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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR IMMIGRANTS ?

THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION has suggested to the Department of Education and Science that religious education in schools should be modified so that immigrant children can participate in RE lessons and the daily act of worship without feeling an alien religion is being foisted on them. The Commission hopes that syllabuses can be drawn up, with the help of the leaders of the non-Christian faiths, which will make it possible for Sikhs, Muslims and other immigrants to worship side by side with Christian children.

Humanist opinion on religious education has long recognised that the existence of children whose parents adhere to faiths other than Christianity, renders the present laws regarding religious education, racially divisive. At present in schools immigrant children have either to sit, kneel or stand through what to them is mumbo-jumbo, or be withdrawn by their parents, thus being set apart as peculiar and being made to stand in draughty corridors, in exactly the same way as children who are withdrawn by humanist parents. In the few schools where alternative religious assemblies and lessons are arranged, the fact that immigrant children are in some ways different from children in Britain is emphasised more strongly than ever, and the undesirable build up of race consciousness is therefore encouraged.

The proposals of the Community Relations Commission are welcome in that they display awareness of the problem. But how practical is it to suggest that children from all religions can receive religious education in its present statutory form together? At present there is a severe shortage of teachers qualified to teach Christianity. There seems little hope of competent religious instruction being given on a large scale in a number of different religions at once. And how can an assembly be religious and at the same time acceptable to Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and anyone else who happens along? And the Community Relations Commission seem to forget that there are also a large number of Jews in our schools, who though not immigrants have as much right to join in a multi-religious assembly as everyone else. This is not, of course to mention the children of humanists who surely have as much right to study humanism from Confucius to Ayer, as Christians have to study Christianity from Christ to Muggeridge.

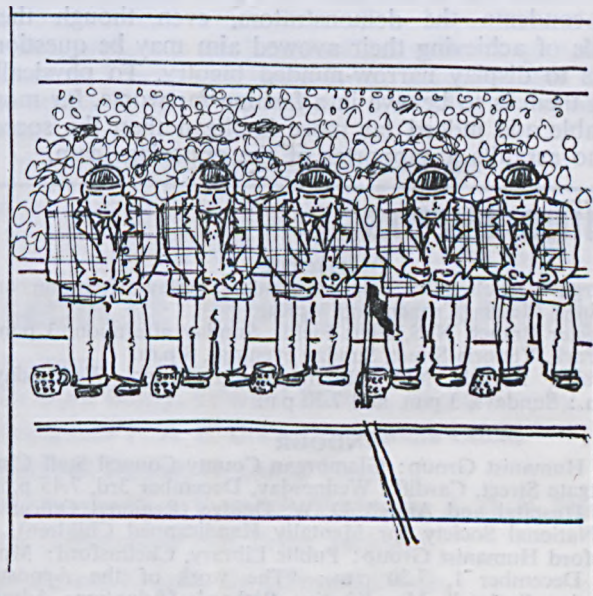
It seems therefore highly dubious whether the Community Relations Commission's scheme could work without the abolition of religious education. Could one have a *religious* assembly which satisfied all beliefs? Could comparative religion be taught and at the same time belief be inculcated? The Commission has made its proposals in order, in the words of Sir Ronald Gould, the chairman of its advisory committee on education, "not to give offence" to immigrants.

Were the Commission to consider what is ethical rather than what is expedient, they might realise that their scheme is tantamount to advocating the end of religious education, and add to their arguments the view that no state should have the right to decree that its children should be brought up to be religious—that it is the duty of a state

to teach its children *facts* from which they can decide upon their own philosophy and way of life. A state which took such a duty seriously would indeed teach its children comparative religion and also explain to them what it means to be an agnostic or an atheist.

RUGGER HOOLIGANISM

RUGBY IS a game normally associated with tankards of beer, jock-straps, sweat, 'dirty' songs, and men whose physical proportions, including their mouths, are on the large side. Despite this it is undeniably an upper class sport. Twickenham is often alluded to as "Twickers", while Wembley has had to get along without such an increase in its status quo. Soccer fans are constantly in the news due to brawls on terraces, and hooliganism on trains. Not so rugby fans. They have remained demurely unnewsworthy. Until recently that is. Until Saturday, November



Keep politics out of sport!

15, when at St Helen's ground, Swansea, gangs of them, some 100 of whom wore orange arm-bands which designated them stewards and others who were variously described by the press as "self-appointed strong men", "vigilantes" and "rugger heavies", assaulted anti-apartheid demonstrators both inside and outside the ground.

Freethinker

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In *The Times* Richard Streecon wrote: "... a girl of about 16 who sat down near the halfway line was kicked in the ribs before she was dragged off. Initially, she was pulled by the hair. Later when a second steward joined in, her arms were pushed behind her, and, bent double, she was hustled away, apparently in agony. . . . Nearly all those (incidents) I saw, and others seen by colleagues in the press box, involved far more punching and kicking by the stewards than seemed necessary. Many of the stewards were smiling. They seemed to relish their work." Outside the ground Streecon "saw demonstrators being hit over the head with their own banner. . . . When it seemed the police cordon might break, there was a rush of Rugby supporters, many of them elderly man, to prop up the cordon".

In the House of Commons on the following Tuesday Mr Callaghan, the Home Secretary, said: "It is not the job of a steward to assault people: he should escort them from the ground if such a thing is possible. If physical force is required, it is his duty to call on the police for that purpose". Whether the immediate objective of some of the demonstrators, to stop the Springboks tour is the right way to achieve their underlying objective of halting the apartheid policy of the South African government is debatable. But that the underlying objective is a good worthy and completely right one, cannot be denied by anyone who considers that all men should be equal.

To condemn the demonstrators, even though their methods of achieving their avowed aim may be questionable, is to display narrow-minded bigotry. To physically assault them is to behave in a fashion far worse, far more despicable and indeed far more hooligan than the soccer fan who assaults a supporter of the opposing team.

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

- Cardiff Humanist Group: Glamorgan County Council Staff Club, Westgate Street, Cardiff: Wednesday, December 3rd, 7.45 p.m.: "Ely Hospital and After", D. W. Doidge (Regional Officer of the National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children).
 Chelmsford Humanist Group: Public Library, Chelmsford: Monday, December 1, 7.30 p.m.: "The work of the Agnostics Adoption Society", Mrs Kirstine Richards (Adoptions Administrator and Senior Caseworker).
 Glasgow Humanist Group: George Service House: Sunday, November 30, 2.30 p.m.: "The Jewish Community", Dr Jack Miller, JP.
 Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, November 30, 6.30 p.m.: "Two Civilisations", Dr W. Bryn Thomas, Ph.D.(Econ.)(Lond.).
 South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, November 30, 11 a.m.: "The Race to

With their own behaviour the rugby enthusiasts have added a very strong argument for the calling off of the tour, whose right to continue they defend with such vigour.

INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY ?

MR BRIAN WALDEN, Labour MP for Birmingham All Saints, is to bring a Right of Privacy Bill before the House of Commons. His object is to establish a right to privacy and to make invasion of that right a civil tort. Mr Walden has said that his main concern was to ensure that information given in confidence to one organisation was not then put at the general disposal of others. This was particularly relevant now that computerisation has greatly facilitated the building up of personal dossiers.

Perhaps the most interesting point that Mr Walden has made is that he considers it wrong that dossiers should be compiled without the knowledge of the individual. The following extract from the National Council for Civil Liberties November Bulletin suggests that the government itself is the chief compiler of such dossiers:

"The Prime Minister is responsible to Parliament for security matters but in recent years he has not been under much pressure to explain the function, financing and terms of reference to the Special Branch and MI5. In these circumstances the term 'secret police' is no exaggeration. The existence of a force over which there is minimal control and which has carte-blanche to intrude on the legitimate activities of private citizens is inimical to civil liberty and a denial of democracy. Of course any democratic state has an obligation to protect its security from the agents of foreign powers and from serious internal subversion. The difficulty is where to draw the line. The pressures on individual members of the Special Branch to collect dossiers on citizens who do not threaten security (the *Observer* estimated a total of two million security dossiers in 1965) and to use such information to the detriment of those under investigation (for example employment and promotion in the civil service) should not be underestimated."

Any bill which is intended to ensure our individual rights to privacy deserves all the support that the individuals who are to benefit can muster. One would like to know however, whether Mr Walden intends his bill to curtail the frightening 'Big Brother' activities of government sanctioned agencies such as MI5 and the Special Branch.

the Moon and After", Richard Clements, OBE. Admission free. Sunday, December 7, 3 p.m.: Debate on School Religion—David Tribe and Howard Marratt.

Teilhard de Chardin Association of Great Britain: Gilbert School, North Hill, Colchester: Saturday, November 29, 2.30 p.m.: A Symposium—"The Significance of Man", Speakers, Richard Clements, Father Cecil Doyle, James Klugmann.

Worthing Humanist Group: Morelands Hotel (opposite the pier): Sunday, November 30, 5.30 p.m.: "Education for What?" David Hardman (Internationally known lecturer and educationist).

Westminster Theatre, Palace Road, London, SW1 (Box Office 01-834 0283): Till December 6—Evenings 7.45 p.m., Matinees Wednesday and Saturday, 2.30 p.m.: Flora Robson, Joan Miller, Joyce Carey in *The Old Ladies* by Rodney Acland. Directed by Peter Cotes.

VISION AND REALISM

Annual Report of the
 NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

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103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

A VIEW OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

L. B. HALSTEAD

An extract from a public Lecture delivered at University of Natal, Durban and Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, South Africa, and reported in the South African press, August 1969.

I THINK we must accept as incontrovertible fact that in general white congregates with white and black with black. That people of one race will of their own volition prefer to associate with their own race.

Now if through an accident of history their roles in society are different, then we have a class distinction superimposed which emphasises and accentuates the already existing cultural divisions.

It then becomes all too easy to assume that this situation is preordained, and one that must therefore be retained and, if there is any resistance, imposed. Strangely enough the more draconian the measures introduced, the more tensions are augmented and the more certain becomes the ultimate breakdown of the system.

There is a particular trait of western civilisation which characterises the Judaic and Judaic-derivative religions, such as Christianity. The original sin was to question the Supreme Authority (and to get sadistically punished for it into the bargain); Thomas who demanded evidence was admonished and not praised. A tradition of accepting authority without question is engendered in our culture—a tradition of Paternalism. The number of times I have had it explained to me how much we (the whites) have done for them (the blacks) is legion. Also, as proof of the immaturity of the latter—how little gratitude they show. They are different, they haven't our ability, they are inately inferior. Not really human you know.

An attitude is ingrained in the fabric of this society. Let me give a personal example. Recently I went out with a black girl in this part of the world. She was well educated and we have much in common and we are very fond of each other. Well, I spoke of my friend to a young lady of Wits University. She wanted to know if we had kissed—the answer was simply yes. And the young lady exhibited a degree of horror and revulsion it has never previously been my misfortune to witness.

A few days ago this same young lady informed me with some pride that she had given her maid a lovely present. And when the maid (black) appeared she was asked by her mistress (white): 'What did you get today?' The reply after an initial uncomprehending hesitation: 'A present from madam'. I have never heard one grown human speak to another like this, as if one were an imbecile child. The young lady concerned probably glowed with virtue at her own kindness and generosity. Perhaps she cannot comprehend my disgust nor understand the hatred that her action can engender.

These two trivial episodes epitomise a basic attitude. There is an inability to judge a person as a person—instead one merely recognises labels. A physical characteristic acts as a sign stimulus, and one moreover that is intensely emotive. So much so that the strength of the reaction to the sign stimulus acts as a barrier to communication between individuals belonging to different groups.

To a certain extent this is all perfectly natural and it gives a degree of coherence to the group. What is unnatural is when such attitudes are demanded and constraints imposed on those individuals who for one reason or another are incapable of reacting to particular sign stimuli. Such

people are not subversive—they just happen to be built that way—they can only see individuals.

Let me quote John Blacking¹ on this topic: "One of the most critical issues in the world today is the onslaught on personal relationships, which is being made by large impersonal organisations, who demand the loyalty of people even unto death, and intrude into their personal lives telling them what is right and wrong, and whom they may or may not choose as their friends".

A conformist rigid authoritarian society of this ilk in which attitudes of thought become stereotyped may appear to be successful for a time. A truly strong society is measured by the degree to which it can accommodate dissent from its stated social *mores*. A society which is inflexible will break.

As Blacking has stressed: "The key to human evolution was the discovery of a new source of energy, the power that is generated by separateness in community, by individuality in society, by diversity within the framework of unity". Personally I think this is overstating the case—this only applies to a minority in any society. The majority of people prefer to conform—there is security in body and mind. However, one must concede that the creative members of society can only flourish in the conditions described by Blacking.

Stated baldly, society as a whole cannot afford to alienate let alone destroy the talents on which its future must ultimately depend. A perusal of recent issues of *Wits Student*, Blacking's Inaugural Lecture published this year, the booklet of the proceedings of the "Week of Protest" at University College, Salisbury, reveals that an idea unwelcome in this part of the world continues to survive and to find expression.

Just so long as such views can live in the minds of men and find expression then there will be hope that society will evolve before it is too late. As Clutton-Brock quoted at the Salisbury Teach-in: "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world and that is an idea whose time has come".

Your task is to keep it alive until that time.

¹ Professor John Blacking (an Englishman) was earlier this year sentenced together with a lady doctor (an Indian) for "conspiring to contravene the Immorality Act, i.e. to have relations".

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WHOSE HOMESTEAD IS PALESTINE?

PERCY ROY

THE CONCLUSION OF A TWO-PART ARTICLE

ON MAY 15, 1947, the General Assembly appointed the UN Special Commission on Palestine to consider and submit appropriate proposals for partition. In September 1947 two plans for the solution of the Palestine problem were submitted; a majority plan proposed the termination of the British mandate, the partition of Palestine and the creation of an Arab state, a Jewish state and a *corpus separatum* for the City of Jerusalem, which would come under a special regime to be administered by the UN. The two national states would be linked by an economic union. The minority plan also suggested the termination of the mandate but proposed the establishment of a federal state consisting of an Arab and a Jewish state with Jerusalem as the federal capital.

The Arabs *opposed partition in any form* and even questioned the legal competence of the United Nations, demanding recourse to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. This plea was rejected and against Arab opposition the General Assembly adopted on November 29, 1947 a resolution for the partition of Palestine fundamentally on the lines suggested by the majority report, with some territorial modifications. When on May 14, 1948, the end of the British mandate was proclaimed, both parties immediately began to grab more land than had originally been allocated to them. The Jews, under the pretext that the Arabs had refused to accept any partition and therefore had no claim at all, did not consider themselves bound to keep to any designated boundaries. Whilst taking more land than was their share, they also resorted to intimidation and outright terrorism to drive out Palestinians and create a purely Jewish country (cf. the infamous Deir Yessin massacre).

It is however, true that the territories proposed under the UN partition plan for the establishment of a Jewish state were unrealistic and indefensible; and since no parts of Palestine suffered from overpopulation, partition was practically feasible. In his book *Palestine, the Arabs and Israel*,¹ Henry Cattán justifies the Arab refusal of partition with the claim that at the time the Arabs were in the majority nearly everywhere. This argument is neither here nor there, since it had been the intention of the UN to create a new state as a home for Jewish immigration. So far the Zionists had acquired land in malaria-infested and therefore depopulated areas—land which was cheap. Now by dint of hard toil and sweat this land is once more dry and healthy. It has been an elementary socialist rule that land ought to belong to those who work on it. Israel today is the product of hard work and differs greatly from the state it had been in under Turkish neglect and Arab absentee landlordism. It has become a thriving community, unrelated even to the quite recently occupied Arab territories.

This is one aspect to be kept in mind; the other is that racist and religious fanatics ejected the indigenous Arab population by means ranging from expert psychological warfare to ruthless expulsion. This was Hitler's "final solution" with a vengeance.

However, the Arab demand of repatriation of all displaced refugees is unrealistic, not because of racist considerations or lack of space (the Israelis do not need more land but more immigrants), but because the land from which the Palestinian farmers, labourers and shopkeepers fled, is no longer the same nor able to absorb a million rather demoralised and justifiably aggrieved paupers. It

was the misfortune of the Palestinian refugees that their host countries already had a large excess of citizens who wanted to farm but had no land. For years the rural population had been increasing at a rate several times that needed to replace losses through retirement, death and the opening up of newly developed land.

Were it not for the racist aim of establishing a pure Jewish state, undiluted by citizens of any other denomination, it would not be too difficult to integrate a number of returning Arab farmworkers in socialist Kibbutzim (where there is no racial or religious discrimination) or even to create new collectives (considering that this kind of corporation is the backbone of Israel's economy). Moreover, many more could be employed in industry. Until quite recently, there had been some difficulties in integrating Jews from Arab countries (in particular Morocco and the Yemen) owing to their inferior cultural background; today they have become valuable workers pulling their weight as factory hands and so on. And the Druzes—formerly oppressed by the Arabs on religious grounds—are highly estimated citizens of Israel for whom, even in the Army commanding positions are open; as valuable allies they are however, the only exception to date in that they are not compelled to conform to the Jewish pattern.

The only obstacle is the Zionist objective of creating "in Palestine a state which ought to be racially, religiously and exclusively Jewish". This exclusiveness has long been emphasised by Zionist leaders and "Dezionisation" is therefore the prerequisite to a lasting peace in the Middle East, as Anthony Nutting pointed out:

"So long as Israel remains a western state, inspired by Zionist aims, there can be no hope for peace with the Arab world . . . The Zionists have been evil geniuses to the Jewish people. They have done and are still doing almost irreparable injury to the friendship and understanding that have prevailed for centuries between Arabs and Jews."

Herzl had to choose between Jewish colonisation in Argentina, Uganda or Palestine. For religious and emotional reasons he chose Palestine, but even so not many Jews could then be persuaded to go there. Hitler did more than Herzl to boost Jewish immigration.

Apartheid in Israel

When the Balfour Declaration was being discussed by the British Cabinet, its terms were privately conveyed to some influential Jews in Britain. Two of them were opposed to Zionism seeing it as a source of trouble. One of them was Lord Montefiore who wrote:

" . . . We denied that the Jews were any longer a nation, and we did not want them even to become a nation again. We . . . desired . . . that they should be free and equal citizens of all the countries in which they lived. We feared that the proposed National Home might create far more anti-Semitism than it would cure." (*The National Review*, December 1936.)

Now that a Western enclave has been created in Arab lands it is unavoidable for the Israelis to merge into the political structure of the Middle East. Given equal citizens rights, the Arabs would find life in Israel greatly beneficial economically and culturally. Some might even be converted. But both religious communities would sooner or later find their beliefs to be an anachronistic shackle in modern life and discard them. The new generation, if given a say, would definitely welcome the breaking of the rabbinical dictatorship. Even Western 'Gentiles' who come to help or

study in Israel only stay temporarily, because of the religious restrictions which are contradicting the Declaration of November 29, 1947, Section C which states, *inter alia* that the new state must guarantee "to all persons equal and non-discriminatory rights in civil, political, economic and religious matters and the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

However, another precondition for a lasting settlement is that the Arabs at long last in principle and *de jure* accept the United Nations decision on partition. Without that the Israelis cannot return any occupied territory, while the Arabs feel that in direct peace talks they have to negotiate under duress.

For all its wealth of documentary evidence, Mr Cattan's book suffers from a certain amount of over simplification

of a rather complex problem which the present reviewer has tried to describe.

In *Query*, No. 2, a symposium on "The Jews"—published without date, perhaps in 1947—H. G. Wells wrote:

"I am 'Jewish' or 'Aryan' or 'Keltic' or any of those things, probably all of them, and my own tradition, if I may be paradoxical, is creatively futuristic. I want the whole of this planet for myself and my kind—mankind—and I am bored by attempts to mark off pieces of it for the exclusive use of this or that gang, group or tribe. . . . The Bible story of the origin of the Jews is about as credible as Nazi ethnology. . . . (I) protest against any deliberate attempt to corral it back into a distinctive ghetto (as in Palestine) and divert it from human service to racial boasting, ganging and bickering."

¹ Longmans, 40s.

IN PRAISE OF PLEASURE

G. L. SIMONS

HUMAN EMOTIONAL experiences are of two sorts—nice and nasty. Both can be further divided according to intensity, duration, type, etc. Let's look at the nice ones.

Nice experiences are graded by *respectable* people. Certain nice experiences are regarded as basically 'physical'—such things as enjoyment in eating, drinking or sex. Other nice experiences are regarded as 'spiritual' or 'intellectual'—such things as listening to 'good' music, reading 'good' books, looking at a sunset, etc. The *respectable* people say that it is right to enjoy certain experiences but not others. Such people are almost always in favour of the 'intellectual' nice experiences but very often against the 'physical' nice experiences, particularly when they have sexual associations. Not long ago I read that a local council had decided to ban certain paintings from an exhibition because, as the pictures were of nudes, certain people may be expected to visit the exhibition 'for the wrong reasons'. This means that pleasure must be of the approved variety. Pleasure is not its own justification. It must satisfy certain careful criteria that the respectable people are eager to draw up.

This tendency of course, in respectable circles, derives in part from the religious tradition. In historical religion—and not just Christianity—the 'ways of the flesh' were condemned and other non-fleshy modes of existence were recommended. Today, in our so-called permissive society the sexually promiscuous woman is condemned and the chaste one is commended for her morality. Both may have a pleasurable life; both may have adopted modes suited to their own personalities; both may be well-adjusted and content. But the one is bad, the other good. So the respectable people say.

I recently attended a lecture given by Sir John Trevelyan at the Manchester Film Theatre on censorship. After an entertaining talk delivered with little factual support he proceeded to show a number of short films—one, privately made, was based on *The Perfumed Garden* and two others were made for the American commercial pornography market. Trevelyan liked the first of these and detested the other two. All three were relatively explicit, the last two pretty well as explicit as a film could be. The first had a certain lyrical quality, the other two were unashamedly 'physical' and clearly tongue-in-cheek. Trevelyan's prudery emerged in his comments on these three films. It is a clear sign of prudery when an erotic film can be tolerated if it is dressed up in a lyrical cloak with no sign of sex organs but not tolerated when the lyrical quality is absent and male and female sex organs are on view. This is to say

nothing of the quality of the three films shown—the first may have had artistic merit, more than the others. But I (and my wife) were bored by the first and less bored by the other two. Trevelyan disliked the last two films intensely and said so several times—and this was clearly the only reason why he would in no circumstances give a film certificate of any sort to either of them. (Film club members, of course, exist in that lofty incorruptible atmosphere too heady for other poor mortals.)

The Trevelyan syndrome is common in most human societies (certainly in all developed societies). Pleasure must be respectable or you are not entitled to it. In the 'decadent' West we are getting saner on such things but the prudish communist countries still have a long way to go—though recently a number of interesting examples of film nudity have appeared in Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovakian films (which is doubtless why all the sex-starved Russian troops rushed to Prague). In China, Chairman Mao and his cohorts have made unpleasant remarks about romantic love and recommended a more 'socialist' orientation of human emotions. This is one particular in which I would wish to see China less 'socialist'.

To me all pleasure is its own justification unless (a) it threatens the similar pleasures of other people, or (b) it threatens the continued pleasure of the participant himself. Even this last point must be qualified. Perhaps a man should even be allowed to commit suicide if he knows what he is doing and enjoys doing it—others may even enjoy watching him! In general unless pleasure harms other people it is wrong to assess it in moral terms. There is no such thing as immoral pleasure *per se*. If a number of people go to see a nude painting for artistic reasons and enjoy it, then great! If people go for sexual titillation and get it, then great! Why should sexual titillation be frowned upon as a literary or artistic experience? Why should a *moral* distinction be made between 'hard-core pornography' and erotic literature 'of merit'? Of course there are distinctions in the quality of literature—but are there *moral* distinctions? Human beings are capable, thank God (!) of a wide range of pleasurable emotions. Why should it be right to try to evoke some of these by the written word and wrong to evoke others? Because evoking some has had social consequences? Fine! Then prove it! The grounds for thinking the 'hard-core pornography' has bad social consequences are Non-Existent, Non-Existent, Non-Existent—or so we may conclude in the total absence of evidence produced by its opponents. Some people are disgusted,

(Continued overleaf)

nauseated, horrified at sexual themes being treated in a direct commercial way. In any case, such people remark, such literary efforts have no artistic merit. This *may* be true, but so what! Are such people always seeking the 'artistic merit' in Coronation Street (which they are not falling over backwards to ban), in the advertisement hoardings (no Mary Whitehouse advocating *their* destruction), and in similar artistically barren commercial phenomena which impinge on the mass scene.

When people condemn pornography they are saying more about themselves than about the pornography. They are saying a lot about their own sexuality, their own guilt and fears, the sterility of their own lives. Such people see pornography everywhere, perhaps under every bed (like the Yanks and commies). There have been movements to ban Plato's *Symposium* as well as James Joyce, Henry Miller and co. The anti-pornographers have narrow, silly little minds. Perhaps the sanest attitude is one of mild interest, leaving oneself open to titillation if the words can achieve it—and not feeling guilty when they do—but in the main deriving one's chief sexual experiences from shared heterosexual activity (but this of course reveals my own prejudice—what's wrong with shared homosexual activity, or sexual activity not shared?).

The censors are on the defensive—with the floggers, theologians and traditional moralists. I was amused to read the other day of the unhappy Latin American censor who said sheepishly, after banning a Bergman film: "I'm sorry, I didn't know it was a masterpiece". And of course this is the point. One man's masterpiece is another man's pornography—and who's to be the judge? But even if we could arrive at criteria for recognising bad art—and we never will—then even this would be no reason for banning it when it has a strong sexual content. Bad sexual art can evoke sexual feeling—and unless the sexual feeling is so diseased as to bring misery, then there is nothing wrong with sexual feeling (an upset stomach can be revolted by ice cream, but, please, let's not ban ice cream!).

Of course people can be prudes if they wish. I think I would bring in a bill to allow consenting adults to practise prudery in private—but I don't want their disgusting activities to spill over into my cinemas and bookshops.

A History of Sex by G. L. Simons is to be published in paperback next June.

Book Review

NICHOLAS GRIFFIN

The Human Evasion: Celia Green (Hamish Hamilton, 21s).

MISS GREEN supports three theses and an attitude towards them. The first is that things exist which human beings don't understand (these things she grandly calls 'the Outside'); the second is that human being aren't omnipotent (Miss Green prefers the word 'infinite' but omnipotence is what it boils down to); and the third is that nothing is certain. The human evasion of which she speaks consists in denying, ignoring, or failing to be obsessed by these three assertions. This evasion is part of the standard mental equipment of all sane people, and Miss Green's book is written on behalf of the 'not-sane' (her own term) to encourage their attitude to the world.

I doubt whether anyone would deny the first two assertions: Quasars exists and are not understood, and only the institutionally insane believe themselves to be omnipotent. As for the third, I doubt whether even Miss Green accepts it. From the tenacity with which she holds them I rather suspect that she thinks her three theses are certain; which is rather a lot of certainty to find in the world, especially when you consider that Descartes started with 'I think, therefore I am'. Miss Green's earlier book, *Lucid Dreams*, which has somewhat more philosophical interest than her present work, dealt with one of the main arguments for Cartesian scepticism which had, until her book, received scandalously little

attention. There are, however, important objections to total scepticism which she doesn't consider here, but which require her refutation. But if two of her three theses are universally accepted and the third is sometimes accepted, she cannot be furious that people contradict her assertions.

What upsets here is that people are not obsessed by them; according to Miss Green they should dominate our lives. This seems to me to be plainly silly. 'What emotion arises in you when you think that you would be quite unable to lift Mount Everest?' she enquires at one point. The answer, of course, is none; which to Miss Green, who presumably agonises over the fact, is a clear sign of my corruption. To take another example, she regards the question 'Why does anything exist?' to be one which we ought to consider with unusual urgency. But why should there be any reason, and what sort of assertion could possibly count as such a reason? Her question is only a pseudo-question. If Miss Green is against our ignoring the fact that we are unable to lift Mount Everest what would she have us do? There are only two possibilities: on the one hand we could admit our failure, despair and commit suicide; on the other, we could embark upon a desperate struggle against our limitations. Miss Green is right in saying that few people accept her point of view: I've heard of no-one who has committed suicide because they could not lift Everest; nor of anyone who has spent his life trying to pick it up (although I can't be sure that Miss Green doesn't devote herself to some equally lunatic task.) Resignation in the face of the inevitable is the only sensible course of action. With one obvious difference she reminds me of the woman who said, in Thomas Carlyle's hearing, 'I accept the universe'. 'By God she'd better', Carlyle replied. For once he was right.

It's when she comes to deal with certainty, however, that the inconsistencies of her view and her fundamental insincerity appear. She quotes with disgust the delightful passage from Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* where, having come to a totally sceptical philosophical conclusion, he breaks off from his work and plays a game of backgammon and when he returns finds his speculations 'so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any further'. She should not, however, be misled by Hume's published writings; Hume was not as urbane as he made out, his sceptical conclusions produced a nervous breakdown in 1734. This fact should profoundly please Miss Green. But Miss Green, herself, obviously believes in certainty quite a bit (apart from her three principles). After all, she's got three books to the publishers, which involved, presumably, finding her typewriter each day where she left it; finding that her sentences didn't jumble themselves up after she'd written them; and finding that her proofing alterations were incorporated into the published text. All of which, of course, is totally baffling to her—indeed Miss Green must be a very baffled woman. But these things are not in the least baffling to people who are prepared to admit that there are physical objects and that they behave according to certain laws. She attacks C. D. Broad for saying that although nothing was absolutely certain some things are more certain than others; for example, it is more likely that material objects exist than that they don't. 'Once you have admitted you may be dreaming', she complains, 'what value can you attach to your reflections on the likelihood that you are dreaming?' (p. 81). But shortly after she says someone 'might feel that . . . everything was uncertain, but his death highly probable . . .' (p. 99). In other words, she herself does exactly the same thing as Broad.

Death is one of the things that, according to Miss Green, we should regard with a sort of obsessed and terrified fascination. Resignation in the face of death is for her 'typically sane' and therefore despicable. She has hard things to say about the deaths of Freud and Marie Curie. I can only hope that if I have to face as painful a death as Freud's I would do so with the sort of heroic stoicism that Ernest Jones so movingly portrays in his biography and which Miss Green so bristly derides.

Indeed, human feeling is one of the things she feels most strongly against. Anything, from Hume's game of backgammon to a humane concern for others, which might deflect our attention from what we don't understand, what we can't do and the uncertainty of things, is to be dismissed as trivia. Moral obligation plays no part in her thought. She urges us, like Gabriel Malagrida after the Lisbon earthquake, to 'set all this miserable, worldly business aside and seek, in what might well be our last hours, to save our souls'.

There are two good things about her book. The first is the style. Unlike most women who espouse such a hysterical theme and who usually have a hysterical style to match, Miss Green's style is witty and urbane. (I cannot help but conclude that this remark would deeply offend her.) The second is her chapter 'How to Write Sane Books', in which she enjoys herself trying to make sense of modern theologians. Her derisory treatment of a text from Tillich's *Systematic Theology* is a delight. But is an author who so con-

spicuously misuses words as Tillich, worth all the effort, and shouldn't her conclusion be that what Tillich writes is literal nonsense rather than that it makes some covert sense?

In her fury she mistakes allies for enemies and launches indiscriminate attacks. The existentialists who, in their passion for commitment and *angst*, are closest to her are attacked because their anguish is only transitory. Radical theologians, who echo her concern for ill-considered questions, are convicted of being too much concerned with human affairs. Quantum theorists who stress the limits of human knowledge because of the indeterminacy principle (a grossly inaccurate account of which occurs on p. 89) are attacked because they don't invent theories about what they don't know.

Who, therefore, are Miss Green's allies? Who are the not-sane who are so admirable? She gives a description of them first of all. They possess a sense of urgency, are single-minded, unconditional and self-sufficient. (In a word they are fanatics, but she doesn't use that word.) They are more interested in 'the Outside' than in other people. Miss Green says she has spent much time in trying to find such people. Kant might have done 'but his books are too long'; so might Einstein but he was 'bad at psychology'; or perhaps H. G. Wells but he 'declined into sociology'. Newton won't do because he was Master of the Mint (though he had his moments). In the end she is left with two: Jesus and Nietzsche. I think this list is unduly restrictive. Céline and the Marquis de Sade are clearly good candidates. But her example *par excellence* is Hitler; surely the final solution was urgent, single-minded, unconditional and self-sufficient and supremely unconcerned about other people. Alas, Miss Green doesn't mention Hitler.

She does, however, undertake the exegesis and re-interpretation of the Gospels in under a dozen pages; insisting rather frequently in lieu of evidence that surely her view is simpler than that espoused by learned Biblical scholars. Her treatment of Nietzsche is rather similar: 'It does not pay', she begins, 'to read the works of Nietzsche in their entirety, unless you wish to confuse yourself'. I don't know whether this is an excuse for her not having read them all, or for quoting selectively. Quote selectively she does! 'There is nothing in the first few pages of *Zarathustra* to suggest that the Superman would be a hedonist (or a sadist)' she suggests innocently. I don't doubt there isn't, but consider the following quote which she omits but which comes, I think, from *Beyond Good and Evil*:

'I test the power of a will according to the amount of resistance it can offer and the amount of pain and torture it can endure . . . I do not point to the evil and pain of existence with the finger of reproach, but rather entertain the hope that life may one day become more evil and more full of suffering than it has ever been.'

But perhaps this is one of those places, to which she often refers, where Nietzsche misunderstood his own philosophy. And of course, like all women who worship Nietzsche, she fails to mention that he began life as a quiet, shy classical scholar.

It is inevitable that she would dismiss the sort of criticisms I've made as 'typically sane' and I don't expect to damp her impetuosity. But if her book helps her to exorcize her neurosis I can only hope it is successful.

LETTERS

I WAS PLEASED that you had found space for a review of the document on Moral Education produced by Dr Hemming and myself, but would like to make the following comments:

I do not know whether Dr Hemming is satisfied with being called an ethicist.

I am not, and do not know what is a Modernist and think that your reviewer should not use such out-moded descriptions which betray his ignorance of the development and the complexity of Christian Theology.

The reviewer assumes that we ignore other views than our own, but it is clearly stated on pages 5, 21 and 22 that we hoped schools would allow pupils to understand and learn about a variety of viewpoints and not just common and agreed ones. Again your reviewer seems out of touch with the development of modern Education.

Although Dr Hemming wrote as a Humanist, I cannot see how the statement that "Humanists regard Jesus as totally human in parentage and nature; as a great man but no more than man" could be regarded as more controversial than we realise, since I understood that Humanists could not add more to this statement and that all those who detracted from it by regarding Jesus as a figure of mythology to be already dead.

The reviewer considers that we have not considered the practical needs of slum kids from broken homes and others, but we have made it quite clear that situational approaches are necessary and have deliberately refrained from entering into details of syllabus, but I venture to suggest that both of us have had more experience in dealing with the real situation in schools than your reviewer and would reject his suggestion that as little as possible be said about morality in the school at large as much as we reject his description of cruelty as "a simple issue". Indeed, the reviewer shows by the contradictions within his own review that he has not thought out either the principles, which was our intention, or the practice, which was not.

HOWARD MARRATT,
Head of Divinity Department, Borough Road College, Isleworth.

Skeleton in the closet ?

READ ANY JOURNAL devoted to a special range of topics and after a time you can begin almost to forecast the contents of the next issue; each movement too has its heroes and saints whose names are invoked, intoned, loved and lauded. There's an exception to all this as far as my experience goes and concerns what must be the foremost skeleton in the freethought closet. What I'm trying to bring out into the open is the reason for the British freethinker's neglect of Joe McCabe. I've read his autobiography *Eighty Years a Rebel* and find the trouble arose originally from his dealings with the Rationalist Press Association which finally drummed McCabe out during a meeting that sounded more like Gibbon's account of an early Church Council than a congress of rationalists. Heading the attack (for a fee) was none other than J. M. Robertson whose beatification is now well under way in these very pages. The Americans befriended him but I get the impression that British Freethought circles have imbibed the opinions of the Rationalists of that time so that even a newcomer like David Tribe in his 259 page *100 Years of Freethought* has only this to say of McCabe: ". . . sometimes monastic superior, secretary of Leicester Secular Society in 1898 and prolific writer".

According to McCabe the trouble started when he was given five trunks of letters and commissioned to write a book on G. J. Holyoake. Some passages put Bradlaugh (now canonised) in a bad light and pressure was applied to clean up certain passages. To add mystery and drama to the whole unbecoming mess is the mention of a legally suppressed libelous biography of Bradlaugh. It will be interesting to see what Tribe will make of all this in his forthcoming book on Bradlaugh.

My wish is that this matter be cleared up in the FREETHINKER.
D. M. CHAPMAN, Canada.

"Free Speech" ?

TO SAY, "how proudly Mr Page celebrates his sterile bourgeois clichés" (G. L. Simons, November 8, p. 360) does not seem to me to be good "Free Speech" amongst genuine freethinkers when one is an opponent of another's views but hardly an enemy. To speak like this, far from enlightening, is rather alienating, both the discussants and those who follow the argument.

Of course, Karl Marx often ridiculed and neurotically depreciated those who did not agree with him; but fortunately he was also a genius and an encourager of all oppressed and exploited people—until they become themselves oppressors and exploiters.

Contemporary Marxists who are better psychologists than was their revered teacher are *fraternally* striving to overcome their personal as well as mankind's existential difficulties. The international symposium on *Socialist Humanism*, edited by Erich Fromm, will not be to the liking of mechanical historical materialists but may prove most valuable for all freethinking humanists.

The sentence about the "British feudal boot on poor Mr Page's bourgeois neck" is disarming by what some readers may consider as its vulgarity. But even the disarmed one will remember the Russian boot stamping on the necks of those in Czechoslovakia who wished to be allowed to think and speak freely.

PAUL ROM.

Capital punishment

NO GOVERNMENT which allows a resolution to bring back hanging will receive our support.
JEAN AND ELIZABETH STRAKER.

Things Oriental

IN the Gospel according to Thos. W. Hogan (November 8) we are told that, "Crucifixion was apparently of Oriental origin". Really. No evidence or reference is thought necessary by him as the writer or you as the editor. Normally in what purports to be a serious informative article in any journal of repute such small things as references or evidence are necessary before the editor will accept an article as ready for publication and any competent contributor knows this. Not so those involved in the production of the FREETHINKER. Further, the relevance of this piece of information is left in obscurity. Articles written and accepted with these faults

appear to be in a tradition either encouraged or tolerated by successive editors of your journal. This would appear to show some contempt for your readers and can be matched only by the journals of some of our more fundamentalist opponents. Perhaps I have no right to expect a higher standard.

Two questions. What is it that so many of your supporters club have against things Oriental? And what in their view is Oriental?

GERALD SAMUEL.

Heythrop College

MR DAVID TRIBE complains I am not "more accurate". It appears he insinuated that I had "sold out secularism" *before* he went on holiday, not *during* this happy interlude. To any of your readers who may feel I misled them on this fundamental issue, I gladly apologise.

Mr Tribes agrees that the Senate of London University acted within its legal and constitutional limits in making its decision to admit Heythrop. But, he claims, it was "high-handed" because they did not "tell anyone what they were doing" and further suggests that "this is what the protest movement is all about".

Quite unwittingly, he has touched on a basic issue relating to universities. For universities *do* claim academic autonomy. They *do* think that, provided they act within the law, they should be free to conduct their academic business as they think fit, without any interference from the State, local authorities or even the NSS. They *do not* accept the view that their agendas should be published in advance for public comment and that decisions should not be made until everyone outside the University has been given an opportunity to object. No university in the world conducts its business in this way and no university in this country is ever likely to do so.

Moreover the idea that the so-called "protest movement" is in some way directed against this academic autonomy of the Universities is a figment of Mr Tribe's imagination. Students are not organising "demos" and sit-ins to secure Mr Tribe's right to intervene in academic matters in which he happens to be interested.

A year or two ago, Chelsea College was admitted as a School of London University. The procedure followed was precisely the same as with Heythrop College. Why didn't Mr Tribe raise his objection to the procedure then? Isn't it really that he attacks the procedure only because he dislikes its results? If the same procedure had been followed and Heythrop had been refused admission, Mr Tribe would have approved of it wholeheartedly. And if any Catholic then complained of its being "high-handed" Mr Tribe would rushed to the defence!

As for the NSS annual meeting, Mr Tribe contrives to miss the whole point. I am a member of the NSS. I was *not* informed in advance of the proposal to protest against the University's Heythrop decision. Mr Tribe, however, does complain that the University did not inform him (or anyone else outside its administration) of the proposal to admit Heythrop. In other words, the NSS, under Mr Tribe's leadership, treats *its own members* in exactly the same way as the University treats the general public.

Mr Tribe seeks to excuse this on the grounds that the NSS "cannot afford" to conduct its affairs more democratically. I note, however, that the Society *can* afford to publish a 12-page annual report with an expensive glossy cover, in which the name of David Tribe occurs no fewer than 12 times. Inside this document, there is no balance sheet nor even the elementary information as to how many members there are of the Society, although a whole page is devoted to precise instructions about how you can leave money to the NSS in your Will. It follows that, as a member of the NSS I have no means of judging what it can afford or what it cannot.

It can afford the necessary paper and stamps to issue Mr Tribe's press releases but not, it appears, to tell its own members the whole of the business which it proposes to transact at its annual meeting. When it discussed the Heythrop business, the annual meeting was in fact a secret conclave since the majority of members of the NSS knew nothing about it until afterwards.

As for Mr Tribe's suggestion that I ought to "turn up at the meeting" (conveniently held on a Sunday in August) to move an amendment "congratulating myself", whilst this might conceivably vary the monotony, I must confess that I do not feel myself able to compete successfully with Mr Tribe in such exercises.

In his fourth point, Mr Tribe really gives himself completely away. He accepts that Heythrop students will only have the same rights and privileges as all other students in the University. It is to this that he objects. It follows that he thinks that Catholic students of theology in a university should be denied equality of treatment as compared with any other students, simply and solely because they *are* Catholics. And he objects to being called a "Paisleyite"! But this is precisely his attitude! The only difference is that Paisley is intolerant from a "protestant" point of view whilst Mr Tribe invokes "freethought" for his intolerance.

In the remainder of his letter, Mr Tribe discusses the early history of London University (about which he knows so little that it would hardly be worth while pursuing the matter with him), also Juju rituals, the "studious indefatigability" of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses (the latter, incidentally, refuse even to accept membership of a university), the scientific claims of astrology, etc. Clearly his undoubted talent for boundless irrelevance must sooner or later him in complete and undisputed possession of any field in which he wields his odd assortment of controversial weapons and it might as well be here as anywhere else. Juju is clearly more in his line than it is in mine!

However, for anyone who (in what one supposes is intended as a rational discussion between secularists) can accuse his opponent of "selling out", of "recklessness", of "mental illness", of "a strange eye infection", of an "arrogant attitude", etc. to accuse that opponent of "mudslinging" and of following "the ecological law that every species has a natural habitat", is surely an example of precisely the sort of self-righteous bigotry that led—and still leads—me to classify Mr Tribe in the same category as the Orange Order. Both seek to treat the Catholic as a second-class citizen. Neither can echo the immortal words of Voltaire to fight to the death for the freedom to say things of which he disapproved.

If anyone is "selling out" principles, it is Mr Tribe. For I cannot believe it has ever been a principle of Freethought to deny any group of people equality of treatment in any educational institution merely because of their religious beliefs.

J. STEWART COOK.

OBITUARY

WE REGRET to announce the death of Mrs Martineau Quinton on November 18th. She was aged 80 and had been in poor health for some time.

Mrs Quinton was—like the rest of her family—a lifelong freethinker. She was a member of the National Secular Society and closely associated with the former West Ham branch. Mrs Quinton served on the NSS Executive Committee for many years. The late R. H. Rosetti—a former President and Secretary of the NSS—was her brother-in-law. Our sympathy is extended to her sister, Miss R. Pankhurst, with whom she lived.

Mrs E. Venton, Vice-President of the NSS, conducted the committal ceremony at South Essex Crematorium last Monday.

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

Humanitas Stamps: Help 5 Humanist charities. Buy stamps from/ or send them to Mrs A. C. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, RM7 8QX, Essex. British and African speciality. Send for list.

Christmas Cards—peace themes, many-language greetings, bargain parcels, excellent gift selection, generous discounts for sales. 24 samples 12/6 post free. List free. Proceeds to *Peace News*, c/o Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London, N1.

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