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ON WHOSE CONSCIENCE?

THE MURDERS of the two Glasgow policemen were horrendous and for better or worse have resulted in much reflection on our penal laws. Principally the murders have been used by those who opposed the recent abolition of capital punishment in order to illustrate their argument that the death penalty is a necessary deterrent. The Chief of Glasgow police is reported as having said that abolitionists should have the murders on their conscience.

When considering this it must first be remembered that there is no means of establishing how any person would behave in different circumstances. The report published by the Home Office based on the available murder figures for the years since the trial abolition of capital punishment began in no way suggested that there was a greater tendency for murders to be committed when the gallows played a part in the murderer's gamble than when they didn't. Thus those who allege that the policemen would not have died had capital punishment still been in use, have neither psychological nor statistical grounds for their assertion. And if as seems likely similar assertions are going to be made following every murder in the near future, one can only plead that newspaper editors do not waste space reporting unsubstantiated and ill-considered opinion.

Mr Eldon Griffiths, Conservative MP for Bury St Edmunds, and adviser to the Police Federation, came closer to the point, when he asked: "Can we dispute that while there was still the possibility of a death sentence, older members of criminal gangs used to frisk younger members to make quite certain they were not carrying firearms when they went to do a job?" Again the figures lend no substantiation to the inherent insinuation in the statement that the murders might not have occurred were the death penalty still in operation. One suspects however, that Griffiths is particularising one type of murder, the unpremeditated murder in furtherance of crime, which obviously would be avoided if as Griffiths suggests senior gang members were to ensure that their juniors were not carrying firearms. It would seem highly questionable though, as to whether the difference between death and an extremely long gaol sentence is likely to make senior criminals lax. One would imagine that a criminal, who leads a gang of the type likely to carry firearms, would be both a pretty hard nut and a very capable individual, neither of which tally with Griffiths' picture of a man, who becomes less careful because the death penalty has been abolished.

The chief point that anti-abolitionists seem to forget is that criminals operating now are criminals, who have been accustomed to capital punishment, and who have been brought up in a society where the penal system existed in order to provide punishment instead of correction. If the murders should be on anyone's conscience perhaps they should attach themselves to those who worked Sidney Silverman's earlier abolition bills in the late forties and fifties.

That anti-abolitionists should drag into the arena of public debate a particular incidence of murder as they have done is unfortunate, as it does nothing to clarify the situation, and serves only to play upon people's emotions. However, since they have chosen this incident as fuel for their

cause and since they have played upon the fact that it was two policemen who died, I feel I should mention that two of the alleged murderers are ex-policemen. This fact appeared in the evening papers of December 30 and has since been corroborated by the *Evening Standard*. For some reason it received mysteriously little mention in the morning papers of December 31.

POPE'S PROGRESS

NINO LO BELLO, the well-known author and journalist, is quoted in the anti-Christian Hindu monthly *Masurasham Patrika*, as having revealed that the Vatican owns a firm named "L'Instituto Farma cologico Serona", which is situated in Milan and manufactures and markets the birth control pill, 'Luteolas'. The firm has capital of 1.4 million dollars. Lo Bello is further credited as having established that the Vatican has a part interest in the Lepetit Company of Milan, which manufactures a birth pill called 'Enovit' under licence from G.D. Searle of Chicago.

As a writer I have always endeavoured to avoid cliches. But occasionally they make the point best. Hence: "Need more be said?"

* * * *

Though to ask the Pope for clarification has long ago been proven as fruitful as King Canute's chief activity, one feels he should say more about his ruling that birth control is wrong because it interferes with the course of nature and is therefore contrary to God's will. Even if in argument we allow the Pope to condone medicine in general, it is hard to understand why he does not issue an edict condemning the recent multiple births, which have occurred as a result of women taking fertility drugs.

* * * *

However, perhaps we can forgive the gentleman whom *Private Eye* is wont to describe as "Popery", for this slight idiosyncrasy in his logic, when we read that the Pastoral Council of the Dutch Roman Catholic Church has added to its rejection of *Humanae Vitae* by rejecting the principle of clerical celibacy. The pastoral council is a body of laymen and priests and their decision, which was arrived at with 90 votes in favour and only six against, constitutes a recommendation to Holland's bishops, all eight of whom are members of the council and all eight of whom abstained in the vote but markedly did not vote against the motion.

The whole procedure was undertaken despite a reported warning from the Pope to Cardinal Alfrink, the leader of the Dutch bishops, that for the council to discuss priestly celibacy would not be well-received by the Vatican.

(Continued overleaf)

Freethinker

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Professor Educard Schillebeecks, the eminent Dutch theologian and principal theological adviser to Cardinal Alfrink further embarrassed the Pope, by publicly recommending that the bishops take the matter into their own hands. He suggested that a start would be made towards the ending of the celibacy ruling, if the bishops were to decide for themselves if a priest who married should be maintained in his religious office.

The attitude of the Dutch and other progressive Catholic clerics has been said to be motivated partly by a desire for ecumenism. It would seem at present more likely to result in a serious split in Catholic ranks, and a severe reduction in the dignity and authority of the Pope.

HUMANIST LETTER NETWORK

MRS KIT MOUAT, the author of *What Humanism is About*, former editor of the FREETHINKER and free-lance journalist, has decided to wind up the Humanist Letter Network (International) which she founded six years ago. In a letter to its members Mrs Mouat explains: "Although I had an operation for cancer in October I have every hope and intention of surviving for a long time yet (if only to prove how ineffective the prayers of some of our local clergy are!), but I have naturally been prompted to review my activities." She explains that the Network has always had priority over her other activities, "writing books, running a secondhand book business (postal) and, of course, running a home". The Network has now become so large that even addressing the Newsletter envelopes is "tedious and time consuming".

Considering that many women find running a home quite enough to keep them occupied, Mrs Mouat's host of activities have always astonished those who know her. She writes: "I started the Network because I know from experience (as a teenager) what loneliness is, and also how it feels to live as an atheist amongst religious people. And I believe that very often loneliness is at the root of some of our major social problems, from alcoholism and drug addiction to divorce and suicide. I wanted to do something about it, and under the Humanist flag, which all too often seems to be hauled down in order not to offend those who are the first to accuse atheists and agnostics of never helping each other—never mind society as a whole!"

The Network has acquired 516 members and there can be little doubt that it has helped many people, who would otherwise be suffering the distresses of loneliness. Mrs Mouat quotes four letters, including two from couples who have met through the Network and married, to illustrate the scope of the Network. One such quotation reads: "... I should like to thank you very much for the pleasant contacts you have put me in touch with since I joined the Network..." Mrs Mouat writes of the letters she quotes, "these can be multiplied 100 times to give some idea of the encouragement which has been the Network's mainstay".

Though the Network as such will not continue under the guidance of anyone else, Mrs Mouat has hopes that another similar service will begin soon.

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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

Belfast Humanist Group: Greenan's Lodge Hotel, Lisburn Road, Belfast: Friday, January 23, 7.30 p.m.: Annual Dinner—Tickets (30s) must be obtained in advance from Basil Cooper, 46, Cadogan Park, Belfast, BT9 6HH.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, January 18, 11 a.m.: "The Seven Ages of Man", H. J. Blackham, BA. Admission free. Tuesday, January 20, 7 p.m.: Discussion—"Privacy of the Individual", Joseph Jacobs (Barrister). Admission 2s (including refreshments). Members free.

West Ham and District Secular Group: The Community Centre, Wanstead (near Wanstead Underground): Thursday, January 22, 8 p.m.: Meeting.

THE NEXT STEP

G. L. SIMONS

PEOPLE such as Malcolm Muggeridge are apt to remark that today all censorship has been lifted in Britain, and that "erotica" is in full flower (whether the bloom smells sweetly or has an obnoxious odour is largely a matter of taste). To Muggeridge the barriers are down, the floodgates are open, and the cat is among the pigeons. Muggeridge, however, has not got it quite right—as is his wont. He forgets that there are still *ten* Acts of Parliament that can be invoked to prevent the circulation of certain types of literature, drawings, etchings, films, etc. The restrictive laws operate on material coming into the country, on the actual production of material inside the country, and on distribution and display activities. It is not always realised how all-embracing are the laws that seek to determine what artistic and literary experiences we adults shall have.

It is instructive to consider the effects of the Customs Consolidation Act (1876) and the Customs and Excise Act (1952). The following quote is taken from a Commons speech of the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, Mr Merlyn Rees (*Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, Vol. 787, No. 152, 18/7/69, 1195):

In 1964-65 proceedings were undertaken . . . and 152,254 books and magazines were forfeited after the proceedings in addition to the material destroyed without proceedings being taken . . . In 1966-67 165 trade seizures involved 1,280,292 magazines, in 1967-68 245 trade seizures involved 611,917 magazines and in 1968-69 164 seizures involved 792,211 magazines . . . there are relevant figures for books as well.

Sometimes the obscenity law is vicious in its application. A singular case was recently reported in the *Sunday Times* (7/12/69). In 1965 the police raided the bookshop of Mr Arthur Dobson in Bradford: 825 books were taken, including 19 copies of one called *Bawdy Setup*. On November 11, Mr Dobson was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of £500 for possessing other similar paperbacks that were regarded as obscene (*Bawdy Setup* was returned to him as *not obscene*). A total of 47 titles of the seized books were regarded as obscene and the residue was returned to Mr Dobson . . .

In 1966, the Court of Appeal freed Mr Dobson after reducing his sentence. Mr Dobson then put the returned books into store, away from public view—but in August 1967 the detectives were back again and removed more books from Mr Dobson's shop, including the 19 copies of *Bawdy Setup* (which the Director of Public Prosecutions had already declared *not obscene*). On February 3, 1969, Mr Dobson was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for possessing *Bawdy Setup* for gain, a sentence which was to run concurrent with another one for possessing the Victorian classic *My Secret Life*. After serving ten months in prison—and after paying a total of £3,000 in fines and costs—he was released by the Court of Appeal. In the words of the *Sunday Times*: "He is acknowledged to be a ruined man whose possession of both books has cost him about £17,500—a sum which includes fulfilment of a guarantee to close down his £15,000 business".

The case of Mr Dobson is not isolated—a man was recently imprisoned for giving an art exhibition on the theme of love where naked breasts were visible from the street. A nun in charge of some children noticed that they were giggling, and she brought the action against the art exhibitor: he was imprisoned for several months and instructed to have a psychiatric investigation!

John Trevelyan, in the words of one reviewer "the man paid to have a dirty mind", regularly refuses to allow films a certificate, or insists on cuts in many instances. Much of the stuff emasculated by him in this way has considerable artistic merit (e.g., *Hugs and Kisses*, *The Trip*, *Trans-Europe Express*). And unless a certificate is granted the film cannot go on release. In Trevelyan's own words, the members of his team often have their own "ribald remarks" to make about the films they are obliged to view to protect the public. I suggest that Trevelyan and company are wasting their time, as are the keen detectives who diligently seek out "dirty" books. One bookseller was recently raided by 18 detectives all of whom claimed membership of the dirty books department of the London Metropolitan Police. Sir Theobald Mathew, now deceased, has been quoted as saying—when associated with the Department of Public Prosecutions—"I try to keep people on such work for as short a time as possible . . . there are roughly 2½ people in the office doing what I call the preliminary sorting of this mass of stuff".

There are also solicitors and barristers who advise the DPP whether to prosecute: one such adviser judges whether action should be taken on the following basis—"The test I use is whether it makes me feel randy", and another solicitor has talked blandly about things "lewd and disgusting to the average person". If the pornography is expensive, then it tends to be left alone. Sir Theobald Mathew observed that he would tend not to prosecute Sotheby's for marketing an expensive collection of pornography: this of course is reminiscent of the New York theatre scene where *Oh! Calcutta!* with expensive seats was allowed, but *Che* with cheap ones was not! As in other things the rich are allowed privileges here that are denied their poorer compatriots.

After the Arts Council Report and the experience in Denmark, intelligent opinion is clearly on the side of the abolition of the obscenity laws. No correlation has been found between an inclination to pornography and a tendency to sexual delinquency. There is a much stronger case for banning sweets for children (for reasons of tooth decay, obesity, etc.) than for banning "dirty" books and magazines. Marx said that the best censor is "criticism": only when artificial taboos have been broken down will it be possible to judge erotic art on aesthetic and not ethical grounds.

Any adult should resent any other adult telling him what he may or may not read. When such a thing happens in the complete absence of any rational justification, it is time to say "Enough! !"

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ANARCHISM

JOHN L. BROOM

HAVING BEEN in obscurity for many years, anarchism as a political theory seems recently to have acquired a new lease of life. Many of the student revolutionaries throughout the world are self-confessed anarchists, and the whole Hippy movement is based on Tolstoyan anarchist principles. Spokesmen for the powers-that-be in Northern Ireland or for the property owners in London, invariably lay most of the blame for the disturbances on mysterious unnamed anarchists who are alleged to be united in a conspiracy to overthrow the Government. The phrase "law and order" has acquired an almost mystical value, signifying a condition of blissful security which the wicked anarchists are seeking to destroy. In this article, I propose to take a fresh look at this phenomenon which has become such a dirty word on the lips of those in authority.

As its name implies, anarchism is the theory which holds that the state is *ipso facto* evil and the basic cause of all injustice and oppression. Every government depends for its existence upon force represented by the police and the criminal law. This holds good whether the government is democratic or totalitarian, and anarchists maintain that there is a difference only of degree between the two forms of coercion. "Parliamentary democracy", say the anarchists, is an illusion. We think we choose our own rules in Britain, but since hardly anyone has the slightest chance of being elected unless he is a member of one of the three main political parties, our "choice" is in fact restricted to people sponsored by powerful interests of right, left or centre. And, once elected, our representative must vote on almost every issue as his party whip dictates or be expelled. From melancholy experience, we know that even a nominally Socialist Government must have the support and confidence of those who control the national and international purse-strings, if it is to survive. And this can only be achieved by such unsocialistic measures as wage-restraints, cuts in the social services, and so on. Thus, the ordinary worker finds himself economically as much in bondage under a democracy as under a Communist or Fascist dictatorship. Anarchists, of course, are not so foolish as to maintain that life for the intellectuals is as unpleasant or frustrating under the former as under the latter type of government. They know that their own writings are suppressed in China, Spain and the Eastern "people's democracies", and that if they persisted in trying to spread anarchist propaganda in these countries they would soon find themselves political prisoners. But they point out that even in the western democracies the intellectual's freedom is severely curtailed by the laws against sedition, libel and obscenity and by the fact that the mass media of communication are controlled ultimately by a handful of millionaires. Freedom of speech and action are relative to wealth. The poor man is certainly free to mount a rostrum in Hyde Park and say (almost) what he likes. But immediately he attempted to translate any of his revolutionary beliefs into action the whole paraphernalia of state coercion would be brought to bear against him. In short, anarchists hold that intellectual freedom without economic freedom is a strictly limited good, and that the two types of freedom are only attainable in a society devoid of any form of central government.

Anarchists realise that their task has been made much more difficult since the war by the apparently steady upward trend in the general standard of living. The workers are told continually, not only by the mass media of capitalism, but also by their own Trade Union leaders, that

the harder they work and the more they produce, the greater will be their eventual reward, in the form of higher wages better housing and all the material benefits accruing therefrom. Many workers, recognising that they now indeed enjoy a prosperity undreamed of by their fathers and grandfathers, have become completely demoralised by those golden apples of capitalism, and have lost any revolutionary consciousness they may once have possessed.

The primary aim of anarchism to day must therefore be to try to convince the masses of the illusory and temporary nature of their present comparative affluence, and to persuade them of the essential iniquity of the state as such. Anarchists must demonstrate that society is not some mysterious entity apart from, and superior to, the individuals which comprise it. It is simply a collection of individuals united for the common good. The modern state, however, has become the instrument for the protection of those who own or control the wealth of the community against the vast majority who, by their labour, create that wealth. Its forces, as represented by the army, the police, and the criminal law, exist primarily not, as is pretended, to protect its citizens from aggression from without and crime from within, but to protect the ruling classes and their property from possible revolt by the masses. Moreover, when a state seeks to obtain new markets and sources of raw materials, it invariably finds itself in conflict with other states pursuing similar objectives, and war is the inevitable result, the workers in each country being of course the innocent dupes striving to kill each other in the name of "national honour" and similar empty slogans. The state has a morality far inferior to that of most of the individuals within its borders. Thus, politicians and Press continually talk of their country's "rights", "privileges", and "virtues" in a manner which would be regarded as ludicrously egotistical and selfish if uttered by a private citizen about himself. And though a state's own laws invariably forbid the solving of a dispute between its individual citizens by force, the state itself has no hesitation in resorting to force when disputes between one section of society and another break out, for example in calling upon the police and the army to break up strikes and political demonstrations.

As I have pointed out, anarchists claim that these evils are inherent in the very nature of a centralised government. Hence, any revolution which seeks to substitute another form of government in place of the one deposed is foredoomed to failure, since the new government will speedily and inevitably assume all the tyrannical characteristics of the old whether it calls itself Fascist, Communist, or democratic. Examples of this are legion: the English Civil War led to the Cromwellian dictatorship, the French Revolution to the tyranny of Napoleon, the Russian Revolution to the horrors of Stalinism, the overthrow of the Kumintang régime in China to the totalitarianism of Mao-tse-Tung and so on. True revolution must be spontaneous, arising from the fervent desire of individual men and women to create a society independent of all forms of external authority or coercion. It is to be hoped that such a revolution will be accomplished without undue violence. The still prevailing popular conception of the anarchist as a bearded fanatic hurling a bomb at a wealthy potentate is at least sixty years out of date. Moreover, while the bombs of the anarchists of old were mostly directed against individuals guilty of oppression or murder, the far more

hideous bombs wielded by capitalist or Communist states have slaughtered millions of innocent people.

Anarchists insist that the revolution must be of an economic, and not a political nature. Only the working classes can bring it about, not because they are in any superior to the other classes, but because without their co-operation the government and its forces could not exist for another day. They alone control the power bases of society. The chief weapon the workers possess is of course the general strike and for this purpose, most anarchists advocate the organisation of the masses into "syndicates". These differ from trade unions in being grouped according to industry and not according to craft, in being controlled by delegates elected for short periods by the workers themselves and not by remotely-appointed bureaucrats, and in having as their ultimate aim the complete overthrow of the capitalist system and of all governments, instead of the mere winning of reforms under capitalism. When the call for the general strike arises, the workers do not withdraw their labour, but take over the means of production from their present owners and continue to run them. Instead of the workers being starved into capitulation as happens in many Trade Union motivated strikes today, the process is reversed, and it is the ruling classes who are forced to submit, because the workers deny them all the necessities until they do so.

What would be the distinguishing features of an anarchist society assuming such had been established? The most obvious characteristic, apart of course from the absence of any form of centralised government, would be the owning and operation of all industries, agriculture and services by the workers themselves—coal mines by the miners, farms by the peasant collectives, transport by the drivers, conductors, and mechanics, theatres by the actors and technicians, medicine by the doctors and nurses, and so on. To those who object that such a scheme would be unworkable, anarchists point to Spain, where they claim that for nine months during the Civil War an anarchist experiment on the lines described above was carried on successfully. Particularly impressive was the efficient operation of the Catalan railway system by the railway workers and the running of the Barcelona transport services under the control of the crews and mechanics, during which wages were raised and fares lowered. Other services and industries peacefully taken over and carried on triumphantly by those who formerly were employed in them in Catalonia and elsewhere, included medicine, education, printing, textiles and timber. Ironically, the brave experiment was brought to an end, not by Franco's Fascists, but by the Communist government when its forces occupied Barcelona in May 1937. Many leading anarchists, including Camillo Berneri one of the finest anarchist philosophers of the century, were summarily arrested and shot.

Another striking characteristic of an anarchist society would be the desire of people to work for the common good instead of for money or personal aggrandisement. Anarchists deny that men are naturally lazy or will only work if compelled to do so by the threat of starvation. On the contrary, they claim that work is a natural function of man, and that he is unhappy when not regularly employed at some task or other. Most so-called laziness and inefficiency, anarchists contend, is caused by the fact that the majority of workers are employed in boring, uncreative jobs in which they have no interest and whose end products they can never enjoy personally or perhaps even see. Those few who today are engaged in labours of love such as scientists, doctors and nurses, creative artists, actors, professional sportsmen and so on, toil like Trojans at their chosen tasks while many who detest the work that has

been forced by circumstances upon them will spend their evenings and weekends sweating in their gardens or even working out their football coupons. In an anarchist community, everyone would be engaged in work which was socially useful and seen to be so. There would be no production of futile luxuries or war materials, no police, courts of law, prisons (except in the form of psychiatric institutions) or banks. In such a situation, anarchists maintain that even the most unpleasant but necessary tasks would be performed joyfully, since the best incentive to work is the consciousness that one is making a contribution towards the achievement and continued survival of a worthwhile object, in this case a free and happy society of individuals.

In conclusion, let me outline the main objections to anarchism as I see them. Firstly, of course, there is the all-important question of practicability. "I am sorry for anyone who has not been an anarchist at twenty", said the French statesman Clemenceau, implying that one discards such an impossibly idealistic political philosophy when one grows older and wiser. It must certainly be admitted that, in general, anarchists are deplorably vague concerning the means by which the anarchist society is to be established. Looking at the average working man in the average pub, and listening to his conversation concerned almost exclusively with drink, football or racing, one may be pardoned for doubting if he will ever be imbued with the necessary revolutionary consciousness to overthrow his present oppressors. Indeed he does not even realise he *is* oppressed. It is all very well to point to Spain as an example of anarchism working in practice, but that situation arose under very exceptional circumstances, and lasted for under a year. Secondly, even if conditions did arise in this country which would make a worker's revolution possible, it is difficult to see how this could be successfully accomplished without much bloodshed (in spite of pious anarchist hopes to the contrary), and would not a society established as a consequence of the deaths of many innocent people contain within itself the seeds of its own destruction? Thirdly, there is the problem of crime. Anarchists maintain that the criminal is primarily a product of the prevailing political and economic system and would largely disappear in the kind of world they aim to create. No doubt many crimes such as robbery would be eliminated or greatly reduced, though surely the temptation to steal from the common storehouses by those in charge of them would be very great. But what of the homicidal maniacs, the Christies the Heaths and the Bradys? How are they to be restrained? Moreover as Bertrand Russell pointed out in his *Roads to Freedom* (1919), what is to prevent, under anarchism, a combination of ambitious men forming themselves into a private army, manufacturing their own munitions and enslaving the majority? As Russell says, can it be supposed that Napoleon, for example, had he been born into an anarchist community, would have acquiesced tamely in a world where his genius and overwhelming desire for power could find no outlet? The anarchist Nicholas Walter in his excellent pamphlet, *About Anarchism* (Freedom Press, 1969), acknowledges that "even the most libertarian society would have to protect itself against some people and *this would inevitably involve some compulsion*" (my italics). But who is to exercise this compulsion in the absence of an organised police force? Fourthly, it is very difficult to see how many functions of our incredibly complex modern civilisation could be effectively and justly performed without the co-ordinating activity of a central government. The control and distribution of the hard drugs is one of great topicality which springs immediately

(Continued on page 24)

LET'S TEACH THEM RIGHT¹

RAY BOTT

THIS BOOK consists of a disparate collection of eighteen essays and articles culled from various sources. Because of this, any educationist—teacher or parent, who reads it seeking guidance on problems of moral education, will find much difficulty picking his way through. Though to be fair, there is a comprehensive list of books and articles appended at the end of the book, recommended as further reading for the serious student.

Moreover, it would be doing the book less than justice not to say that there are discernible and important threads running through it. A basic one is that if moral education is going to be successful, it means getting away from the Victorian inculcation of overt standards. This is not to say that this era was more guilty in this respect than others, but that its influence is still felt. It means too, devising ways whereby standards of conduct are based upon internally held moral values. Towards the end of the book the various chapters on practical experience with counselling, sex education and discipline provide admirable accounts of enlightened open-ended approaches to moral education.

There was a time when we were all quite clear what was meant by *religion*. Today much has been eroded from the traditional forms of worship and notions of deity. Now, the concept has taken on a much more vague connotation. Harold Loukes (p. 111) draws attention to the current argument about what religious education is, and suggests that it is going to be some years before there is any prospect of agreement. In the meantime we must concern ourselves with the practicalities of producing moral beings. However, the reader is left with the uncomfortable feeling that what passes off for religious education is *in situ*. In this context, the only detailed accounts of general school life are given in the contributions by Lionel Elvin and Edward Blishen, and make depressing reading. They highlight rightly the fact that despite all the high powered academic discussion in the upper echelons of our educational institutions, and the more enlightened approaches in a very few of our schools, the overall picture is dismal. It is what the ordinary rank and file teacher thinks and does that ultimately matters. In this connection Harold Blackham makes a vital recommendation in the Introduction, in alluding to the need for teachers to become acquainted with the philosophy of moral education, and that colleges of education have an important part to play here. Similarly the joint statement by James Hemming and Howard Marratt indicates the need for attention to the nature of ethical problems, in colleges of education.

Another contributor, John Wilson, seems to think there is some overlap between the modes of religious and moral thinking; the former being centrally concerned with emotions, ideals and outlooks, although his chapter includes little of his thinking in this area. Edwin Cox and Michael Hinton have more to say about this, and go for the notion that religion is an activity concerned with attempting to answer certain ultimate questions. Both seem to think that answers to such questions provide a sound basis for morality. As I understand them, they are saying there is a necessary connection between religious and moral education. This argument is difficult to uphold. Cox says (p. 28), 'Religion would seem, then, to spring from an attempt to find an emotionally satisfying explanation for the existence of the world and some theory of the purpose of life'; and Hinton, in recommending a pragmatic approach to sixth form discussion, states (p. 90), 'It is quite extraordinary how much agreement can be produced among a class who

find themselves united in the premise that people matter; and even if I (speaking as a Christian) think the reasons why many sixth formers hold that belief to be unsatisfactory, I am pleased that their hearts are wiser than their heads'.

In my view one of the main weaknesses of the Cox and Hinton treatment is that they hive off the emotional life, as if it enjoyed an independent existence. It is the emotionally satisfying aspects of the so-called answers to ultimate questions that seem to matter to them. There is no implicit recognition that the education of the emotions stems from a cognitive core. That is, to be educationally viable, our emotional experiences must be based on reality situations. There seems no justification to plump for a metaphysical account because it is emotionally comforting. Such a strategy could well lead to a rude awakening.

Another difficulty that Cox runs up against is the nature of some of his 'ultimate questions'. For example, he offers 'what is man's destiny?' and 'what is life for?'. But such questions presume affirmative answers to even more basic questions. For to ask 'what is man's destiny?' presumes that whatever it might be, at least he has one. To follow that suggestion certainly leads us on a metaphysical adventure. But to discuss whether it is reasonable to hold the view that man has a destiny does not necessarily entail such an exercise. Similarly, to ask questions about life's purpose begs the question that life *has* a purpose. That individual human beings exhibit various purposes in conducting their lives, is manifestly clear. In that sense human life is almost always purposive. But to take the abstraction 'life' and encapsulate it with a concept like 'purpose' is a level of generality that can only lead to the most abstruse of metaphysical conjectures. The contextual significance of such words is just ignored. Another supposed ultimate question is 'what is man?'. An adequate biological or sociological account can be offered, in principle. In short, put into some contextual situation, the philosophical problem dissolves.

Are we to suspect that at all costs we are to be compelled to move into some metaphysical or transcendental realm? For that is not to ask an ultimate question, but to provide a particular kind of answer. The case that religion is an activity concerned with ultimate questions does not succeed. It is concerned with activities related to answering ultimate questions in a certain way: quite another matter.

Reference to Goldman's research indicating the inappropriateness of current RE teaching is suggestive of a reassessment of religious teaching in Primary schools. Yet if we do follow Piaget in accepting that the intellectual development of children moves from an initial egocentric state, ultimately to one characterised by formal logical operations, with its attendant public criteria of what constitutes knowledge and understanding; it is difficult to conceive at what stage a point of view that derives from personal commitment and conviction can meaningfully intervene. Piaget characterises the development of thought as a growing awareness of objective reality. It is just creating a verbal froth to thrash around to find some formula for leading children to objective reality in the religious area of experience, simply because no one has succeeded in showing that so-called religious experience can become public knowledge.

By contrast the approaches of Hirst, Humphries, Loakes and Peters emphasise the separateness of moral discourse from that of the religious. Professor Hirst, in his chapter

on 'Morals, Religion and the Maintained School', is quite explicit about this. He disposes of the thesis that what is right or good is what God wills, as a definition that attempts to solve the moral dilemma by an evident tautology. As a Christian himself, he concludes that if Christian doctrine is not to run into serious logical difficulties it must be maintained that man does have moral knowledge which he acquires by some means other than by divine revelation. Coupled with his denial that it can be shown that we can possess religious knowledge except in the sense of knowledge *about* religion, he makes a strong plea for secular education in State schools.

Inevitably a large part of the book is concerned with moral education at upper Secondary and sixth form level. As is rightly pointed out in various contributions, it is only at the later stages of development that moral questions can be discussed in a relatively autonomous way. The young child must start from some basis of authority rule. It is here that Professor Peters in 'Moral Education: tradition or reason?', outlines the gradual move by teachers and parents away from being solely moral authority figures, to persons who attempt to build in an explicit rational basis for children's moral decisions. This broad account of a rational approach to moral education is the only contribution that acknowledges problems of moral education in the Primary school although there is a generalised account of the value of parental involvement in the Junior school by Lawrence Green.

The lack of Primary school references is an unfortunate omission. What was needed to give a balanced sample of current thought in the moral education field, was a practical detailed account within a development framework, of how moral awareness is thought to arise in children: such as outlined for example in chapter 8 of *Fundamentals in the First School*—M. Brearley *et al* 1969; and current research of the Farmington Trust.

The chapter entitled 'Humanism and Christianity: the common ground of moral education', has been reviewed separately as a pamphlet in the *FREETHINKER*. Suffice it to say that the dialogue between Howard Marratt and James Hemming is an uneasy one. When it comes down to the bare bones of what should be going on in the schools, very little is agreed and made explicit. As for giving ground in concrete terms, the ball is very much in the Howard Marratt court: for the Christian is in occupation, at least as far as current practice and legal backing are concerned. It remains to be seen how much the discussion will penetrate to the consciousness of teachers. *Let's Teach them Right* illustrates much fruitful thinking among educationists, including three head teachers anxious to improve the present parlous state of affairs. It has drawn together some provocative ideas, and at least will help.

To encourage sixth form students to discuss a wide range of social problems with moral significance as Michael Hinton does, is highly commendable. But there is something that smacks of the patronising to talk about it in terms of the teacher's role being partly a practical one. For example, he says 'to influence his charges in directions which the judgement of those best qualified to speak would approve', and again 'to encourage philosophical and moral stances which most educated people in our society would regard as preferable . . .' This approach appears to stem from his claim that 'one great function of education is socialisation'. This may be how the State sees the teacher's function, or perhaps is the objective of many parents who opt for sending their children to certain public schools. But it seems to me doubtful whether teachers involved in the *educative* process have any obligation to meet socially approved ends. Though this is not to say that such pro-

cedures may not be socially approved. It may be that a teacher is obliged not to deliberately incite pupils to break the law, but this is a negative approach; and even to positively encourage respect for the law is moral education only in a very weak sense.

Conformity is not synonymous with moral competence, and in many instances may be contrary to it.

¹ *Let's Teach them Right: perspectives on religious and moral education*, edited by Christopher Macy (Pemberton Books, London 1969. Cloth bound: 214 pages. £1 15s, paper back £1).

THE POLICE AND THE CITIZEN

As reviewed in *FREETHINKER*, January 10, is available at 4s (plus 5d postage) from :

THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP
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Book Review

L. B. HALSTEAD

Freedom of Choice Affirmed: Corliss Lamont (Beacon Press, \$2.95).

THE PROBLEM of free will has exercised the minds of men since time immemorable. My first contact with one of our most original and talented students was when he came to discuss the apparent inconsistency of his fellow scientists. As scientists they were employed in discovering general laws by means of which events could be determined, yet as individuals they believed in free will or at least in their personal possession of the same. This student felt that these two attitudes were mutually contradictory. Similarly many a theologian has struggled over the problem of an omniscient deity which by definition must know the future—a concept exceedingly difficult to reconcile with belief in free will. Just as Christians in their normal lives behave as if there were no god, so too as Professor Lamont stresses the most vehement of determinists 'in practice decide and act to a large extent as if free choice existed'. This is the crux of the matter. When all is said and done, it is the man-in-the-street's commonsense view of the subject that prevails in practice. As a professional philosopher Lamont has assembled an impressive series of arguments which are liberally laced with fascinating anecdotes to convince the reader that we are not predetermined automatons. After reading this erudite essay, I was left with the suspicion that the entire subject was, as David Hume and John Stuart Mill claimed, merely a matter of semantics, what Professor Schlick—the logical positivist—called a 'pseudo-problem'.

In spite of this Professor Lamont has provided a signal service by bringing a welcome degree of clarity into what one would imagine to be a pretty sterile field. Lamont speaks of the 'unceasing dispute over free will', and states 'the great debate in Philosophic circles over the question of free choice and determinism has continued unabated. . . . There can be no doubt that the problem of free will is a matter of prime concern to economists, historians, scientists and the educated mind in general'. From Lamont's contribution to this debate, it is evident that most of the controversy of the past was merely a consequence of muddled thinking. This, no doubt, was the reason that Hume and others dismissed the subject as simply semantic exercises.

Strangely enough the problem of determinism is of practical concern in modern society. The old-fashioned notion, that people are responsible for their actions, implies that they have free will and can freely choose their course of behaviour. The modern view, held by many criminologists and psychologists and supported by a vast array of data, is that certain patterns of antisocial behaviour are conditioned by family and/or social background. In this sense the offenders cannot be held fully responsible for their actions—they were in fact predetermined. Lamont counters this argument by pointing out that the majority of young people from delinquent-producing environments are in fact law abiding. Even the supposedly antediluvian attitudes have always recognised that there are occasions when an individual cannot be held responsible for his actions. The criminally insane are not treated as common criminals; if sufficiently provoked a verdict of justifiable homicide can be returned as was done in the last century when a policeman was stabbed during the breakup of a demonstration. The jury was fettered for years on the strength of bringing in this particular verdict! Anyhow being unfit to plead is an accepted defence. The

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fact that this is generally recognised does not, however, imply that this apertains in all cases.

As Professor Lamont clearly states, the range of behaviour of an individual is limited by a whole series of outside factors including both his environment and his heredity, to this extent it can be said that his actions are predetermined. However, within these circumscribed limits, there still remains a number of alternatives. These may be reduced so that there is only one course of action available. Even in this extreme, a choice will remain: to take the course or not. In this instance non-action can be a positive decision of the will.

The fact that much of human behaviour is predictable suggests a measure of determinism. For example Lamont quotes the prediction of automobile accidents for a particular day in 1966. On the basis of previous statistics it was suggested that between 460 and 540 people would die—in fact the number killed was 514. However, no-one had the temerity to indicate exactly who would die on the day in question.

Because it is possible to predict with considerable accuracy the behaviour of particular individuals, once one is in possession of sufficient data, it still does not establish the case for determinism. It is important to recognise the difference between what Lamont terms the 'agency' and the 'subject matter'. A person may act in either of these roles, the former active, the latter passive. When one is in possession of all the details of an individual, his personality, heredity the sum of all his experiences, it is possible to be reasonably confident that he will react to a given situation in a given way. But it is only when viewed in retrospect that the cause and effect situation appears to be determined. At every juncture in the sequence of events, there has been a choice made. The choice or rather the range of choice is determined by the personality, background but this merely predisposes in a particular direction, produces a tendency, it does not determine the exact decision. Lamont gives the example of a young lawyer of intellectual calibre and moral idealism who wishes to further the movement to obtain full constitutional rights for the negroes of America. His background and personality may have determined his general attitude and aims but he has within this situation a variety of choices—listed by Lamont. His character sets general limits within which his choice can operate, but it does not dictate the exact one he will make. He makes a free choice.

Perhaps the strongest case against determinism is provided by the role that contingency has played in events. Lamont gives a number of rather hair-raising examples of these but one of the most interesting is the 1933 assassination attempt on President-elect F. D. Roosevelt. An agile woman who happened to be standing next to the assassin seized his arm and the bullet killed the Mayor of Chicago instead. But for this fortuitous event, the President of the United States would have been a fourth-rate Texan and America's policies both at home and abroad would have been vastly different from those of Roosevelt's New Deal. 'In short, chance as exemplified in the split-second deflection of a bullet by the quick action of an alert American had most significant consequences for both the United States and the world at large.'

Finally, a point which Lamont could have stressed, which to my mind clinches his case for freedom of choice as opposed to determinism, is provided by the best and most fully documented cases of determinism. Let me give an example. A man can acquire an attitude towards the opposite sex as a result of a faulty parental background that will predispose him towards women suffering from the same personality defects as his mother. This will tend to reinforce his attitudes. In fact by being unaware of the psychopathology of the situation his behaviour will be predictable. It would be correct to say that a disastrous marriage is predetermined. Should a Lamont-type contingency occur, the husband can acquire knowledge of the underlying causes of his instinctive pattern of behaviour. The acquisition of this knowledge now presents him with the possibility of making a conscious choice. He may still have the same tendencies as previously, but whereas they were acted out in ignorance now a conscious choice is available. It can be acted upon or not. The greater the amount of knowledge, the deeper the understanding, the more likely it becomes that one achieves freedom to choose.

In conclusion Lamont has produced a thoroughly convincing case that human beings do have freedom of choice. The unending quotations from authors whose style is frequently lacking in clarity tends to hinder the flow of his argument. Much of this seems to be somewhat unnecessary, but then without the inclusion of these authorities we would simply have one or two short articles. It does seem an inordinate amount of effort to establish from the standpoint of the philosopher something which every individual recognises from the experience of his own life. Admittedly this is the kernel of Lamont's case—the seductive in-

humanity of determinism needed to be dealt with and Professor Lamont is to be congratulated on the devastating demolition he has accomplished.

ANARCHISM—continued from page 21

to mind. Finally, I believe that anarchism fails to take sufficient account of the sense of national identity. I am aware, of course, that national boundaries are quite arbitrary, and yet, as a Scot, I am very proud of my country's cultural heritage and traditions, which are quite different from those of England. Anarchists would no doubt dismiss these feelings as dangerous illusions, but I maintain they are the expression of something very valuable which it would be wrong to ignore or attempt to destroy.

Ultimately, the practicability or otherwise of anarchism rests on one's view of human nature. "You can't build a marble temple out of a mixture of mud and manure", says Larry Slade the disillusioned anarchist in Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*. Plato related the fable of Gyges' Ring which made its wearer invisible and hence unaccountable for any crimes he or she might feel disposed to commit. How would the majority behave under such circumstances? I know how I would behave, but then I may only be one of the few deplorable exceptions.

LETTERS

BBC Radio Brighton

THE TONE of Mr Gunnell's letter suggests to me that he is more used to dealing with evangelists than with journalists (or housewives who object to being exploited!) I confess that I could never undertake an Any Questions type of programme without days of catching up on local topics (especially in a town where I do not live) and the mass of subjects that might arise, but I do not believe I am unique in this. I did not 'complain' about the guinea fee. I agreed to it willingly when Mr Gunnell started the ball rolling by phoning to ask me to join three 'ardent' Christians on the panel. I was merely stating a fact which hit those of us who have to earn our money the hard way. When I was asked and agreed to discuss RI in another item I was *not* told that I would not even receive the shillings to cover my travelling expenses. (Perhaps I may just add that although working full-time, if I earn 10s for a few days work I reckon myself lucky.) I resent Mr Gunnell's pompous and self-righteous comments about 'community spirit and financial gain'! It would be interesting to know just how much time *he* spends on *unpaid voluntary* work for the community, and also how much time the Rev. Frank Topping (a pleasant enough person, and, I believe, ex-TV personality) can spare from his clerical duties for his broadcasting commitments? Being an 'ardent Humanist' does not necessarily imply wealth or complete idiocy, although, of course, it is fatal to complain if one wants to be 'in' with those who control our mass media, and goodness knows they are already anti-Humanist enough. Fortunately perhaps I have no energy or ambitions regarding the limited audience of Radio Brighton, which cannot even be heard by more than very few across the Downs in my own neighbourhood. If I had, I would have been wise to have kept my mouth shut!!

I have a note somewhere from Mr Gunnell (who, incidentally, is a very charming person and an excellent chairman) regretting the series of mishaps I experienced, and he apologised for the fact that I was not told when the discussion I recorded was being transmitted and never knew what went out under my name. His apologies were gratefully accepted. Nevertheless, this sort of situation is bound to occur if local broadcasting is increased with its lack of funds and professionalism. No radio station can hope to 'reflect all forms of opinion' so long as it has to rely on people who can enjoy the luxury of working for it in time paid for by some other employer, and, I repeat, the clergy are among the very few who are in this happy situation. In Sussex they surely don't need my support; they are surrounded by cap-dollers! Good luck to them. I almost admire the way they so often get what they want at other people's expense. Wake up Humanists! Perhaps we only get the radio and TV we deserve, and that is an ugly thought with which to begin 1970.

KIT MOUAT.