people, "bloody" is still a magic word; for Mr Tindall, "fuck" is. Neither word has any power to do anyone any harm. How can he attempt to insist that his taste must govern everyone else?

I hope Mr Tindall can see the difference between open discussion of a serious subject (which is what I was talking about), and the anti-social behaviour, sexual or otherwise, of boozy sex-obsessed Australians. If the latter had enjoyed serious, frank and unembarrassed discussion of sex in childhood, they might not have turned out so badly after all.

MAURICE HILL.

With apologies

IN MY recent dispatch from Rome (NSS wreath laid at the Bruno statue) of 28 June I regret there were two errors: Bruno was burned on February 17, 1600 (not 1660) and the famous Siege of Rome was in 1849, not 1840.

Tut! tut!

YOUR ROME CORRESPONDENT.

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