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IS 'POP' REPLACING RELIGION?

IN HYDE PARK this summer there were a number of free pop-concerts which gained enormous audiences, one of which was reported to be 250,000. It has been said that these concerts were permitted as a sop to the permissive generation and the 'underground'. Whether this is so or not, the attendance at these gatherings is clear indication of the desire among young people to equate themselves with a 'revolutionary generation'. And yet at recent demonstrations against the Vietnam war at the American embassy, the attendance has not reached four figures. Pop would appear to be replacing religion as the opium of the masses. Pop is, of course, far less harmful than religion. However, the press and television have been responsible for giving youth the idea that permissiveness, is essential to anyone abreast of the fashions, instead of the idea that permissiveness is socially desirable. Thus, we have a considerable degree of political and social apathy among young people.

This is apparent amongst students as well as the less educated sector of youth. And as the largest cohesive body of aware individuals in the country, the students are largely to blame for the exotic permissive inactivity of the young population as a whole.



It may be said that the recent student disturbances display anything but apathy, but if one considers the situation closely one finds this is not so. The Select Committee on Education and Science—a body of 13 Labour and Conservative MPs have spent nine months visiting universities and colleges, and holding hearings at Westminster. The chief recommendations in their report published on October 15, are that universities and colleges should follow the National Union of Students code of discipline—the code which gives students representation on disciplinary committees, a fair hearing and rights to appeal and cross-examination.

On October 6, Mr Jack Straw, the president-elect of the NUS giving the first Granada Guildhall lecture, called for greater student representation on decision-making bodies. In this he was agreed with by the Federation of Conservative students who suggest that students should be educated in participatory democracy within their own institutions. It would seem from this substantial agreement between parliamentarians and left and right-wing students, that students may soon obtain the concessions they are demanding. Indeed the Academic Board of the London School of

Economics last week raised the offer they made to their students last November, by increasing the number of seats for students on various decision-making committees. Straw's speech was in fact less conciliatory than its conclusion would indicate. He would construe the LSE's offer as 'a concession that has occurred out of expediency to stave off student militancy', and he would have a point if the majority of students were militant. The fact that they are not is not in itself evidence of the apathy of the majority of students, but there seems little doubt that despite the NUS, the sit-ins and the eloquence of men like Straw, the average student is not interested. And it is this more than anything which gives university administrators the opportunity to get away with limited concessions instead of the large scale reform which even the parliamentarians are advocating.

In view, therefore, of the average student's lack of interest in what a minority, ably given voice by Straw, is attempting to achieve, is it surprising that young people as a whole are fast becoming a collection of beautifully decorated oafs.

UNPRECEDENTED RESPONSE

THE RESPONSE to the publication of the pamphlet *Religious Discrimination in Schools*, reported and reviewed in the FREETHINKER last week, has been very considerable. The pamphlet has been accorded extensive coverage in the press, with reports appearing in a large number of papers including the *Evening News*, *Sunday Times*, *Observer*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Birmingham Sunday Mercury*, *The Times Educational Supplement*, *The Teachers' World* and *The Teacher*. At the head office of the National Secular Society, which published the pamphlet jointly with the Humanist Teachers' Association, orders and enquiries have reached an unprecedented level. Also David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society, was interviewed by BBC radio. The interview was broadcast in Radio Two's *Newsreel* on October 4. As well as the obvious questions about religious education itself, Tribe was asked "How large is the Humanist society's view? How many people belong to it?" Pointing out that

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the important thing was "how many people agree with us", Tribe replied: "... we're encouraged to see only last week

that the Confederation of Associations for the Advancement of State Education have overwhelmingly supported us. The young teachers of the National Union of Teachers do. I think it's right to say that the National Union of Students do. There are quite a lot of Christian educationists who agree with us on purely secular and civil liberties principles".

This huge public response would seem to indicate that the hope of the Humanist Teachers' Association and the National Secular Society that "the conscience of the people will no longer permit such an immoral state of affairs to continue", is by no means a vain one.



The speakers at the press conference held to announce the publication of the pamphlet, *Religious Discrimination in Schools* were (left to right, starting second from left): Mrs J. R. Miller (a teacher), Mr Maurice Hill (the Secretary of the Humanist Teachers' Association), Mr David Tribe (President of the National Secular Society) and Mr. Michael Duane (former principal of Risinghill School and lecturer in education).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

Buy British and African Stamps from Humanitas Stamps and help Swaneng Hill School, the Agnostics Adoption Society, and the Humanist Housing Association. Send for list to Mrs A. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, Essex RM7 8QX (sae please).

COMING EVENTS

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.

INDOOR

All Ireland Humanist Conference, Hotel Nuremore, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan: October 25 and 26: Brochure from Mr. S. Potter, Swains Hill, Ballykeel, Holywood, Co. Down. Tel. Holywood 2863.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group: The Bull House, Lewes, Sussex: Saturday, October 18, 6.30 p.m.: Annual Dinner. Tickets 23s 6d each from Mrs K. Pariente, 97 Valley Drive, Brighton. Tel. 504007.

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group: 106 Southover, Woodside Park, N12: Saturday, October 18, 8 p.m.: "Meet Local Humanists"—Members of the public are invited to meet group members. Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, October 19, 6.30 p.m.: "The Use and Abuse of Agnosticism", David Tribe (President National Secular Society).

London Young Humanists: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8: Sunday, October 19, 7 p.m.: "Drugs", Professor Francis Camps.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, October 19, 11 a.m.: "Nietzsche, Marx and Humanism", Martin Page. Admission free. Tuesday, October 21, 7 p.m.: Discussion, "Bradlaugh—Annie Besant and the Conways", Nigel Sinnott. Admission 2s (including refreshments) members free.

Sutton Humanist Group: Honeywood Lodge, Carshalton: Monday, October 20, 7.45 p.m.: A meeting.

West Ham and District Secular Group: The Community Centre, Wanstead (near Wanstead Underground): Thursday, October 23, 8 p.m.: Meeting.

THOUGHTS ON AN OLD BOOK

PAUL ROM

I READ the world-famous book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when very young and unable to judge it in the capacity of a literary critic, sociologist, or historian. As a human being I was deeply impressed by this novel but more, I remember, by the mulatto slave George Harris' escape into physical freedom, than by Tom's humble journey towards a Christian heaven. I was then not at all alive to another figure of the story, Augustine St. Clare, and his horror of man's tyranny over man, whether his skin be black or white. But, as I see now, this is the central theme of the book. Growing up I just labelled it a pious, well-meaning propaganda publication which, after the Civil War, had no more importance, though it may have had some influence upon its outbreak. And was I not right as I only saw that the author asked good white Americans to pray for a change in the law, and invited negroes to be better Christians than their white masters? Negroes who now call well-meaning whites sarcastically "Uncle Toms" have a similar narrow view of this Christian book.

Nowadays, the much more extended lack of satisfactory relations between human beings is generally described as "alienation". Re-reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* I was struck to learn that the author eventually changed her sub-title "The Man that was a *Thing*". With this sentence, Harriet Beecher Stowe expressed what we are now all bitterly aware of, to whichever race, sex, or age group we may belong, namely that every social organisation aiming at profit or power can transform persons into manipulated reactors, hardly better than machines or things.

Karl Marx has analysed the alienation of the property-less industrial workers from tools and machines, raw materials, products, from nature and fellow-workers, which deprives them of their humanity. This rebellion against alienation entitles him to be considered as a Humanist. Harriet Beecher-Stowe, the novelist (only six years older than the economist Marx) forcefully expressed the same insight of dehumanisation and thus stressed the humanist aspect of her Christianity. She also anticipated Alfred Adler's "Individual Psychology" with her understanding of the dynamism due to inferiority feelings and which may result in a neurotic striving for power and useless compensations in form of depreciating others.

Harriet Beecher-Stowe, indeed, in the chapter on The Mother, attributed a "consciousness of inferiority" to a white man who had hired out his mulatto slave George Harris to work in a bagging factory. There, Harris invented a machine for the cleaning of hemp and acquired much appreciation of all people around him. He had, as an individual and temporarily, achieved a socially valid compensation for his status as a marketable thing.

His white owner, however, painfully comparing himself with his really superior slave, compensated his inferiority feeling in an unsocial manner by taking his "thing", alias George Harris, back from the manufacturer and putting him to hoeing and digging in his plantation, thus preventing him to "step about so smart".

This insight into the psychological dynamics of inferiority feelings, scientifically formulated by Adler in 1912, led on the one hand to the political ideology of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a means to create a classless society; and on the other to an increase in pious prayers for the bliss of the slaves' eternal life after earthly misery, and the final salvation of the impious tyrants.

A third possibility is the attitude of the rebel as defined by Albert Camus.

Rebels who affirm that there is a limit for human indignity, are people who say "no!". But their apparently negative attitude insists on the value of each individual as a person, and on those human potentialities which can only be expressed and fulfilled by a revolt. Revolt, therefore, transcends the personal destiny and indicates something like a universal human nature. Adler, more concretely, formulated that man is born with a striving to overcome his existential difficulties. In its valid form of co-operation this leads to human solidarity.

Whilst Camus saw in human solidarity the only admissible absolute in this absurd world of ours, Adler, also, accepted only one absolute truth: the logic of our group life, based on human equality and implying reciprocity and mutual help to safeguard survival and to lead to cultural development.

Descartes has said: *cogito, ergo sum*. Camus modified the cartesian "I think, therefore, I am" by saying: "I rebel, therefore, *we are*".

Considering in this light Augustine St. Clare, Beecher Stowe's wealthy white Southerner, it becomes clear that we must understand his "laziness" as a rebellion against the established order of money-making, i.e. the mode of capitalistic competition and exploitation from which he could afford "to drop out". Most of his contemporaries, of course, considered laziness as an un-Christian weakness. But St. Clare can also experience "fellow-feeling" (reminding us of Adler's "Gemeinschaftsgefuehl" meaning Social Interest) for the lazy "slaves who put stones at the bottom of their cotton baskets to make them weigh heavier". This, he says with fine empathy, is "exactly like what I should do if I were they".

The people of the "establishment", happy in their *status quo*, must feel extremely shocked when he goes beyond the condemnation of exploiting coloured labour in America and compares it with the exploitation in England of white factory workers. He holds: "The slave-owner can whip his refractory slave to death—the capitalist can starve him to death. As to family security, it is hard to say which is the worst—to have one's children sold, or see them starve to death at home".

White people, desirous to help overcome racial prejudice and injustice but failing to comprehend the total human condition, must often feel helpless and, discouraged, may give up their efforts.

Negroes who then call them sarcastically "Uncle Toms", do not look beyond their social ghetto when aiming at black power and not at human solidarity.

The humanist conclusion of these considerations would be that we must resist the temptation to manipulate others as if they were things, as well as decline the indignity of allowing others to manipulate us.

VISION AND REALISM

Annual Report of the
NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Free copies from
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

MAN AND COMPUTERS

G. L. SIMONS

In *The Proper Study of Mankind*, B. A. Howard lists the following items:

Enough water to fill a ten-gallon barrel;
 enough fat for seven bars of soap;
 carbon for 9,000 lead pencils;
 phosphorus for 2,200 match-heads;
 iron for one medium-sized nail;
 lime enough to whitewash a chicken coop; and
 small quantities of magnesium and sulphur.

This is supposed to be the prescription for one human being. Now I don't know if the chemistry is right but clearly an accurate list of this sort could be given. In one important sense every man (and woman) is a bunch of chemicals and nothing more. The vital thing is how the bunches of chemicals are arranged to form Fred or Mary.

The development of technology has been in one sense the progressive simulation of human activity. First simple levers may have been used to move loads that would formerly have required many men and much effort. The evolution of more complex machines has represented a means of doing better what men could already do in some degree, given enough of them and plenty of time.

When machines started to become complex about three hundred years ago there were a number of reactions. Progressive people welcomed every development; the clergy as always was not so sure. The early theologians had defined the character of human society and the impious rationalists who sought to change it did so at their peril.

Philosophical questions were involved. The theologians would have conceded the materialistic first paragraph of this article to *some* extent. Of course man has a chemistry; of course this chemistry is vital to his life and happiness—upset the chemistry and you upset the man, he no longer functions well and he may die. But of course, the clerics rush to say, man is *not only* chemistry. He is spirit or soul or mind.

As long as machines were incapable of simulating intellectual activity it was possible for theologians and others to persist with this philosophy. As long as machines did nothing more than transport human beings, print newspapers, dig for coal, it was possible to maintain, with some plausibility, the notion that an unbridgeable gulf existed between men and machines. With the advent of the modern digital computer—the most interesting machine of all—this distinction is no longer possible to make.

The interesting thing about the modern computer is the extent to which it can simulate human activity in all the intellectual and creative roles. Apart from simple arithmetical and logical operations the computer can design houses and aeroplanes, play chess, write poetry, compose music, design bridges and cars, work out rocket trajectories, organise refuse disposal, predict crime incidence to allow efficient police deployment, govern traffic, diagnose illness and metal faults, design other computers, etc., etc. It can be truly said that the modern electronic computer can perform *to some extent* any intellectual or creative act of which the human mind is capable.

The objections to this thesis usually centre on the fact that the computer is programmed by human beings, that human beings in effect tell the machine what to do; and that in consequence the computer lacks intelligence and

creativity. But the conclusion does not follow from the premise. Let us first look at man in more detail.

For materialists, the concept of man (but not the detail) is relatively simple: individual men and women carry sperm and ova with unique genetic features. A fertilised egg is the equivalent of the computer programme. The genetic features of the fertilised egg determine the subsequent evolution of the individual. If certain outside influences occur the fertilised egg may not come to fruition, or the subsequent development may be effected in one way or another. The machine analogy of the human being would read thus: an elongated structure including appendages for locomotion and manipulation of external objects, facilities for the ingestion and assimilation of chemicals for the provision of chemical and electrical energy, a central intelligence region oriented to individual and race survival, devices for sensing environmental phenomena, etc., etc.

The analogy between the computer and man can now be drawn. Both are capable of intelligent behaviour; both owe their intelligence to factors outside their control (the computer owes its intelligence to the human designer, man owes it to genetic make-up, early nutrition, stimuli fed through the sense-organs); both can take decisions based on experience (the decision facility of the computer resides in its 'jump' orders—the provision in a computer programme that allows the computer to decide which instruction to obey next); both require a constant supply of energy to keep going; both can be plugged in to a rigid energy source or can carry their energy source within them (i.e. a computer can be plugged into a electric grid or can work off a battery, a man can be fed intravenously or can rely on his fat content for several days—without the energy supply, man and machine stop working after a bit); both have a memory (the computer one usually magnetic, the human one chemical or electrical); both have sense-organs linking them to events in the outside world (the computer sense-organs can be typewriters, photo-electric cells, microphones, etc.); both can modify their behaviour patterns in the light of new sensory experience (e.g. if a man, programmed for survival as he is, gets coshed down a dark alley, he avoids the alley in future; if a computer, programmed for chess, attempts a losing sequence the sequence will be avoided in future); both can design machines never before conceived; both can create artistic forms never before devised; both go wrong in extremes of temperature and humidity and for other reasons; both need to be repaired by experts; both are complex.

It is important to realise that the computer expert cannot always predict how a computer will behave. A programme may be written and understood by the programmer in every detail—but until the programme is run, the outcome is often uncertain. And this is not simply because programs embody faults (programme 'debugging' can take as long as the original writing), but because provisions for computer *creativity* can be written in. A programme can be written so that the computer will respond in one of many ways according to incoming data. What the data will be at any one time cannot be predicted and so the computer behaviour at particular times cannot be known until it has happened. This, incidentally, should help to show the confusion of people who equate choice with free will—the two concepts are quite different. Every modern computer chooses many times in any programme sequence—but few people would suggest that the computer had free will. The

only reason that the concept of free will has currency in some people's mind is that they cannot grapple with the sheer complexity of the human causal situation. The same is true of computers. Neither man nor computer has free will (the terms are meaningless); but both men and computers choose millions of times as week follows week.

The analogy between computers and men could be extended. All human intellectual and personality traits could be described and a machine analogue could be devised. Already computers are teaching us things about human intelligence and human society, and they have much to teach us yet. Perhaps it may even be feasible to regard computers, in due course, as a life-form. Of course they

cannot reproduce without human assistance, but neither can many plants reproduce without their own intermediary—the bee.

The important point is that in terms of performance, creativity, intelligence, perception, experience, memory, etc., the differences between men and machines are differences of degree, not of kind. We may live to see a Charter of Computer Rights for the protection of electronic intelligence, and the last 'C' in NSPCC may not only stand for 'Children'. Perhaps, in time, computers will vote and make love to one another. Already they do sums better than human beings; perhaps they will do these things better as well . . .

SOB (Save Our Books)

OSWELL BLAKESTON

"I DON'T SEE what's wrong with cannibalism. Is it any better to eat an innocent lamb than a succulent young woman? Left alive, the young woman would be likely to bring far more damage to the world than the lamb and enjoy herself less. Besides, cannibalism is an integral part of Christianity." Just a few bright lines of dialogue from a recently published light novel by John Chancellor, *The Farther Off From England* (Cassell, 25s), a random example but only a few years ago it would have been impossible to print such gentle jokes without getting into serious trouble.

Has, then, the problem of censorship been resolved? Spectacularly erotic works of literature have won a licence in the courts to deal with their material, and even a humble who-done-it may, quite casually, introduce a negro detective who falls in love with the white man whom he finds guilty of the murder. All tribute, for sure, to those who have fought to bring this about, blocking the witch-hunts in an attempt to lead us to the point where we might join the human race.

But is the present happy position only a temporary one? Will the pendulum swing disasterously far the other way? Can there be any security until the Law establishes freedom in depth? And, more disturbingly, is it possible that the truce is part of a plan which will lead finally to an unwelcome ultimate crunch?

One has always held that the "daring" books produced at hazard by the little presses and the "way-out" plays performed in cellars packed with three people are of the greatest social value; for the *avant-garde* is the cutting edge of the community mind. So the art experimenters, too, deserve our tribute when all of us can enjoy as entertainment a detective story reinvigorated by new material or a light comedy given a psychic face-lift with adult jokes. It is a pity they are not included in C. H. Rolph's *Books in the Dock* (Andre Deutsch, 25s); but the author deals with pretty nearly every other aspect of the story of opposition to the political, religious and prurient censorship of books through the ages.

Mr Rolph has himself been associated with the drafting of many liberating acts, and is a staff writer and director for the *New Statesman*. One does not want in any way to be ungrateful for the things which he has splendidly done; but it is just possible that the emphasis should now shift from censorship as we have known it to a more subtle attack on books and their power to educate us in wit, tolerance and expertise; for one way of censoring books is to abolish them entirely.

This, conceivably, might be the underground attack plan of the Establishment; for it does not seem to matter what party is in power—no provision is made for cultural exemption for books when postal rates are increased. One has only to read the pathetic letters in *The Bookseller* to learn what dire things the increased postal charges are doing to the country bookshop. Then SET plus rising rentals is driving countless booksellers, who anyway were generally only surviving on a shoe string, out of business. No bookshops—no books.

The public libraries? Ha, there is now the ghastly threat of borrowers paying a fee. Admittedly, at first this fee would be nominal; but how soon would it be raised to "a rational figure"? Think of what governments have done with insurance contributions. In no time there would be no free libraries as we know them, only reference libraries where we could consult government documents. Is this why the suppressors are prepared to wait? For without sales to public libraries, publishers would collapse like tower flats.

It sounds ridiculous? But one can imagine some comparatively decent Germans roaring with laughter when someone first suggested that their government was going to shovel all the Jewish race into gas ovens. How absurdly exaggerated! Of course for the moment many are deceived with the notion that the proposed fees would be a pleasant bonus for authors. They overlook the fact that the whole business is so obviously a put-up pretext, for why should borrowers pay to borrow books which they have already bought in communal buying through the rates? Few of us can afford to own privately the new books we want, and we have to buy communally, and publishers rely on such purchase.

Library fee, a bonus to authors? No: library fees and a decline of the public library, the end of the minority book publisher, and death to authors.

The publishers of books for which borrowers would still be prepared to pay a whacking great library fee? Their bad turn will come; but other people, one might say, will take the dirty work from the censors-of-books-by-suppression. The kill-the-book brigade can sit back and watch the effect of rising costs which are pricing all books out of the market, and the unions who refuse to sanction machinery which might offset some of the loss because such machinery would abolish skilled grades, the general refusal of workers to allow rationalisation of staff.

Yes, freethinkers should continue to be continuously vigilant about overt censorship, but they should also watch

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the more insidious threat of concealed censorship. It may be less glamorous to fight for exemption of books from postal charges as essential culture, for exemption of bookshops and theatres from SET, for agreements to save publishers by rationalising printing, than to take arms against the upholders of prosecutions for obscenity; but all the listed causes are the contemporary priorities. Books are essential for freethinking; and if we do not fight now, we may witness the assassination of books even in our time. So fighting for free-libraries is no frivolity.

Certainly, to my mind, the old-fashioned censors were far less dangerous than the anti-book men because they were so patently imbecilic. In fact they could even be endearing. I remember when I was making abstract films in the thirties, the film censors waived charges for their certificates (which one had to have for all films shown publicly) on the grounds that they simply couldn't understand the films!

But one must return to Mr Rolph. His book raises so many excellent points. Is the new permissiveness just a sign of the decline of a nation? It's easy for the busy to be virtuous and the Victorians were so busy; but now that we have no Empire to fuss over does the devil find work for our idle hands? Well, welcome to that if the devil means increasing the subtlety of our thoughts and emotions; but what follows from this suggestion is alarming. I don't think I agree with Mr Rolph, but his hypothesis deserves serious consideration, his idea that the relaxing of censorship may be a transitional part of a campaign waged against privacy.

It was once argued that detective stories were encouraged because they were a preparation for acceptance of the police state. One can't just dismiss such an argument: yet even if one cannot be convinced, one can still be relieved that the new thriller gives us bent policemen and accurate descriptions of how some police states encourage confessions. So it is obligatory to think about the unsettling notion that the exposure of sex larks which used to be private frolics may be a preparation for improved and sustained surveillance of the citizen's life by Big Brother.

Mr Rolph, although he is on the side of reform, doesn't shirk problems. He is not in the whole-hogger lobby which would abolish all censorship. He thinks about privacy, and he faces the implications of freedom which permits the publication of a book exploiting a pernicious fascist philosophy. My own suggestion is that such a book should be compelled to include an essay exposing the fallacies. In a much happier way The Bodley Head used this principle when they issued *Ulysses* in 1937, printing with the text the judgement of Judge Woolsey that ended with the words: "*Ulysses* is a sincere and honest book and I think that criticisms of it are entirely disposed of by its rationale". Any prosecution of The Bodley Head would have meant the jury reading not only Joyce's words but also Woolsey's vindication.

And what is the "real hard-core" pornography? Who can say? When I was young we used to think it was what the police then called "the good clean adventure yarn", the book with men tying up victims to tables and torturing them with lighted cigarettes. This, we declared, was the stuff which should be condemned, not D. H. Lawrence. True enough, if one is going to condemn anything; but may it not be, as Mr Rolph hints, that it is better for a man to masturbate with a book of sadistic pictures than to

work out his impulses in life? Of course. But against that we can no longer put credence in the doctrine of sport sublimating violence, when today we have seen a football match lead to a war.

It is all amazingly difficult, and Mr Rolph's solution is that we should use the tortuous logic of the present statute and try to make it work better. One thing arises immediately from this—that the first reform here should be a literary one, that authors should be called on to rewrite the clauses of the act. Mr Rolph quotes from the acts and admits he doesn't know what the quotations mean, that no one seems to know what they mean.

Which brings up the question of the literate jury. When Mr John Calder appeared at the Old Bailey, in connection with his publication of *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, he rightly complained about the semi-literate jurors. Yet this is really an indictment of the jury system, for many a jury trying an involved commercial fraud includes members to whom the whole story is totally unintelligible.

It would seem that it would at least be seemly if the Law put its own house in order before trying to regulate that of the publisher's. By doing so they might be driven to some clear thinking which would itself define the occasion when a psychoanalyst's opinion might be solicited or that of a pacifist practitioner or an erudite freethinker. Too often "if it is proved" merely means if a particular jury can be induced to believe something.

But read Mr Rolph and try to work through the difficulties. It is a job for freethinkers. Meanwhile, don't take too long, don't let the present lull induce complacency, don't wake up to find that all books have been censored by their abolition.

WHOSE WAR IS THIS ?

DEBORAH DODD

"WARS WILL ONLY CEASE when men refuse to fight," wrote Tolstoy a hundred years ago; and it seems as though the truth of this statement is dawning on us at last. On August 27 sixty young American boys refused an order to attack the Vietcong. This hit the news, but it is not the whole story by any means. Few people in this country realise what consternation faces the young men of America today, or to what lengths they will go in order to escape the draft. Some flee to Canada: others to Sweden, Greece or Spain. Others bribe their doctors anything up to two hundred dollars to find some physical defect which will prevent them from fighting. Any moral considerations are subjugated to the practical ends of beating the system at all costs.

Then there are those who have not subjugated their morals: on the contrary, they have deliberately burnt their draft cards because of these morals. An organisation for draft resistance has been formed in northern California by a young man called David Harris who is now receiving his nation's due thanks for his 'unpatriotic activities' with a three-year term of imprisonment. But this will not deter him from his aim "To teach the world once again how to see, not with the bloody vision of oppressors, nor through the visors of armies, but with the eyes of men. Men whose proper inheritance is life itself; men who refuse any longer to be the messengers of death". His period in gaol may temporarily prevent him from taking an active part in the organisation of draft resistance, but there are others who will carry on his work. And when he is released he will

simply take up where he left off: a three-year term of imprisonment will not crush his conviction that non-violence is the only answer to the state of the world today.

On the face of it, this is a politician's war; but in the final analysis no war is a politician's war. It is the war of those who fight—or refuse to fight. This is the war of a young boy of twenty who writes from Vietnam:

"It is a difficult task to tell you what it's like during a rocket attack, or the millions of things that run through my mind when I'm manning a bunker. When we're in the bunkers and fighting holes out on the perimeter it's so strange. Ahead you see nothing but the barbed wire and behind the ground which has been so burnt out it offers no concealment. You just sit in the darkness and think, and wonder what sense there is in fighting a war for a population that couldn't care less who governs it."

It is also the war of those who are deserting—at the rate of one every seven minutes; and it is the war of David Harris and the other draft resisters, for they are all fighting it in their own way.

Nevertheless, the politicians attempt to make it their war. They hold talks and conferences; they vacillate; they order the withdrawal of troops, then they withdraw the withdrawal. But what right has any Government to force its citizens to fight a war in which they do not believe against their wills and their consciences:

And at any rate, it has become quite apparent that no Government is going to put an end to this war. The young Americans realise this. They have seen—as Tolstoy saw—that:

"The reduction and abolition of armed forces will only come about when people will stop trusting Governments; when they will seek this salvation not in the complicated and devious combinations of diplomats but in the simple fulfilment of the duty of every man written in the heart of every man. The law not to do to another that which you would not wish to be done unto you; and—still more—not to kill your neighbour."

BOOK REVIEW

R. K. MEARS

IBSEN—A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST: Hans Heiberg (Allen and Unwin, 50s).

THIS BOOK falls between stools. It is neither the interesting, friendly sort of biography which gives the reader a personal, if sometimes over-dramatised look at its subject, nor is it the strict, rigid literary analysis, which touches on the life of the man of letters only when it is strictly relevant to the work under discussion. One suspects that Heiberg set out to write a book in the former cosier vein. In this he was doubtless frustrated by the sparsity both of material about Ibsen, and of Ibsen's life itself. Most men, worthy of a biography are men of a character—be it warm or stone cold—which lends itself to lengthy description, speculation and anecdote. Ibsen was not a colourful personality. Only on very rare occasions did he display anything approximating to what publicity agents nowadays refer to as 'charisma'. Thus the chief source of material from which a biographer might construct 'A Portrait' is his plays themselves.

It is because of this that though the book does tell the reader of Ibsen's life, it reads rather like an embellished curriculum vitae, the latter part of which is dominated by the writing and publication of a procession of plays. Though this renders the book somewhat uninspiring, there is little doubt that this is the fault of the subject matter rather than the author. And it is unlikely that anyone could better Heiberg's *Ibsen*. The book is not therefore one for those who "like biographies" but more for those whose interest is specialised at least to the extent of 'the theatre' if not to Ibsen himself.

There is much here to explain why this man arose from a very ordinary origin to alter the history of theatre throughout the world. A radical and a freethinker at a time when in his native Norway, as everywhere else, repudiation of an orthodox deity was inadvisable socially and restricted to progressive intellectual circles, Ibsen

is shown to be a drab, often unfriendly character lacking in self-confidence until confronted with a bank balance and a theatre-going public both of which spelled success. Yet he pioneered the now commonplace psychological drama—a form which neither merely entertains nor loudly proclaims an obvious moral, but looks at characters, utilises much subtlety and innuendo, and leaves the audience to form its own conclusion. In short he initiated drama which required the audience to think deeply—he was the forerunner of the now trendy audience participation.

Heiberg traces his life, as far as is possible from the scanty raw material available and turns chiefly to the plays for a deeper character analysis. The picture that emerges is incomplete, but nonetheless revealing. Certain of Ibsen's letters which have survived contribute a major source to Heiberg, for here Ibsen's views are spelled out instead of hinted at as in the plays. And on occasion Ibsen displays a certain eloquence, often combined with a refreshing optimism: "Exchanging of forms of government is no more than wavering over degrees, a little more, or a little less—all evil". "The State has its roots in time, it will be better in time. Greater things than that will fall: all religion will fall. Neither moral concepts nor artistic forms are immortal . . ."

Immortality for a writer is acquired by his ability to record ideas which are dateless. Ibsen's immortality derives from his plays, many of which will always hold validity. However, the following extract from a letter puts his case even more irrevocably: "Is it only in the political field that the campaign for liberty shall be allowed in our country? Is it not first and foremost the spirit which needs to be freed? Such servitude that we cannot even enjoy the freedoms we already have. Norway is a free country inhabited by imprisoned people."

LETTERS

How much toleration ?

MAY I AGREE eagerly with every word of Michael Gray's excellent and sorely needed remarks (October 4). It is not enough just to reject superstition and myths which are Christian: there are just as many concerned with 'race', 'sex', and 'nationality' which, if we claim to be 'Rational', 'Freethinking' (and certainly Humanist), we must try and avoid. Our enemies are exploitation, persecution, prejudice (allowed to be active politically), discrimination and totalitarianism, *wherever we find them*, whether they be Catholic or Protestant, Christian or Communist, Religious or Secular. It is disastrously easy for anti-Humanists to damage Secularism by abusing the toleration of your paper. I disapprove of censorship as much as you do (as you well know!) but no paper can afford to betray its own principles out of consideration for its enemies.

KIT MOUAT.

Why ?

I FELT SORRY for the two boys who called to tell me about Jesus. Not because it was a cold, windy night, nor because of the rain that fell in torrents. Nor even because I asked them to call back at a more convenient time (the dog was barking her head off and I had a house full of young children trying to get to sleep). I felt sorry for them because I wondered *why* two boys of barely more than 16 or 17 felt the *need* to say they had taken Jesus into their hearts and wanted to tell me about him. I knew, too, that their reception at the houses to follow would be far less friendly, far less civil even, than mine.

The amount of time that would be wasted with such negative results as they were almost sure to get, appalled me. They were young and intelligent and obviously realised the chaos the world is in, so why didn't they also realise the futility of their efforts, in relaying genned up phrases to other reasonably intelligent beings? Did they really *believe* it would help?

I read the tract which one of them fished from a pocket under his dripping wet mac, and I agree four minutes isn't much warning of a nuclear attack. But I still cannot be blackmailed into believing in Jesus so that my sins will be forgiven if that time should come.

When I think of all that some young people do in their spare time, to help elderly people, the handicapped, children from broken homes, and many more, I feel desperately sorry for the two who think that telling people they have taken Jesus into their hearts is better than actions which *help* make the world a happier place.

MARGARET GREEN.

(Continued overleaf)

LETTERS—(continued)

Forsaken men and women

I AM a great believer in the dictum—"Ladies first"—and therefore am glad that the FREETHINKER ventilated the cause of "Forsaken Women" before that of "Forsaken Men". As a male myself I have every sympathy with the plight of these "forsaken men" but I would like to make two points clear:—

1. In my article—"Forsaken Women"—I was principally concerned with the problem of these women in finding somewhere suitable for them, and their children, to live and—when this had been done—to find the money to pay for their home.

A man, unencumbered by small children, can much more easily find somewhere to sleep.

2. The men referred to in the letter—"Forsaken men"—at least had their freedom. They could, if they wished, marry again. Thousands of men are tied legally to their wives because they are refused a divorce. They cannot—as the law now stands—marry again so, if they are in love with another woman they must live in what I believe is still known as "sin". This must be even more damning to their professional prestige than being cited for cruelty.

I do not think that a man, if he is given a divorce, must grumble at paying up to one-third of his income to his former wife; after all he was married to her and cannot expect just to walk off and leave her to fend for herself with the children.

Surely too a scheming wife, of the type referred to in the letter—"Forsaken men"—must, if she has any brains, realise that the more she damages her former husband's professional position, the less he is likely to earn and therefore the less she, in turn, will get.

It is however, completely wrong that a man should still have to maintain a former wife when she remarries.

It is still, unfortunately, true that many professional men are turned out of their profession if they are found guilty of adultery and this, despite the fact, that they may be first class members of their profession.

A doctor, for example, who falls in love—and commits adultery—with one of his patients.

Or again, take the case of a priest of the Church of England who has been found guilty of adultery. On the surface it may be said that, by committing adultery, he was going against the tenets of the Christian Faith but this Faith is supposed to be going back to the beliefs of Jesus Christ and Jesus—according to the gospel story—did not condemn a woman who had committed adultery.

Further, the writer of the story of Jesus appearing first of all after his supposed resurrection to Mary Magdalene must have written that because he thought that was the first thing Jesus would do—go back to the woman he loved who was herself almost certainly originally a prostitute. She attracted Jesus and this love he had for her may well explain his sympathy for the woman taken in adultery.

So Jesus, who was forsaken by so many was perhaps after all, not completely a "forsaken man".

CHARLES HENNIS.

Free Speech

WITH REGARD to Mr Simons's letter (September 20): I notice that in the first two paragraphs he admits he lacks the "intellectual and verbal mastery" and "wizardry" to answer my previous challenges—and his admission of failure is amply corroborated by the rest of his "reply". He confesses his own "befuddled ignorance", and he admits that he cannot define the "working-class", which he persistently champions! These are surprisingly candid admissions from the man who, in the same letter, says of my remarks on Tibet: "it is intriguing to read Mr Page supporting, in the FREETHINKER of all places a feudal tyranny". Indeed, it is so intriguing that I challenge Mr Simons to justify this blatant lie, this monstrous falsehood, this typical Simons perversion. At most I implicitly criticised the Chinese invasion of Tibet. The fallacy in Mr Simons's naive and perverse "argument" lies in the assumption that if one criticises or condemns the Chinese invasion, one must support the preceding "feudal tyranny" in Tibet. In my previous letter I did not even mention priests or secularists; yet Mr Simons implies that, if I am a secularist, I have to support "Chinese secularists" against "Tibetan priests", regardless of circumstances. On that basis Mr Simons would rejoice whenever a Christian nun is raped by a secularist (if and when that happens!). So much for any pretensions Mr Simons may have as an advocate of rational morality or of human rights. I share Mr Simons's abhorrence of barbarities committed by the Tibetan priesthood; but it is hardly logical to claim that such abhorrence justifies the invasion and continued occupation of Tibet by the Chinese. Abhorrence of the atrocities committed by Stalin does not necessarily mean approval of Tsarism—yet distinctions of this kind seem beyond Mr Simons. His prostitution of truth and reason and his willingness to distort

and twist the arguments of others have been exposed. Unfortunately, these are qualities that have been exploited by totalitarians in our century to facilitate their manipulation and enslavement of their fellow men on a scale virtually unprecedented in history.

MARTIN PAGE.

"The Day the NSS went to Church"

ERIC WILLOUGHBY'S summary of the NSS tour of Sussex last month is a nice record of a most enjoyable day. I hope he will not mind my picking up a number of errors he made in reporting my address at Lewes outside the house, where Thomas Paine lived; I had to contend with the noise of heavy traffic, and even though I had been a Sergeant-Major in the Army, I may well not have been clear to Mr Willoughby.

The name of the house, now a restaurant, where one can see a number of interesting relics of the period of Paine's life, is the Bull House, not the Bull's Head. When Paine was first in America, it was his book, *Common Sense*, that united the colonists against Britain; this was written in 1776. *Rights of Man* was written many years later in England, the first part being published in 1791, and part two the following year.

With regard to the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, Mr Willoughby reports me correctly in saying that there is a distinct possibility that Paine actually did the work—but for Thomas Jefferson, not Benjamin Franklin.

Back in England, pursuing his scientific turn of mind, Paine was interested in the construction of a bridge, that eventually was built, based on his design, over the river Wear at Monkwearmouth—often called the Sunderland Bridge. I believe that, because he championed the French Revolution at that time, particularly in his *Rights of Man*, he was deprived of the credit for this considerable engineering achievement.

The cartoon, that I presented to the landlord of the Bull House on long loan from the Thomas Paine Society, did not hang in a lavatory of the House of Commons; it showed Paine, Guy Fawkes-like, setting fire to a pair of straw-stuffed breeches at the House of Commons, the idea for the cartoon being based on the discovery of such a pair of breeches in a lavatory of the House of Commons. It was one of a number of efforts to denigrate Paine during his life-time.

I hope on another occasion at the Bull in Lewes to enlarge on the breeches story, as the Thomas Paine Society intends displaying some token coins of the 1790s, which also show these hot pants, said to have belonged to the Rev Joseph Priestley.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

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