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HUMANISM IN PERSPECTIVE

"I DON'T NEED to join a society in order not to believe in God."

"It sounds like another religion to me."

"But you've no battle to fight. Hardly anybody believes in God these days. And those that do—well, they're pretty harmless aren't they?"

"There might have been something in it last century, but nowadays the churches have no real power. Surely?"

Remarks such as these come from socially concerned individuals, who are generally agnostics, though sometimes atheists—in fact they are humanists insofar as philosophically they look at the world from a humanist standpoint. Yet they don't describe themselves as humanists, nor do they join any of the humanist organisations. Relatively there are an enormous number of such people. In fact it would not be unfair to say that the majority of opinion formers, intellectuals, thinking, concerned and aware individuals fall within this category, which though in essence humanist has no desire to label itself such. Also, quite apart from the so-called intellectual elite, it would again be fair to say that the majority of average citizens are humanist in outlook, yet they too fail to utilise the word.

It is thus impossible to avoid the conclusion that organised humanism is severely lacking in appeal.

In order to uncover the reasons for this, it is useful to take a brief, but hard, look at the antecedents of present day organised humanism.

The world has, of course, always had its humanists, but the British humanist movement of 1969 can only be traced back purposefully to approximately one hundred years ago, when rather than 'humanist' the terms 'secularist' and 'freethinker' predominated. Fundamentally the movement began because many radicals realised that the churches were exercising an influence over the affairs of state quite out of proportion either to their following or to their understanding of the country's problems. The secular movement thus grew up very much alongside the working-class movement, because broadly speaking the church was reactionary and provided support for the opponents of the awakening working-class. It can be seen that the secularists of the last century operated in a predominantly practical sphere and were much involved with social reform and therefore to no small extent, politics. However, alongside this tough campaigning group, there grew a philosophy, that of rationalism, whose adherents were anti-religious, not just because of the visible evil which they could see the church was imposing on society, but also because they considered religion to be an evil force *per se*.

Very fundamentally the movement continues to exist in this same form. Broadly speaking the National Secular Society, whose foundation in 1866 can be said to mark the beginning of modern humanism, represents the more active side of the movement and focuses its attention more on law reform than on philosophy. Conversely the British Humanist Association, which until fairly recently was known as

the Ethical Union, represents the more philosophical side of the movement. This distinction is however, largely academic. Both organisations are concerned with law reform, as they are with philosophy, and there has been, and is, much common ground between them.



My purpose is primarily to look at the humanist movement as a whole rather than to discuss the subtle differences between the bodies that make it up. But it is important to realise that the movement has been concerned with both campaigning against the practical power of the church—and this often involves campaigning for those law reforms which the church seeks to obstruct—and campaigning against religion as a personal philosophy. Note that these prime objects of the movement in the past both contain the word 'against'.

Over the years the movement has achieved an immense amount as the number of social reforms completed against the wishes of the churches testifies to, in the same way as the vast reduction in the numbers of those individuals, whose lives are ordered by religion, does. And it is this achievement which is the foremost cause of the movement's failure to appeal in 1969. The church's power is dwindling. There are fewer reforms for humanists to point to as instances where a campaign will be needed to overcome

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the religious reaction. There are fewer people whose religious bigotry can be cited as an example of the harm religion can inflict on a human mind. And the essence of Christianity has been considerably watered down and cannot so easily be shown to be irrational and dangerous.

In this light it is not surprising that humanism fails to attract, for it would seem to be fighting a winning battle, and the nearer it comes to victory the fewer troops are necessary. At this point our friend with the humanist outlook but not the label may say: "So what are you worrying about. You don't need a bigger humanist movement. The church is dying and your movement will die with it. The process may take centuries but both will dwindle together".

Such a view has much to commend it and the humanist who sees humanism solely as an antidote to the church might well pay it heed. However, there are two reasons for the need for a continued growth of the humanist movement, and it is these which the movement as a whole is guilty of failing to put over to the vast number of people who could perhaps best be described as disorganised humanists.

First religion is not as dead as it seems. It is a fault both of British society in general and the British humanist movement, that not enough consideration is given to the world as a whole, and too much to our tiny island. Religion may die everywhere in the end, but to consider religion dead at such a time when it may have died in Great Britain would be a grave error of judgement. In the more primitive countries, religion has a far greater influence than it has here, and thus its expectation of life is much greater. An answer to those who consider religion not worth worrying about is therefore, to ask them to look at the less 'civilised' nations. But though it is vitally important that humanists should be people who look at the world as 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, August 11, 8 p.m.: Review of the year past and discussion of future plans.

London Young Humanists (13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8), Sunday, August 17, 7 p.m.: A discussion on Secularism.

single unit, there is really no need to look outside Britain to prove that a strong humanist movement is a necessity.

In this country one can indeed foresee a time, when religion is no longer taught in schools—when bishops do not automatically become members of the House of Lords—and even when church membership drops so low that organised religion ceases to exist. Statistics point to the likelihood of such a time being reached. However, not only are statistics often wrong, but the influence of religion on our lives today is far greater than it would appear. It is easy to say as one of our label-less friends might: "Religion has little influence". But is not a parson almost universally respected and treated with a certain awe? Many people, who are either consciously agnostic or just apathetic, will listen to the advice of the man of God as long as he keeps off religion. The fact that non-believers in their thousands marry in churches is a mirror of the unreason that religion has spread amongst us. It may not harm an agnostic to marry in a church, but there is no rational reason for his doing so, and a man who acts for no reason is as great an enemy of humanism as a man who acts according to his 'faith'. Clearly humanism will have to continue to fight religion long after the demise of organised religion. In such a situation 'religion' might better be termed 'unreason'. And those who consider that as organised religion dies, and as the statute book ceases to reflect the irrationality of churchmen, so too will humanism die, might like to consider which is more dangerous, an enemy who can easily be recognised as such, or an enemy who wears normal clothes and can only be recognised by subtle abnormalities in his speech.

It can thus be seen that as religion becomes more and more dilute, the harder it will become to distinguish between reason and unreason, and therefore the greater will be the need for a humanist movement, embodying as its prime aspiration the spread of reason.

This leads on to the second major argument for the necessity for the continued growth of the humanist movement. Unreason cannot only be fought on its own ground. As has been shown its existence will become more and more insidious, and it will therefore be a lot easier to combat if humanism represents something more than a campaign 'against'. And it is this which should be the major concern of every committed humanist. As well as campaigning against unreason we must define more clearly, and therefore attractively, what are the rewards of exercising one's reason. We must demonstrate publicly by every means available—with our publications, pamphlets and with the small time afforded to us on the air—the superiority of a doctrine of human self-sufficiency and the greater satisfaction derived from a life ordered by reason. Further we must be seen to use our reason and to be concerned with issues far wider than religion in schools and abortion law reform. Many humanists are still beset with a moral code derived from Christianity. We must question such basic foundations of our society as the family system and present-day political and economic systems. This is not to say that the humanist movement must come out for or against the family, in favour of capitalism and against communism, or vice-versa. We must be seen to be aware of the ills of the world and to be applying reason in an endeavour to find solutions.

It may be objected that that so far reason has got humanists nowhere, since they have discussed many topics before and have been found to disagree—that there are 'Christian humanists', agnostic humanists, and atheist humanists—communist humanists and capitalist humanists

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BORDER DISPUTE

G. L. SIMONS

ONE OF THE major sources of ill-disguised glee among Western observers is the persistent and deep-seated conflict between the Soviet Union and China. The main manifestation of this conflict in recent months has been the frequent border clashes between Russian and Chinese personnel, sometimes involving exchange of fire, sometimes not. It is a measure of the current political orientation of the Soviet Union that it is her case that the West chooses to see and broadcast: a recent blatant example of this occurred in a BBC television documentary on communism in which the only reference to the border dispute was to the effect that formerly China had relied on the thoughts of Mao Tse-Tung whereas now she relied on bayonets and guns. But as with many such examples the situation is less simple than our Western propagandists would have us believe.

The present Sino-Soviet border runs for 4,000 miles and is the longest in the world; it originated in its present form as a result of the Tsarist military expansion into Asia. According to the 1858 Sino-Russian Treaty of Aigun the territory east of the Ussuri river was to remain in the joint possession of Russia and China pending the demarcation of the frontier. In November 1860 Russia forcibly incorporated the territory and made the conquest part of the terms forced upon China by the Treaty of Peking. Russia won about 400,000 square miles from China in this way, and even before the 1860 Treaty, Russians had settled in the Chinese port of Haishenwei and renamed it Vladivostok—'Master of the East'.

Very soon after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 the Soviet authorities declared that they repudiated all the predatory policies of the Tsars. In a famous pronouncement made on July 25, 1919, the Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Karakhan, said:

"We hereby address the Chinese people with the object of making them thoroughly understand that the Soviet Government has given up all the conquests made by the Government of the Tsar, which took away from China Manchuria and other territories . . ."

And a year later, a draft Treaty of Friendship proposed by Soviet Russia to China opened with the following clause:

"The Government of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic declares null and void all the treaties concluded with China by the former governments of Russia, renounces all seizures of Chinese territory and all Russian concessions in China, and restores to China, without any compensation and forever, all that had predatorily been seized from her by the Tsarist government and the Russian bourgeoisie."

For a number of reasons, partly because of the then reactionary Chinese government, these Soviet concessions were never made, and when the issue arose after the communists won power in China in 1949, the Soviet attitude had changed. China began a series of negotiations on border questions with Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, the Mongolian People's Republic and Afghanistan. In a number of instances, the settlements, peacefully arrived at, involved the Chinese in having to sacrifice territory which they were occupying; this they did voluntarily. Two countries, however, refused to negotiate on the border question: India and the Soviet Union. And this despite the fact that China declared herself willing to accept the border line determined by the 'unequal' treaties as a basis for negotiation.

Of the negotiations conducted between China and Nepal, Burma, etc., Neville Maxwell wrote in *The Times* (30/9/68): "They found China tough but reasonable at the negotiating table and they emerged with their boundaries confirmed on the alignments they claimed, with minor

variations upon which they had agreed with the Chinese in a pragmatic process of give and take. But the USSR has refused to negotiate its borders . . ." Abortive Sino-Soviet talks began in Peking in February 1964, but the Soviet side would not recognise that the territory in question had been taken from China by unequal treaties imposed by the Tsars—what a change from the position of Karakhan in 1919!

Much of the dispute arose over the position of the Island of Chenpao, which both China and Russia claim. The island is situated in the Ussuri which forms the Sino-Soviet boundary in the region. According to international law, where a river is a boundary the dividing line passes down the centre of the river. This clearly puts Chenpao Island in Chinese territory, as a panoramic photograph issued by the Hsinhua News Agency on March 21, 1969, clearly shows. Even the London *Economist* was forced to concede that China seemed to have the stronger case.

An important account of the Chenpao clash was given by Keito Tokuga, a Japanese employed as East Asian correspondent of the West German Social Democratic Party weekly *Vorwärts*. His account was printed in the Frankfurt paper *Bild Am Sonntag*, 23/3/69; apart from a brief mention in the *Daily Mirror* (March 24) the report was ignored by the British press. It appears that the Russians fired, without provocation, on Chinese villagers; under the first salvoes about two dozen villagers fell, and older people who could not flee continued to be hit by bullets. Then the Russians started using grenade-throwers, field-howitzers and machine-guns. Then Chinese troops arrived and four hours after the first Russian shots had been fired the Russian guns were silenced by Chinese artillery. Keito Tokuga spoke with numerous relatives of the Chinese dead, and he comments of the survivors: "They are embittered and full of hatred, whereas previously the anti-Russian utterances from Peking had made little impression on them. . . . They say it would have been impossible for anyone to have mistaken them for aggressors or even for ill-intentioned violators of the frontier". Tokuga adds that he "had conversations with some 30 to 40 people who were entirely independent of each other. Although certainly not rehearsed, they all said essentially the same. Thus for me it is beyond doubt that the statements of the villagers conform with the actual happenings".

After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia it is not difficult to believe that the USSR may have imperialist plans against China. Anyone who believes that the Soviet Union is primarily motivated by proletarian internationalism, by idealistic concepts of socialist justice, knows little of politics. The USSR, like the USA, has a strong imperialist vein running through its foreign policy, and who can doubt that the Czechs would find the Chinese account of the Soviet attack on Chenpao a plausible tale. In *The Times* (25/5/69), Harrison Salisbury wrote:

"Heavy troop movements have reinforced all elements of the Soviet Far Eastern Command. Between 100,000 and 200,000 Soviet soldiers, including elements equipped with rockets, have been introduced into Mongolia. . . . Estimates of the size of the Soviet forces range as high as 1,500,000 men, from Irkutsk eastwards."

And in the *Sunday Times* (6/10/68), Colin Chapman made a startling comparison between the Soviet propaganda on China and the Soviet propaganda on Czechoslovakia:

"The Russians have now established a number of new missile sites on the Chinese border in Outer Mongolia . . . there is no doubt

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ROBERTSON AND THE CASE AGAINST MARXISM

MARTIN PAGE

(PART 2)

ROBERTSON defined religion as "the sum (a) of men's ideas of their religion to the imagined forces of the cosmos; (b) of their relation to each other as determined by their views of that, or by teachers who authoritatively recast those views; and (c) of the practices set up by those ideas" (*Pagan Christs*, second edition, p. 58). Religion, said Engels, "stands furthest away from material life and seems to be most alien to it. Religion arose in very primitive times from erroneous, primitive conceptions of men about their own nature and external nature surrounding them".

In a sense, Marxism was a Christian heresy. When Marx's wife attended Bradlaugh's Sunday meetings, she recorded her father's reaction: "He told mother that if she wanted edification or satisfaction of her metaphysical needs she would find them [*sic*] in the Jewish prophets rather than in Mr Bradlaugh's shallow reasonings". Bradlaugh's disciple Robertson would have been greatly struck by this remark, with the apparent recognition of "metaphysical needs" by the foremost exponent of the materialist theory of history. Just as Christianity appealed to the slaves of the ancient world, so Marxism championed the wage-slaves of the modern era. Marx, the revolutionary democrat, declared: "Political democracy is Christian in the sense that man, not merely one man but every man, is there considered a sovereign being, a supreme being".

Just as Rousseau gave the Christian concept of the Fall of Man a pseudo-sociological twist by tracing the rise of social inequality and of false consciousness to the disruption of man's natural state; so the Hebraic prophet of socialism secularised the doctrine of the Redemption: Marx conceived of the future classless society as achieving the "re-integration or return of man to himself", as a partial reflection, at a higher evolutionary stage, of man's primitive communism, which was vitiated by the development of private property. In *Das Kapital* he referred to "human nature in general, and human nature as modified in each historical epoch". Yet he gave no detailed analysis of this distinction; and if human nature has been so thoroughly deformed by millennia of exploitation, can man "return to himself"? If, as Marx suggested, modern man and his consciousness are determined by a social environment where justice is an illusion, can man create a truly just society?

Robertson drew attention to the paradox that Marxists proclaimed the historical inevitability of the victory of communism, and yet appealed to human volition by seeking to arouse in the proletarians revolutionary consciousness of their historic mission. It was, he said, one of life's little ironies that the classless society was to be created through class hatred, that a society which would be the consummation of fraternity was to be built up by the forces of malevolence. The Marxian gospel, he said, promised the faithful a political Day of Judgement: "at that day, by military force, a society reduced to misery by systematic capitalism would be turned upside down, swiftly reconstructed by martial law, and then set agoing on ideal principles, to be happy ever after". Marx declared: "The Paris Commune may fall, but the social revolution it has initiated, will triumph", and Engels called the Commune "the dictatorship of the proletariat"; yet no social revolution followed the French Commune, which was brutally suppressed. How, then, were proletariat to know when the hour had struck for the decisive overthrow of capitalism,

for the successful socialist revolution? Moreover, Marx never really faced up to the destructive effects of violence on its practitioners.

Declared Robertson: "Marx puts a catastrophic and finally static theory of social destiny under a pseudo-evolutionary form. Imposed by his personality and that of Lassalle on generations of German workmen, whom it [Marx's philosophy] hypnotised with a quasi-religious hope, analogous to that of the 'Second Advent', it is thus in itself an extremely interesting sociological phenomenon". A system of ideas like Marxism, which essentially reflects a class struggle, could play no vital part in the evolution of a classless society. Even so, on the structure and administration of the triumphant communist economy Marx offered about as little guidance as he did on the tactics and organisation to be adopted by the proletariat to carry through the revolution.

Marx and Engels spoke of "the idiocy of rural life", and Marx said: "the country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future"; yet Marx's "huntin', shootin' and fishin'" concept of communism was distinctly rustic. Marx and Engels expected the division of labour to wither away in the future communist society. Ironically, predominantly industrial states today, by comparison with those of the nineteenth century, are characterised not only by increased leisure and automation, but also by the growing complexity and specialisation of social life. Under communism, alienation, the play of dialectic and the centuries-old class struggle would apparently be resolved; yet to live in a continual state of tension, dissatisfaction and uncertainty seems to be an ineradicable feature of man's estate, and Marx failed to appreciate that strife could continue in a classless society. In some respects, therefore, Marx was at least as utopian as the Utopian Socialists of whom he and Engels were so critical.

In a twentieth century of unparalleled destruction, when the self-annihilation of the human race is at least a technological possibility, the concept of a future earthly paradise seems even more a projection of wish-fulfilment than in Marx's day. Marx's assertion that "mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve" is far less confidently held today, and may be regarded as a legacy of the eighteenth century belief in progress and reason. Robertson wondered what would be the fate of artists and clergymen—indeed, of freedom of expression itself—under a Socialist regime dedicated to "productive" work and possessing a State monopoly of printing and publication. Moreover, if values are taken by Marxists to be historically relative, why do we enjoy art created thousands of years ago and expressing a way of life alien to ours in many ways? Marx gave no satisfactory answer in Marxian terms. Marx's confidence in the proletariat (whom he thought would become increasingly socialistic) appears to have been excessive. If, as Marx believed, "the emancipation of the working classes must be won by the working classes themselves", it has to be explained why so many Marxist and Communist leaders have been non-proletarian, frequently bourgeois. Marx's concept of a revolutionary mass movement was undermined by Lenin's emphasis on an élitist party of professional revolutionaries. Marx's belief that international capitalism would be confronted and overthrown by an internationally unified proletariat has been dismally confounded.

Although Bakunin was alive to the prospect of total war, Marx and the military critic Engels, during the "Hundred Years Peace" before Sarajevo, concentrated mainly on the class struggle and failed to work out a sustained theory of the political significance or armed conflicts *between nations*. Yet, in the twentieth century, such conflicts overshadowed the class struggle within nations. Marx and Engels did not appreciate the extent to which the struggles and armed conflicts between imperialist powers for colonies and overseas markets were themselves the outcome of capitalist development; yet before the publication of the classic treatises of Hobson and Lenin, Robertson said of imperialist expansion: "The only interests really furthered are those of the speculative trading class, the speculative capitalist class, the military and naval services, the industrial class which supplies war material, and generally those who look to an imperial civil service as a means of employment for themselves and their kin" (*Patriotism and Empire*, second edition 1900, p. 187; see also pp. 177-8). Robertson (who was one of the most advanced bourgeois radicals in Britain before the rise of the Labour Party) added that a secondary aim of imperial expansion was "to put off the day of reckoning as between capital and labour".

Marx and Engels, like Hitler, were contaminated by German nationalism and racialism. The genius who claimed to have discovered "the rational kernel within the mystical shell" of Hegelian dialectic and who sprang from the ranks of the Jewish bourgeoisie was himself an anti-bourgeois with leaning towards anti-semitism! Declared Marx: "What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly God? Money". But as Robertson pointed out in *The Saxon and the Celt*: "while the self-styled Aryan prates of the predominance of his species, the lands in which his tongue is spoken are chronically convulsed by wild outcry against the domination of the Semite, who

yields the all-compelling power of the purse, yet—as if to show at a glance the nullity of the theory which makes him merely a manipulator of money—contributes to 'the general deed of man' the most opposing influences, producing Lassalle and Rothschild, Marx and Hirsch, Ricardo and Disraeli" (p. 112).

Marx, the leading light of the First International, adopted a German nationalist attitude towards Schleswig-Holstein (which Bismarck took from Denmark) and towards Bohemia (now in tragedy-stricken Czechoslovakia). He apparently believed in the relative inferiority of the negroes no less than in the innate superiority of the Germans to the Slavs; and he referred approvingly to "the historical tendency and the physical and intellectual power of the German nation to subdue, absorb and assimilate its ancient eastern neighbours". In the Franco-Prussian war, Marx supported Bismarck, condemned the anti-Bismarckian attitude of the German Socialists Bebel and Liebknecht, and declared: "The French need a thrashing. The German working class are in theory and organisation superior to the French. Their dominance over the French on the world stage would also mean the dominance of our theory over Proudhon's".

At a time when the racialist historians of the "Teutonic school" were coming to the fore in England and Germany, Engels produced his sociological romance *The Origin of the Family* (1884). In this work, Engels extolled the racial purity, chastity and respect for women which were supposedly characteristic of the barbaric Germani, with "their personal efficiency and bravery, their love of liberty, and their democratic instinct". Fortunately perhaps, Engels died before his thesis was effectively demolished by Robertson in *The Saxon and the Celt* (1897), where the Scot handled evidence in a scientific spirit that seemed beyond Marx's over-enthusiastic collaborator.

GOODNESS, DEFINITION AND SLEIGHT-OF-HAND MICHAEL CREGAN

DURING ARGUMENTS on the perennial believer-unbeliever battleground, the question of God's goodness or the lack of it, a tactic which is occasionally employed by the former is to try to short-circuit the discussion by declaring that "God is *defined* as good". Once this move is (allowed to be) made, it becomes as nonsensical to cast about for items which disprove divine beneficence as it would be to organise a search for the married bachelor. Since God's goodness is now assured by definition, any action which can be legitimately attributed to him *must* be good; it becomes a logical absurdity to suggest otherwise.

One's first reaction to this 'minority' apologetic must be a feeling of claustrophobia. Until this point the argument has proceeded normally; but now a fog seems to have descended. And it has, except that the fog is a smoke-screen. For the move is entirely *arbitrary*.

How arbitrary it is can be seen by analogy. What would be the reaction if, to counter some moral protest about an action of mine, I were to declare that all protests were misguided as I am defined as good? Clearly this would elicit only guffaws. After the restoration of order, the reply would be something like: "You may well *be* good (which is just the point in question, so let's get back to the argument), but you most certainly are not *defined* as good. (which would give you *carte blanche* to do whatever you like)."

The point in question here is that *entities cannot be*

defined. This applies not only in cases where the abortive definition contains words like "goodness", etc., but whatever the candidate terms.

It would be true, for example, to speak of me as having a beard; it would be absurd to speak of me as being *defined* as bearded. (If it were not, I would cease to be me were I to shave, just as a bachelor who marries ceases to be an instance of the concept "bachelor" precisely because he has married.) Similarly this chair upon which I am sitting *is* wooden; it is not *defined* as being wooden. Once an entity has been picked out—myself, this chair, and so on—anything true said of it is true as a matter of fact, never of definition. Only words can be defined; entities cannot. The same consideration applies to God picked out as an entity.

Hence the statement, "God is defined as good" has to be reconstrued. As only words can be defined, it must now read, "(Part of) the meaning of the word "God" is "a being who is wholly and always good". "There is nothing out of order here; but there is of course a price. For now only a being which is wholly and always good may properly be called "God"—presuming, of course, it meets the other elements in the concept of "God", omnipotence, omniscience, etc.—and the unbeliever can maintain that there exists no being whose moral biography is such that the term "God" can legitimately applied to it. Hence if the

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THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

F. H. SNOW

I HOPE, some day, to see the famous Statue of Liberty that fronts the Atlantic from New York harbour. Magnificent symbol of peace and freedom, it looks toward the Old World of strife and time-honoured tradition, to which, nevertheless, American interests are inseparably welded. When, three and a half centuries ago, the Pilgrim Fathers set sail in the good ship 'Mayflower' for the virtually unknown and inhospitable continent that was America, they little envisaged the great nation they were destined to found across the vast ocean. The torch in the figure's up-lifted hand announces to humanity that love of liberty reigns in the United States.

Here I must correct myself to say the love of liberty for Russia is not intended in that signification.

When Churchill, straightway after World War Two, began making inflammatory speeches denigrating the ideological motives of 'a certain Power' he put a match to smouldering timber, and caused the blaze that has threatened, and still threatens, to burn up the world. The mask that had hidden his face because of need of Russia's aid in the job of saving Britain from German domination, was laid aside, and wanting little incitement, the United States instituted the policy of Soviet containment.

Most western folks condoned this. War ally or no, the USSR was the new menace to civilisation. Though, but for her great strength on our side, Britain would have been lost—though the corpses of millions of 'reds' had littered the eastern war field in Freedom's cause, Russia's original and ulterior aim was the destruction of all that stood for Christian and democratic principles, following the gospel of Marx. Thus said our great war leader, Winston Churchill, and thus said the great ones of the United States. Hitler was dead, but Stalin lived, and communism's ugly head would rear itself all over the globe, and her abominably oppressive policy threaten the Free World, if permitted extension, even as Hitler's had.

Poland was still under the Russian heel, despite our pledge to liberate her. We had gone to war to do that, but after the Nazis had failed to destroy their eastern enemy, and had been swept back past the land of the Poles, that country had remained under Stalin, and the war-weary Allies had left it to him. Now, twenty-three years later, like Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, East Germany, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, Poland was linked with Russia in communist ideology.

It is not suggested that every, or nearly every Pole, is a dyed-in-the-wool Red. Some are politically white, and diametrically opposed to the hammer-and-sickle ideal of a classless society. These are they who plot for the downfall of the Soviet regime, who foster discontent, collaborate with alien movements and uphold the principles of the Tsarism that gave birth to the communist creed. They hate Stalinism, like all reason-minded people, interpreting it in terms of bloody savagery. The pink socialist dislikes the classless notion a lot less than does the white, gives much less trouble, and gets into prison seldom. The real red, straightforward socialist, or communist, is the *bete noir* of western society. Old hat? Yes, but we'll do well to remember that revolutionaries have always been ruthlessly put down, however just their cause, and that American fear of them amounts almost to hysteria. The wealthier the country, the greater the hate of an ideology which aims at a redistribution of riches, and today Russia and Communism are widely regarded as synonymous with tyranny and evil.

It should not have outraged reason when, in the past year, Czechoslovak moves for a more liberal government were regarded by the USSR as largely inspired by outside political adversaries, aiming at the distintegration of the whole Soviet system, and military precautions were taken against that threat to its solidarity. Freethinkers will rightly sympathise with the Czechs for seeking a fuller freedom of expression, but do they rightly appraise Czech aims, and the motives behind the measures of their kindred ideologists, the Russians, in view of their enemies' containment schemes, with heavy emphasis on America?

Had Russia followed up her troop movements with violence against peaceful citizens, she would have deserved international obloquy. Had the Czechs, except a few extremists, been political antagonists of the Soviet, and as a whole, under great grievance against the restraints of communism, the indignant speeches and press furores of Western critics against the Russian 'invasion' would have made sense. But there was no invasion, as the Czechs understood it. The great bulk of them, their leaders included, did not regard the coming of Soviet tanks and troops as such. The term was disparaged by prominent nationals. What firing there was, was in response to that of frenzied patriots who, in inconsiderable number, raised a dust of semblable oppression that sent protagonists of foreign culture screaming against violent measures towards the whole nation, despite its frequently affirmed loyalty to basic Soviet principals. Polish, Rumanian, Bulgarian and other communist forces shared in the brief occupation of Czechoslovak territory, in a demonstration of socialist solidarity.

That the Czechs yielded to force is the cry of many well-meaning but unanalytical persons. That they expressed desire for a more expansive life within the framework of communism, and sought to gain it pacifically, was evidenced by their Prime Minister, M. Dubcek and President Smrkovsky, their most ambitious reformer. My observation of the news out of Czechoslovakia, and the statements of nationals there and elsewhere, left me with the impression that the great majority of Czechs viewed the display of Russian might and the advances of Soviet diplomats very differently from alien liberty-lovers.

Instancing this, M. Dubcek said: "Our country's basic policy is alliance with the Soviet Union". Events much subsequent to the occupation have confirmed the rightness of unprejudiced views of the Czech temper. President Svoboda, said by critics of Sovietism to be hanging to his job by a hair's breadth, stated recently: "If we speak of democracy, legality and right, then for me, too, the decision of the competent authorities is binding". In the BBC review of 1968 a prominent Czech averred: "The Czechoslovaks love the Soviet Army", and assure viewers that his country's leaders were quietly collaborating with Russia to preserve peace and order. Lastly, but hardly leastly, I read that the Czech heads want more anniversary celebrations of the nation's identification with communism.

A great number of interested observers of this political play—as they see it, tragedy—seem unaware of the metamorphosis undergone by post-Czarist Russia. The present Muscovites are as dissimilarly associable with the revolting murder of the third Alexander and his family, as we with those who, in the England of yore, lopped off royal and ducal heads. A comparable rationality and commercial honesty characterise both nations. I have before me a printed statement, unfortunately discreditable to 'Uncle

Sam's' trading agents, by a British merchant, who avers: "Dealing with the Russians is very different from dealing with Americans, who, afraid of being squeezed, always start off by asking far more than they will settle for. With the Russians you can't bluff, and must be absolutely honest, as they are with you".

This, then, is characteristic of the people whose ideology the United States has for twenty-three years sought to most provocatively 'contain'. What is more calculated to inspire reasonable resentment than the spending of many, many millions of dollars in buying sites for nuclear bases directed against Russia, even their establishment on Turkey's border? What more reasonable incentive for the tightening of her defences, in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere? Greatly suspect as being the yeast of the containment campaign is religion, so strongly entrenched in America. Unless its blinding influence is dissipated, and the open hand of good intent offered to Russia and to all men, what prospect will there be of a sane world?

Someday I hope to see America's Statue of Liberty in New York harbour. I hope its torch will be beaming the light of goodwill towards all peoples. Should Moscow's offer to collaborate with Washington in limiting production and stopping the spread of atomic arms be reciprocated and the containment policy abated, not only may a global holocaust be averted, but the world set on the way to a superstition-free, humanitarian condition, when tanks will no more rumble, and humanity will bask in the sunshine of peace.

GOODNESS, DEFINITION AND SLEIGHT-OF-HAND
(Continued from page 253)

believer asserts that God—i.e. the creator of the universe—is defined as good, the believer can simply reply that since God would have to be good (by definition) and since the creator is *not* good, then *the creator is not God*. The believer will then have to change the definition of God to "the creator of the universe", which leaves his goodness as an open question, or assert that the creator *is* good: both of which restore the argument to its original bounds. The "definition gambit" has been safely circumnavigated.

Flew has pointed to "the hopelessness of trying to establish a substantial conclusion by a manoeuvre with a definition"; and the case under consideration is as hopeless as any other.

God and Philosophy, A. G. N. Flew.

THE FREETHINKER FUND

OUR THANKS are due to all those listed below, who have donated money during the three months up to the end of June. A limited advertising programme has been initiated and is slowly producing results. Readers will not need to be reminded how urgently donations are needed, and how gratefully they will be received.

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BORDER DISPUTE

(Continued from page 251)

that the Russians have a contingency plan to enter China with the object of neutralising her atomic bomb sites in Sinkiang should it ever be necessary. . . . The missile build-up is allied to a continuous flow of threatening propaganda against Maoist China in the Soviet Union. The theme of articles in the specialist press is similar to that used at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia—that discontent with the local leadership in some areas, Sinkiang, Tibet, and Outer Mongolia, is so strong that loyal Marxist-Leninists may sooner or later have to call on the Kremlin 'for assistance against their oppressors'."

An invasion by the Soviets in the Sinkiang area—where border trouble has recently occurred—could drastically affect China's economic and military development. For it is there that China's largest oilfields are situated, the Karamai oilfields, and only 350 kilometres away are the great Chinese uranium ore mines, among the richest in the world. More than half of China's crude oil is obtained from Sinkiang and most of her uranium. In the opinion of one writer (Francis James, *Guardian*, 21/6/69) "the population of Sinkiang is solidly behind Peking, and would resist to a man any Russian attack".

In logic and law the Chinese case on the border issue is the stronger. It is hardly credible, as the Soviets claim, that China is planning to attack the USSR: when one considers the relative strengths of the two countries any such policy would be suicidal. The truth is that for ideological or economic reasons the Soviet Union is deliberately creating tension on the Sino-Soviet border and that this policy has already led to serious loss of life. Even those who cannot sympathise with modern China should not close their eyes to the fact of Soviet imperialism.

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HUMANISM IN PERSPECTIVE

(Continued from page 250)

—conservative humanists and labour humanists—humanists who are against capital punishment and humanists who want to bring back the birch—and so on. That people, who are all utilising their powers of reason disagree does not disprove the efficacy of reason itself. It merely shows that no man is totally reasonable, and of course we cannot say whether any man ever will be. But we can say that the more a man's reason prevails over his irrational prejudices the more right will be his decisions. This is not to deny the emotions, but only those emotions directed towards something demonstrably false. To love another human, whose existence can be taken as a fact, is not the same thing as loving a God, whose existence is definitely not a fact. The question of the emotions as a manifestation of unreason, as against religion as the same manifestation, is probably the most important philosophical question on which humanists should sharpen their reason.

Whatever the outcome, if ever there was one, of such a debate, it is essential that the humanist movement in this country overrides the apathy shown by 'disorganised humanists', by putting over the fact that unreason will not die, and indeed is not dying, as the churches die. And further the humanist movement must go all out to demonstrate the importance of the spread of reason, as the only positive means of providing mankind all over the world with a viable philosophy.

LETTERS

Russell and Nuclear Weapons

MY ESTEEM of Lord Russell was badly jarred by G. L. Simons' statement, in the FREETHINKER of July 19, that that eminent sage and philosopher has been guilty of advocating atomic warfare. Accepting Mr Simons' authority for this (*The Morning News*, May 28, 1949), I am horrified that such a man could be identified with the diabolical project of nuclear aggression. I am shocked at the desire of anyone, however, undistinguished, to launch so fiendish an assault on any enemy, real or potential, but Lord Russell, the Russell of our secularist adulation, to be capable of it!

Atomic explosives can be justly used only in retaliation for an attack by similar means (if retaliation be possible after such an attack). To aim to destroy, maim, agonise thousands, perhaps millions of human beings, in order to prevent the nation of which they are members from catching up with the nuclear strength of another nation, is to rival the worst instincts of barbarism. Bertrand Russell expressed his desire to make Russia the objective of such a design, according to Mr Simons. I have no adequate words to voice my abhorrence of the Russell who contemplated that monstrous project.

I hope I am right in thinking that his attitude has entirely changed concerning it. I think I am justified in believing so. His stand for nuclear disarmament evoked my admiration, and I must presume that he would not now wish to rain atomic bombs on Russia, were she in the same, or any, disparity with the USA in nuclear power. But, however benign and pacific his present attitude, it cannot extenuate his attitude in 1949. My detestation of the Russell of that period could not be decreased by his conduct before or since.

Reasons for premeditated nuclear attack, on whatever nation, count for nothing with me. I regard them as utterly inadmissible. I am sure Mr Simons does too, and am surprised that he made no stronger remark on Russell's shocking departure from his characteristically great humanitarianism, than that it was eccentric or dangerous. Freethinkers, one and all, should express the strongest condemnation of that well-nigh incredible lapse on the part of the most revered sceptic of modern times.

Mr Simons avers that Bertrand Russell will be remembered for his wonderful qualities and achievements a thousands years from now. I trust that will be so, but insist that he should be remembered also for his one-time advocacy of nuclear war. Like Macbeth's 'damned spot', it should be unobliterable, as long as he remains in memory.

F. H. SNOW.

Monetary systems

SINCE you have granted so much space to Philip Hinchliff's views on Marxism, will you allow me to make some criticism. Whilst Marx gave due weight to land monopoly in creating poverty, he totally failed to notice the baleful influence of money monopoly, and he therefore made a wrong diagnosis. He failed to notice that all our paper money is legally convertible into gold at a fixed price, and that the supply of gold cannot expand with the growing need for money to exchange goods. The state monopolises the issue of money; and ever since the beginning of the industrial revolution the state has faced periodical crises in which it was obliged to cut down the supply of money because its gold reserves were not expanding proportionately. For the past century and a half we have continually cut down production to fit the available amount of gold.

The result on industry has been disastrous. The banks gather the community's savings, and should be able to lend them out to people who wish to produce. But the ever-present danger of financial crises compels the banks to confine their advances to applicants with highly saleable security to cover the loan. This tends to favour the large firm at the expense of the small, and accounts for the monopoly of industry in few hands more accurately than the theory that large-scale industry is necessarily more economical. A further evil result is that the wage-earner finds fewer firms competing for his labour; and the capable man who would like to start his own business finds little support from the banks. Furthermore, in every financial crisis it is the small firms that are bankrupted first.

Faced with this problem of booms and slumps, Marx saw no solution other than the nationalisation of industry, a solution which, as we now see in Russia, leads to a low standard of living, and intolerable slavery. Today we assert that if the price of gold had been allowed to rise in proportion to the growing demand for the metal as bank reserves, we might have been spared the evils that accompanied the industrial revolution, and which are approaching their peak today. Every man worth his salt wants to be

free to offer his labour where he will, at a wage freely agreed; and every producer wants freedom to sell his goods where they will fetch the best price. A rational money system would enable the preservation of these essential freedoms, unaccompanied by exploitation, and would lead to a world prosperity vastly greater than we enjoy today.

HENRY MEULEN.

Moral Education

THE NSS and the BHA are campaigning to replace RI by Moral Education in the nation's schools, but the type of this moral education is not disclosed. There is the divinely inspired brand of morality usually associated with religious belief. In contrast to this is the Utilitarian school of morals which is based, more or less, on practical human necessity. The one gets its codes from "Thus saith the Lord": the other from the normal interplay of human activity. If, and when, the campaign against RI is successful, what guarantee have we freethinkers and humanists that the moral lessons given to children will still not savour of a religious, i.e. a superstitious, bias? We may have removed the stupidity of RI but the people still in control of our educational system are quite likely to lean backwards to the demands of the churches to teach their interpretation of the 'morality' to be taught in moral lessons. To my mind this is a serious position to contemplate. Has anyone got the answer? If not, how much better off are the children likely to be?

R. ROBSON.

Cohen and Freethought

MAY I take this opportunity to remind M. J. O'Carroll, F. H. Snow *et alia* of the late Chapman Cohen's definition of Freethought. "Freethought is essentially the denial of the legitimacy of authority in matters of opinion. It stands as a protest against the endeavour of any institution or of any person to prevent the constant testing of received opinion, or the attempt to modify or remove any established opinion whatsoever." [*What is Freethought? Pamphlets for the People, No. 7.*] This being so, do we need 'the opposite case' to be stated in front page editorials, isn't 'the opposite case' fed to us from the 'womb to the tomb' by the organs of mass media and isn't the editor doing the job of the editor of the FREETHINKER i.e. stating the Freethought position. More power to his elbow.

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