

Freethinker

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DISCUSSION RESTRICTED BY GOD

THE COMPLEX QUESTION of euthanasia was raised again briefly in a House of Commons debate on Tuesday, April 7. Dr Hugh Gray, Labour MP for Yarmouth, introduced it in a ten minute rule Bill. Dr Gray is to be applauded for his efforts to keep the issue alive, since his Bill had little hope of success. As is the tradition with Bills of this kind Dr Gray's introductory speech was opposed by Mr Norman St John-Stevas, Conservative MP for Chelmsford. Dr Gray asserted that: "The choice should always be with the individual". Mr St John-Stevas asserted that: "it was ultimately God, not man, who was the disposer of human life", and went on as usual to suggest that his views should be imposed not only on the religious minority but on the majority which constitutes the rest of us.

That St John-Stevas should intervene in this particular issue, which is not a clear cut question of religious versus non-religious, is particularly frustrating since there are many humanists who would like to see a debate on euthanasia based on humanist rather than religious ethics. Some of the questions Mr St John-Stevas raised, such as whether there is not a possibility of an "old person asking himself if he should cease to be a burden to those who were looking after him, whether they considered him a burden, and whether he should take this step" of euthanasia, are worth asking, but their import is shrouded by Mr St John-Stevas' insistence on bringing God into the question.

The measure is not designed to force religious people into doing anything and therefore Mr St John-Stevas' attempt to coerce the non-religious on religious grounds are gratuitous. Or as David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society, put it in a recent press release: "We wonder if Mr St John-Stevas goes to church instead of a doctor's surgery when he is sick. If not, he is acknowledging that medical science and not God determine the length of life and should, at the request of the patient, be able to shorten as well as extend it."

JESUS'S SEX LIFE

CANON HUGH MONTEFIORE is the man who three years ago declared that there were indications that Jesus Christ was a homosexual. His case, based largely on modern psychology, was plausible and significant, and naturally caused considerable controversy. Now he has been appointed Bishop of Kingston-upon-Thames. But unfortunately his view of Christ has resulted in widespread criticism of his appointment in ecclesiastical circles, with the result that the Church of England Evangelical Council has called on him to affirm before his consecration, "his belief that the humanity of Our Lord was perfect in every way".

The Council has rejected Montefiore's assertion that even if Christ was homosexual this does not mean that he participated in homosexual practices. In their statement the Council notes Montefiore's opinion that "no question of Jesus's being less than perfect was or is involved or implied", but goes on to state: "We maintain, however, that he gives to the word 'perfect' too narrow a connotation and that Jesus Christ was humanly as well as morally per-

fect. To suggest that his humanity may have been perverted in one of its basic instincts is, without doubt, to deny its entire perfection".

As well as asking Canon Montefiore to affirm his belief in Christ's unequivocal perfection, the Council calls on bishops and leading churchmen to "avoid public speculations which call into question the entire perfection of Christ and deeply offend Christian people".

This whole incident smacks of Catholicism and calls into question the widespread belief among humanists and others that the Church of England is a nice, liberal institution which gives offence to no one and tolerates all. The Council is, in effect, demanding that Montefiore publicly revoke his belief that Christ exhibited homosexual tendencies. As yet, the Canon has merely made "no comment". One suspects that semantics will provide a way out of the situation.

The church hierarchy's almost hysterical insistence on Christ's perfection and disregard of what facts there are, is revealing. There are and have been many religions whose deities are demonstrably imperfect—the ancient Greek religion for instance. Can the Church of England's irrational chase after perfection have anything to do with the degree of faith which the pursuers possess? Though I can't speak from experience I would imagine that if one believes implicitly in a God, one is less likely to worry about his characteristics. However, when one's faith is weaker then is it not natural that one should require something more perfect in which to endeavour to believe.

The other depressing factor in this attempt to stifle Canon Montefiore's, and indeed all bishop's, freedom of expression is the Council's harping on homosexuality as a perversion. Psychologists are fast agreeing that sexual deviation is not the manifestation of a diseased mind. By what authority does the Council class homosexuals as perverts and presumably heterosexuals as sexually perfect? Are they not both equally perfect within their own definitions of the term? Presumably it is again God who has decreed homosexuality to be imperfect, since no human yardstick can justify such a conclusion. When one considers the number of outstanding humans who have been homosexual, and the number of reprehensible ones who have been abundantly heterosexual, the church's preoccupation with sex and its dismissal of homosexuals as imperfect underlines its already apparent outdatedness and irrelevance.

Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

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

THE NSS ANNUAL DINNER

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S 64th Annual Dinner took place at The Pavioir's Arms, Page Street, London, SW1, on Saturday, April 4. Exactly one hundred members and friends gathered to hear the five speakers, meet each other and, perhaps least important, feed.

The first speaker, Mr Nigel Sinnott was introduced by David Tribe, the President of the NSS, as the holder of several offices within the Humanist movement, a writer and botanist. The reason for his selection to propose the toast to The Guest of Honour, Mr J. S. L. Gilmour, soon became apparent. Both men are botanists and Mr Sinnott appropriately gave us a round up of the freethinkers who have been botanists, stressing particularly Robert Brown, Sir Joseph Hooker and culminating with Mr Gilmour, a past president of the Botanical Association of the British Isles who is at present Director of the University of Cambridge Botanical Gardens. Mr Gilmour has been a Director of the Rationalist Press Association since 1961 and was instrumental in founding the Cambridge Humanists in 1955.

Mr Gilmour wished the NSS a long and successful life and immediately qualified the word 'long' because: "I should think it won't be very long before secularists and rationalists are unnecessary because we will all be secularists". He elaborated his case at length and concluded that Christianity will be dead within two to five hundred years. He cited the younger generation, the march of science, the activities of the humanist organisations and the possibility that "like the Emperor Constantine" someone prominent such as "Prince Charles" might publicly change their views, as factors in his argument.

Fanny Cockerell, a founder member of the Progressive League, editor of *Plan*, writer and journalist proposed the toast to the NSS and made a most witty and lively speech in so doing. She pointed out that in order to be in a position to change his view Prince Charles would have had to be influenced by such as David Tribe and William McIlroy, the General Secretary of the NSS. Mrs Cockerell brought the house down on more than one occasion with well timed remarks. Towards the end of her speech she said assertively: "The Pope is about as qualified to give advice on sexual relations as I am to give advice to the Minister of Fuel and Power about coal mines". There followed a pause. "No, perhaps that's not quite fair. I have been down a coal mine once."

The NSS was said by David Tribe to have no older friend than Richard Clements, who has led a distinguished career in social work, law, as a magistrate and in local government. Mr Clements made the last speech and recalled his long association with secular cause. Perhaps thinking of his OBE he said: "Looking back over the years I think there are certain events in the history of the NSS I wouldn't have missed for any government award".

He discussed the potential of science and quoted Marx: "There is literally nothing that man cannot do". He spoke of Bertrand Russell as an exemplary humanist and concluded that as humanists we should follow Russell's example, and ourselves set an example to the world.

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.

Humanist Holidays. Details from the Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M. Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (Tel.: 01-642 8796)

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

Independent Adoption Society: The Post Graduate Centre, Royal Northern Hospital, Holloway Road, London, N7: Saturday, April 25, 2.45 p.m.: Annual General Meeting and film 'Who Am I?'

London Young Humanists: Hotel Eden, Harrington Gardens, London, SW7: Sunday, April 19, 7 p.m.: "The Uniqueness of Man", Professor W. H. Thorpe, FRAS

North Staffordshire Humanist Group: Cartwright House, Broad Street, Hanley: Friday, April 24, 8 p.m.: "Objections to Christianity", Tom Stringer, FRAS.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, April 19, 11 a.m.: "What is the Modern Age About?", Richard Clements, OBE. Admission free. Tuesday, April 21, 7 p.m.: Discussion—"The Roles of Black Men and White Men in Africa", George Sangumba. Admission 2s (including refreshments). Members free.

Sutton Humanist Group: Friends House, Worcester Gardens (near station) Sutton: Saturday, April 25, 11 a.m.: Book sale. Details from Mrs Mepham (Telephone 642-8796).

West Ham and District Secular Group: Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead, London, E11: Thursday, April 17, 8 p.m.: Meeting.

SECULAR EDUCATION APPEAL

Sponsors:

**Dr Cyril Bibby, Edward Blishen, Brigid Brophy,
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All donations will be acknowledged

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

WHAT DO COMPUTERS THINK ABOUT THEMSELVES?

PAUL ROM

ONE CAN describe oneself as a Monist or Materialist (who believes that mind and matter are one); as a Rationalist (who holds that reason must be the basis for all knowledge); or as a modern Humanist (who believes in Man, his earthiness and his responsibility for himself and others)—but always one will search for the determination, or the cause, of an effect which one has observed or experienced. One will wish to establish laws which allow an exact prediction of future events.

When asking the question: "What is the origin of the very notion of *cause*?" one does not leave the field of science. "Cause" is an abstraction; we cannot possibly perceive causes with our sense organs like the things we can grasp. To develop the concept of cause, man had to make many observations in his dealings with nature. From these, he then abstracted the notion of cause as a kind of analogy; I do something—Nature does something; for, indeed, man dealt with nature and produced the desired effects. With his inner resources of intelligence and purpose he could increase his dominance over nature.

We can realise that the purposeful operations of man, of his Self, were projected upon the world. Nature was seen as an "intelligent organism". Considering nature as a kind of human being represents "anthropomorphism".¹

Anthropomorphic thinking prevails in many theologies as well as in the minds of primitive people. God, a kind of super man, is believed to be the cause of all happenings; a violent storm, causing harm to crops, animals, and man, can be seen as a devil's act.

Rationalists will not protest when a poet says, "Splendidly, the sun rose like a king" (using a simile); or, "This tyrant of terrible weather depressed John" (a metaphor); but poets will not make us believe that the sun really moves, or that John really was tyrannised; we may understand that he himself produces his depression and erroneously attributes it to causes for which he thinks he cannot be made responsible.

With the development of modern science, since Newton, the anthropomorphised Nature became entirely deprived of its intelligence and character of an active living body. Men of learning came to use another analogy which seemed to be more adequate; they now considered nature as a great machine. The belief that everything is but matter rapidly spread, and to attribute a purpose to man's behaviour was considered unscientific. The belief in Science became the faith in "Scientism".² The purpose of the human Self, which had previously been projected into Nature, was considered non-existent and man also was seen as a machine. After he had anthropomorphised nature, he, *anthropos*, now became mechanomorphised. Thus, talking about the American cosmonauts a psychiatrist could hold that the human brain is the best computer.

One may guess that his psychiatry is mainly neurology. Neurologists study nerves and brain as particular organs and can treat them with surgery (physically) or medicine (chemically). Whilst he might also be inclined to use behaviour therapy, a humanistic psychology has probably not yet come to the notice of this doctor. It is still a minority of psychiatrists who see their patients as a Self,

as a unique person, as more than an organism with nerves and brain as essential parts. Is not indeed the *opinion* which we have of ourselves, and also often our hidden purpose, decisive for our right or wrong behaviour as social beings?

The much admired cosmonauts were so intensively trained over a long period, were so "conditioned" (Pavlov, Skinner), that their achievement could be compared with that of a "programmed" computer. But, as was pointed out before, metaphors must not be taken for realities; it would be better for men of learning to leave them to the poets.

The cosmonauts' brains were originally means used by their selves to wrestle in their particular way with their difficulties of existence on our earth. For their achievement, however, these men had to allow others to deprive them of everything personal. Their pious reading of the Bible during one of their performances in space was no spontaneous religious experience; it, also, was conditioned by those whom they had accepted as their masters. Computer-like they were hardly feeling or thinking like human beings; they were programmed by others for an ulterior purpose.

So we can say, whilst in certain circumstances a human hand can be a more efficient tool than a mechanical one, a human brain can be reduced to work like a computer.

¹ Collingwood, R. G., *The Idea of Nature*, New York (O.U.P. 1960).

² Matson, Floyd W., *The Broken Image—Man, Science and Society*, New York (Braziller 1964, Anchor Book 1966).

FREETHINKER FUND

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VISION AND REALISM

Annual Report of the
NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP
103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1

PROFESSOR H. J. EYSENCK

Interviewed by DAVID REYNOLDS

PART II

The concluding part of the interview, the first part of which was published last week

REYNOLDS: *Would you say that the current accent on what is known as 'permissiveness' is primarily a result of the decline of religion?*

EYSENCK: Well, I think frankly there is an awful lot of nonsense talked about permissiveness. I've just done a study of pre-marital intercourse in students, and we find that the proportion of eighteen-year-olds who have had pre-marital intercourse is something like eighteen per cent among the girls. Now this does not seem to me a terrifyingly large figure and when I think back on my student days, I doubt if it would have been very different then, and I think from what we know of Victorian times it is almost certain that the proportion of girls, taken over the whole country who were virgins at eighteen would have been minute compared to what it is now. I think there's no doubt whatever that in those days the working class at eighteen would normally have had a good deal of experience. There was a very small group of middle class girls who were protected very effectively, but this was a very small proportion of the total population. And I think you would find that in the working classes something like 90 per cent would have had sexual experience by that age, whereas nowadays the number is very much lower. Schofield in his study using a very good random sample found again the same figure that I found, about eighteen per cent of eighteen-year-old girls. Well, this is very small. In other words, I think we are far less permissive overall than were the Victorians who were extremely religious of course.

REYNOLDS: *So why would this be? There's no link between religion and sexual behaviour?*

EYSENCK: I don't think there's any link between the two at all, no.

REYNOLDS: *So all those religious people were in fact being hypocritical?*

EYSENCK: Well, religion is such a vague phrase. After all your typical Catholic will happily indulge in any kind of malfeasance, and then go off and confess and be happily absolved. For him in a sense religion is a way of avoiding guilt feelings. He can heave all his guilt on the 'Lamb of God' and leave it there. He's perfectly all right to go on and seduce any further number of virgins. He has no troubles. This is a very good religion from his point of view.

REYNOLDS: *Do you think it would be desirable to have a more permissive society?*

EYSENCK: I think that's a very difficult question. The thing we found in our study, was essentially this: that people's sexual behaviour and attitudes were very much determined by their personality. Your typical extrovert is very pro permissiveness, pro pre-marital and extra-marital experience and behaves accordingly; has intercourse more early, more frequently, with more different people, is promiscuous and so on. The introvert is exactly the opposite of all that. He is against permissiveness, pro-censorship, pro-virginity, against promiscuity and so on. Now obviously you cannot have a state of affairs which is equally favourable to both. The more permissive you are, the more you

please the extroverted ones, the more you displease the introverted ones and vice versa. Obviously some kind of compromise is essential.

REYNOLDS: *But surely rationality must dictate one way or the other. Isn't it more rational for us to be permissive?*

EYSENCK: No. I don't think you can use a standard of rationality in a problem which has so many sides and is so difficult. It's like saying that we should all like cheese, or dislike cheese. The fact of the matter, and you must start out with fact, is that we don't. We are genetically different. Take a very simple experiment which we've done. It's rather an intriguing one because it illustrates this very well. You sit your subject in a room which is completely dark and quite silent. You give him a lever to pull and he pulls it at a rate such as he likes. Now the experiment proper starts. Whenever he pulls the lever particularly fast, the lights come on for three seconds and a juke box starts playing. After three seconds the lights and noise go off again unless he keeps on pulling faster and faster. Now the interesting thing is that your extrovert will pull faster and faster because he likes loud music and bright lights. Your introvert will go slower and slower because he doesn't like them. Now you cannot say its rational to do one or the other. It's simply that one is made with a nervous system which needs strong stimulation, and the other is made with a nervous system that doesn't like strong stimulation. It's absurd to say that one thing is more rational than the other. It is simply that a society which has to look after both extroverts and introverts cannot go to extremes either way. The puritans went to extremes one way. We may be on the way to going to extremes the other way and this is a bad thing. You must obviously have a compromise. The field of compromise is fairly wide of course, but you should not go to extremes.

REYNOLDS: *We have taken it upon ourselves to endeavour to deny people religion . . . haven't we?*

EYSENCK: I wouldn't say that. What we deny people is the right to enforce their religious beliefs on others. I don't think a humanist would deny somebody else the right to religious beliefs.

REYNOLDS: *You don't think if somebody is religious, we should try to make them realise . . .*

EYSENCK: Well, you can argue with him of course. If he wants to argue that is perfectly all right. I think one should not go beyond that. One should not make it illegal to have religious beliefs as the Russians do. I think that would be going far too far.

REYNOLDS: *Yes. But at the same time, you would accept that if the majority of people in this country were religious, as they might have been two hundred years ago, the government is influenced by them . . .*

EYSENCK: Well, then equally they have no right to impress their religious beliefs on those who do not believe them. That, after all, was the whole beginning of humanism—a fight that everyone should have the right to his own opinions, religious or not religious.

REYNOLDS: *Nevertheless, we would suffer if the majority were religious—presumably—in a democracy.*

EYSENCK: I don't think that would necessarily follow. It depends what you mean by suffering and in what way.

It would depend on just how the religious majority exercised its power.

REYNOLDS: *I'm wondering whether if one can say that a society is better off with a secular government, one couldn't on the same basis say that it would be better if we were all extroverts or all introverts . . .*

EYSENCK: I'm sure that society is not necessarily better off with a secular government. After all the Russian government is secular and so was the German government under Hitler. I don't think these are good examples of secular government. I don't think the goodness or badness of a government has anything to do with its religious beliefs. I know religious people who I think would be absolutely splendid in running the country and I know people, who are humanists, who would be absolutely terrible, and vice versa. The qualities which are needed in running a government are not those which are relevant to religion or humanism, in that sense.

REYNOLDS: *So this goes back to what you said before, that humanists must fight for reason rather than against religion.*

EYSENCK: Exactly. You cannot try to make people more extrovert or introvert, because these are innate qualities, just as you can't fight to make them more or less intelligent. They are born one way or the other and there's an end to it. You can push them slightly one way or the other, but I can't see any rational way in which one could do this. There's no rational imperative, which says you must be promiscuous, nor is there one necessarily which says you must not. I think the rational imperative is, if you are promiscuous don't go around with a girl who isn't and vice versa.

REYNOLDS: *But couldn't it be said that a society where everybody was promiscuous would be a nicer place to live in . . .*

EYSENCK: Well it might be for people who like promiscuity but some people like to be faithful to one person, not to change, to have a family, to live in security. They much prefer this to any kind of promiscuity. In fact there are a lot of people who don't like sex at all. There is a good deal of difference between people like the philosopher, Immanuel Kant, who never had any interest in women whatsoever and a chap like Casanova. Society has to accommodate all of them. It's no use saying one is more rational than the other. They're just as rational or irrational as liking or not liking cheese or strawberries. It's just a fact of nature.

REYNOLDS: *But if we have to accommodate such a wide spectrum, in what fields can we try to alter people in order that society as a whole should benefit?*

EYSENCK: I think we should really alter people as little as possible. In other words I think the ethics of humanism should be that the state should exert a minimum possible influence and only in those things which are absolutely vital to the survival of the state. And there I think come in things like, one should try to make people less aggressive. Now aggressiveness is quite a different thing from sex, because as far as sex is concerned people have a choice. In a reasonably promiscuous society they can choose to be promiscuous or not as they like. That is perfectly all right I think. Unless one pushes it too far, enforcing promiscuity almost, there's no real trouble. Aggressiveness and cruelty are entirely different things. They are always at the expense of somebody else and therefore are anti-social, and that is a thing which the government ought to do something about,

particularly at the moment, say, in the field of films and television programmes and so on. I have no doubt whatsoever, and there's an enormous amount of psychological literature and experimental literature showing this, that to see this type of behaviour modelled on the screen and on the television has a very great effect on children and on adults. The government pays no attention to this, and isn't interested at all. I think that is a very bad attitude and very irrational because this is a very important aspect of our increasing problem of criminality and so on.

REYNOLDS: *What about the family system? Is there any case for change there?*

EYSENCK: I think it's too early to say. I think obviously what we need at the moment in this field is a good deal of research. There's practically none at all. I would dearly like to know what in fact is happening in China, for instance, where they have abolished families up to a point. The children are brought up in communes and so on. What in fact does happen there? What in fact is happening in the kibbutz? How are people reacting? There's very little scientifically known about this. There are these experiments going on here and there in the world, where people are trying to change things. Well, why not make use of them and actually finance a few hundred psychologists to travel abroad and study this in great detail. Then we would know a little more about just what happens when we change our very encrusted pattern. But at the moment we just don't know enough to really say anything at all sensible about it. Obviously there are great problems in abolishing the family, particularly when there are children. What is going to happen to them? Perhaps these are phantasmagorical problems. Maybe they don't really exist. Maybe children grow up just as well without a father and mother. I doubt it myself but we just don't know.

REYNOLDS: *But supposing the research was done and it was established that children grew up better or that society was a more healthy place without the family, with the commune system. Then have we the right to institute something of this kind or . . . ?*

EYSENCK: Well, I think then we should discuss the matter in great detail, children should be told about it at school and gradually one would presumably get a consensus of what was the best thing to do. Almost certainly nothing is best for everybody. There are always some people who flourish in one type of organisation and others who flourish in the opposite and it's a matter of striking a balance. Perhaps it is a matter of allowing some to get married and others not as they wish. I don't know. We just don't know enough about any of these things to really come to any kind of rational conclusion. In fact it's what I always say: we ought to finance far more research into all these things, because very little is known. We just know enough to know that the research is possible, that we have got some results in some of these fields to show that one can investigate scientifically matters of this kind. There the matter ends. There just isn't enough known about things like the effect of marriage to come to any kind of reasonable conclusion.

REYNOLDS: *You said earlier that psychology should replace religion as a guideline . . .*

EYSENCK: At the moment there isn't any real guideline at all. The whole thing is drifting. We have abandoned the religious tenets obviously. To most people religion doesn't mean anything. On the other hand we haven't got

(Continued overleaf)

anything to put in its place, which is very upsetting to many people. They just don't know where they are. Therefore I think it's very important that we should have an alternative, and I think the only alternative is a scientific one, an evolutionary one, based on modern psychological principles.

REYNOLDS: *So you would think it imperative that as soon as possible religious education should be abolished, and moral education, perhaps based on psychology, be put in its place?*

EYSENCK: I think it would be a good thing. Yes. But the really important thing is first of all to do the research you see. It's easy to say that psychology should be taking the place of religion. But first of all we must know before we can teach anything, because the really important thing at the moment is for the research to be done and financed and undertaken on a large enough scale to put up a proper alternative. Until that is done we can't really say an awful lot that is terribly useful, except in broad outline but this is not terribly specific.

REYNOLDS: *But, at the same time if it's established that psychology or whatever would be a good substitute, you're still going to run into opposition as the situation is at the moment, from religious people. They still have got power.*

EYSENCK: Yes, but I think that opposition is dying out very quickly. I think youngsters are almost universally disinterested in religion. I think in the next generation, you will suddenly find that there is practically no opposition left. There will be virtually nobody to defend religion.

REYNOLDS: *So you'd say that in twenty years time, there'll be virtually no religion?*

EYSENCK: I would be very surprised if you had any of the present religious power groups surviving then.

REYNOLDS: *That's just in Britain?*

EYSENCK: I think very much the same is true on the Continent, I don't know so much about America. They tend to be a bit odd about religion. I think probably there too, but I wouldn't be sure. I'm just talking about Great Britain really now. I'd be very surprised if there was any strong religious movement left. I think it's only older people who have any strong views on religion.

REYNOLDS: *Do you think there's any real threat from the new theologians, like John Robinson? Could they undermine the reason which seems to be prevailing?*

EYSENCK: I doubt it, because the real threat to a rational view of things is a strongly emotional kind of indoctrination, such as you had among the Jesuits, Puritans and so on. This is gradually dying out over the centuries. I don't think people like Robinson are likely to produce any such emotional reaction in people. People may mildly agree or disagree, but the only people who felt emotional about these pronouncements are people who are really religious, who felt that this is a sacrilege, and that this man is in fact undermining their beliefs. I don't think it will produce any great emotional backlash against humanism or rationalism or anything. It's just not that kind of teaching. It's far too academic, far too analytical, far too rational in itself to have any great effect.

REYNOLDS: *As reason becomes more and more prevalent, how do we avoid approaching a 1984 or a Brave New World?*

EYSENCK: *1984*, if you remember, was not a very rational world. It was not based on reason at all. *Brave New World* is rather more difficult. It's a different kind of proposition. I think the argument again is that it was not a rational world, except for one or two people who are allowed right at the top to exercise their reason. All the others are not. The kind of thing I'm proposing is that the state instead of indoctrinating everybody maximally, should indoctrinate them minimally and leave the largest possible field for individual differences in attitude and in personality and innate differences to emerge. I think this is where *Brave New World* as a biological picture breaks down, because it doesn't take into account the very large individual differences, which are genetic, which predetermine people in different directions and some presumably in mystical and religious directions, which I think a rationalist must take into account and must allow them to alleviate if they wish. Aldous Huxley seemed to be dealing with a lot of identical twins, all alike as two peas, and possibly if genetic engineering ever becomes possible, which certainly will be a very long time hence, then we may be in trouble, but at the moment I don't think this is a very likely danger.

The British Humanist Association, the Social Morality Council and Religious Education

The following letters have been received as a result of the editorial published on this subject two weeks ago (April 4).

AS CHAIRMAN of the Social Morality Council's Working Party on Moral and Religious Education on whose report you comment adversely, I hope you will allow me to correct misunderstandings and misrepresentations.

First, the behaviour of the BHA. All members of the Education Committee and all members of the Executive Committee had full copies of the report and time to study it. The Secretary of the Humanist Teachers' Association, who is a member of the BHA Education Committee, made his views fully known both to the Education Committee and in a memorandum circulated to members of the EC. They were taken fully into account in the discussions. No member of the EC was a member of the Working Party. The EC is elected by and answerable to the membership of the BHA and has the responsibility to act in such a case.

The WP separated moral education from RE in its discussions and in the report, and gave a separate head to relations between them. No member of the WP identified the two, or put moral education under RE. There was agreement that RE had a rightful, though not a privileged, place in county school education (1) because religion has had an important cultural role in the history of mankind, and (2) because understanding of the grounds for acceptance or rejection of beliefs about man's nature and destiny, discussions of such questions, and respect for other people's convictions are live interests highly relevant to contemporary education. RE in county schools was regarded by the WP as concerned with this whole area, and as wide open to discussion. It was suggested that a humanist, if professionally qualified, would be acceptable to Christians as head of an RE department. On primary schools, it was urged that a separate working party should be formed to give detailed attention to the different problems raised there; and steps are being taken to do this.

On worship, the WP did not lay down the law. They committed themselves to the statement that the present statutory requirement is indefensible; and suggested three possibilities, not saying at all that this is what should happen. The point about not opting out was merely the negative one that we did not want anything to take place in the county school of a kind that would warrant opting out. It was explicitly stated that the right to opt out must remain.

The importance of the report lies in the composition of the WP. Key persons from the educational sectors of the churches, including prominently the C of E and the RC, the chief RE inspector from the DES, the chairman of the RE Committee of the NUT, make it certain that the report will be treated with attention and respect. It goes further than anything has gone before,

and in the humanist direction; and the WP were unanimous and wholehearted in giving their signatures. Two pupils of different views (Christian and humanist) took an active part in the discussions. Perhaps the chief objection is that the report is likely to be effective.
H. J. BLACKHAM.

MR BLACKHAM has written to you to deal with your criticisms of the Report of the SMC Working Party, *Moral and Religious Education in County Schools*. In this respect I would only ask your readers to bear Mr Blackham's comments in mind as they read the Report, so that they can judge for themselves.

The main purpose of your leading article, however, is not to attack the Report, but to attack the BHA, and I should like to reply. Our executive Committee is democratically elected and therefore feels it has not only a right, but a duty, to try to speak for humanists in general on matters such as this one. Your talk about deviation from democratic practice is cant.

We did and do welcome the Report wholeheartedly; our items of clarification were needed precisely to combat misrepresentations of our point of view—which is perhaps why you failed to give the first one, preferring to dismiss it as 'too general to have any importance whatever'. I quote it for the information of your readers:

"While religious education on the open pattern advocated in the Report is important and has some relation—for historical if not logical reasons—to moral education, in our view it is moral education that is of vital importance for the future of society—indeed, of the human race. We would therefore draw particular attention to paragraphs 7-13 of the Report."

(These paragraphs deal with moral education in terms which are entirely humanist.) I submit that this doesn't fit with the picture you try to paint of us bending over backwards and 'selling humanists up (or down) a most obscure and ill-defined river.'

You find David Tribe's press release 'lucid'; he, apparently, didn't think it worth sending to us. It seems, as quoted by you, rambling and tendentious; for example, as a substitute for real argument about the value of school assemblies it drags in a red-herring like the American saluting of the flag. It tries to twist the encouragement of 'sympathetic understanding of a religious approach to life' into the admiration of superstitious, decadent or fanciful beliefs. The sort of sally best left to aunts.

You saw fit to call our aims into question; these are not in doubt—they were stated in *Religion in Schools* in 1967 and reiterated in last year's submission to the Department of Education and Science. They include the ending of indoctrination in county schools, the removal of the religious clauses of the 1944 Act, and the placing of a responsibility for moral education squarely upon the schools. We do not aim at the outlawing of religious education, which is why we welcome the Report's explicit rejection of indoctrination (para. 14). Your claim that religious education is intrinsically harmful is as ludicrous as your apparent belief that a loud enough blow on the trumpets will bring down the walls of the 1944 Act, and that all schools will thenceforth be forbidden to mention religion.

We are working realistically to get a change in the law, and believe there is a real shift of opinion in favour of this; but RE teachers will remain, some good, some bad, and the climate they work in will determine how they adapt to the new conditions. The importance of the Report for humanists is that it can influence this climate by its wide ranging agreement on the value of openness and toleration in this field.

You deny attempting to define a humanist, but I think that this is the issue between us. Is the humanist one who recognises the diversity of man and the range of his experiences (including religious ones) or has he to continue to assert his escape from the doctrinal fold, clasping to him his secular cloak to protect him from winds that are already dropping? The latter seems to me a pinched and miserable humanism, if it is one at all.

MICHAEL LINES,
General Secretary, British Humanist Association.

YOUR LEADER of April 4, "A Sell Out by the British Humanist Association", implies that any collaboration between Humanists and others is anathema unless the other identify totally with what Humanists think. I suggest that progress towards a creative convergence among ideologies concerned with human betterment—which is desperately needed today—cannot be achieved by adopting attitudes of rigid rightness, whether the group concerned is religious, rationalist, or political. The attitudes of Exclusive Brethren are no more productive among Humanists than among the religious.

I would also like to point out that we cannot ignore the religious impulse in man—the yearning to come to terms with the ultimates of existence. What we have to do is to educate it. To exclude all reference to it, as some rationalists seem to want, is much more likely to produce a regression to primitive superstition, or to the espousal of such pseudo-religions as scientology, than it is to lead to the extension of humanism. We have to let our children take

a critical look at all of it. We can then expect them to choose a modern perspective on "the ultimates" instead of the primitive alternatives.

JAMES HEMMING.

YOU STATE in your issue of April 4 that distribution of the Social Morality Council's Report on Moral and Religious Education is being undertaken by the BHA.

I should like to point out that distribution of this report has been undertaken by me by private arrangement with the Social Morality Council.

I do this at home in my spare time. As I work at the BHA and it is uncertain how long I shall be at my present address, orders are being sent to the BHA's address to make sure that none go astray.

SARAH SEYMOUR.

SOME OF THE CRITICISM made in your editorial (April 4) on the Social Morality Council's report on religious and moral education in county schools may be justified; the heading, 'A Sell Out by the British Humanist Association', is certainly not. The report is, of course, a compromise—but more than ninety per cent of the compromise is in our favour. The radio news items on it, stating that leading Christian and Jewish educationists had agreed with humanists that compulsory religion in schools was immoral, must have come as a salutary shock to many religious people and as tidings of comfort and joy to most secular humanists. Moreover, even before publication, it had made the Minister of Education turn his back on the barricades which he himself had erected only a year earlier.

If the BHA's press officer is indeed guilty of unhumanist activity in using the word "Humanists" instead of "BHA" in his press-release heading (though the text that followed clarified it), it is surely unhumanist to take so absolutist a "line" as your headline. Even if one has revolutionary aims, one can hardly be opposed to substantial reform on the way. Must we refuse to feed the hungry until all malnutrition everywhere is abolished?

BARBARA SMOKER.

YOUR EDITORIAL on the report of the Social Morality Council is a most welcome exposure of the dangers inherent in the BHA attitude. The Report is a perfect example of what happens when Humanists compromise with Christians: the Christians agree to use our ideas for part of the time, and in return the Humanists agree to let the Christians indoctrinate the children for most of the time.

Some Humanists seem to believe that the Christians have at last seen the error of their ways and wish to stop indoctrinating; such people point to the work of educationalists like Ronald Goldman and praise the new "enlightened" syllabuses.

The fact of the matter is that whilst the Christians may be changing their techniques and their syllabuses, their basic aim remains unchanged: they wish to condition the children to believe in God. As even the progressive Plowden Report on primary education states: "Children should not be taught to doubt before faith is established".

Humanists know that in many cases the traditional methods of Christian indoctrination are ineffective; Christians realise this too and we may be sure that they are applying the results of the best psychological research—e.g. the work of Jean Piaget and others—to their educational techniques in order to remedy this situation and to increase the number of believers.

The policy of conciliation as being practised by the BHA will not lead to the end of religious indoctrination. The most likely outcome of their attitude is that RI will be re-named 'Moral Education'—this will include not only Christian indoctrination, but also a ludicrous attempt to teach something of the other major world religions, and also some references to humanism. All this will be under the control of the RI department, and Humanists know on which aspects of such a syllabus the Christians will concentrate. Nor will there be any question of anyone opting out of this camouflaged religious indoctrination, as the Social Morality Council's Report makes clear: "This part of education cannot be optional".

It is in no way surprising to find James Hemming involved in this latest compromise. Humanists like Dr Hemming are being hood-winked by the Christians, who have been claiming humanist support for their improved techniques of indoctrination ever since 1964 when a group of Christians and Humanists (including the ubiquitous James Hemming) published their compromise pamphlet *Religious and Moral Education, Some Proposals for County Schools*.

At that time the Humanist Teachers' Association disassociated itself from that document and adopted David Tribe's excellent pamphlet *Religion and Ethics in Schools* as a policy statement. This pamphlet remains the best unequivocal statement of the genuine humanist standpoint on religion in schools. It is sad to see that the NSS and the HTA now stand alone in their opposition to religious indoctrination.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES.

LETTERS

Thomas Paine and the '98 Rebellion

I READ with considerable interest William McIlroy's sympathetic review of Thomas Pakenham's recent work on the uprising in Ireland in 1798. Of particular interest to me are the connections between certain of the Irish leaders and Thomas Paine.

To date there has been no detailed study of the considerable influence of Paine's works in Ireland, but that the government was alarmed can be seen in the subsidy given to anti-Paine works written by Hannah More and destined for distribution in Ireland. Several Irish publishers took advantage of the interest in Paine's works by publishing in several editions both his major and minor works, as I found when recently examining the card index of Indiana University's Lilly Library Paine holdings. In a book, the title of which escapes me at present as I cannot locate my copy, D. W. Brogan maintained that several Irish newspapers published Paine's *Rights of Man* in full.

Another item of interest, again little studied, is the connection between reformers and reform organisations in Ireland and Scotland. Thomas Muir, who in 1793 received a sentence of 14 years transportation for sedition, was charged with having, reading and causing others to do likewise, the works of Paine and addressing meetings, etc. A third charge against him related to his reading out at a gathering of Delegates in Scotland an Address from The Society of United Irishmen of Dublin. Muir, it seems, was a member of the United Irishmen and, as he said in court, proud of it. Among his private papers seized by the authorities were several publications of the United Irishmen and other material of Irish political interest.

Perhaps one day a comprehensive study of both Paine's influence in Ireland, and of the involved relationship between reform organisations in Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom, will be undertaken and published. Such a study is needed.

For those interested a list of papers, letters and pamphlets seized from Muir along with the full text of the United Irishmen's Address can be found in J. Robertson's *An Account of the Trial of Thomas Muir . . . for Sedition*, Edinburgh, 1793, pp. 144-147 and pp. 153-159. The Address alone can also be found as an appendix in P. Walsh's *The Life and Trial of Thomas Muir . . . One of the Celebrated Reformers of 1792-1793*. Rutherglen, 1919, pp. 89-93.

R. W. MORRELL,

Secretary, Thomas Paine Society.

Free Will and Choice

MR HALSTEAD'S evident belief that *people acting as if free will exists* is logically equivalent to *free will actually existing* is naive to say the least. And his largely irrelevant excursion into biology does nothing to show how randomness can co-exist with a situation in which (his own words) "*every phenomenon no matter how complex is causal in nature and ultimately can be reduced to the fundamental property of matter/energy*". Merely that we cannot predict a particular mutation does not mean that it is unpredictable in principle.

Similarly, that we cannot predict all human acts does not mean that a belief in determinism has no practical value. On the contrary it is very important to our social attitudes, e.g. in penal philosophy we adopt a constructive, scientific approach rather than simply use sterile talk about "wickedness" and "debts to society".

Determinism allows us to view man in a scientific spirit. Any other view is irrational and unproductive.

G. L. SIMONS.

Vietnam

THE MORAL ASSESSMENT of the Vietnam war has never been better stated than by G. L. Simons in his reply to Claud Watson and others; he concludes by writing that, if we support the USA in Vietnam, we are supporting the "*obscene, illegal onslaught of a large technological nation against a backward peasant one*". It is on this last point that I should like to elaborate, having had a report from a friend of mine, Dr Malcolm Segall, who returned from Vietnam just a few weeks ago.

The severe US bombing of North Vietnam has been switched to the South and stepped up; last year 1,200,000 tons of bombs were dropped on South Vietnam. It sounds a lot. When one realises that this was on an area about half the size of Britain, it sounds a hellish lot. When one realises that, by comparison, two million tons of bombs were dropped by the Allies on the Axis powers during the whole of World War II, it does sound obscene.

Dr Segall found evidence of deliberate bombing of hospitals, schools, reservoirs, dykes and other civilian targets in Vietnam. For instance, in Haiphong he saw bomb damage in the area of the Paediatric Annexe of the Vietnam/Czechoslovak Friendship Hospital, where one out-lying building was completely destroyed.

The whole bombing policy of the USA is an atrocity, designed to break the will of the Vietnamese. As increasing numbers of Americans are openly saying, it is morally wrong, and should be stopped. People in the NLF areas of South Vietnam live day and night underground, in order to avoid the bombing. So they miss the sunshine and fresh air, and their health is seriously suffering. They get malaria from the mosquitoes that breed in the rain-filled bomb craters. The children get rickets.

The American government's atrocity is clear. Having proved the point, what do we do? For some people a political course will appeal, *our* government should be urged to stop supporting the USA's war policy—the eventual peace that would result would end the suffering. Meanwhile, practical help can be sent to those Vietnamese who are suffering the most by sending money to the Medical Aid Committee for Vietnam (PO Box 100, 36 Wellington Street, London, WC2), the charity, whose aid goes to the NLF areas of South Vietnam and to North Vietnam.

Dr Segall returned from Vietnam with a list of priority medical supplies that are desperately needed there: antibiotics, anti-malarials, surgical instruments and such like. He also told me that the need is limitless. I hope that FREETHINKER readers of varying shades of opinion will respond.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

How not to get the most out of life

THE MONTHLY *Berkhamsted St Peter and All Saints Parochial Review* prints articles of general local interest as well as news of the two Churches. A local historian writes under the pen name Beorcham (Beorcham Stede) about our castle in its hey day—the place where William of Normandy was offered the Crown of England in 1066. The April number contains an amusing account of a day in the life of a pious Lady.

According to Beorcham, Edward IV granted the castle to his mother, Cicely Duchess of York in 1469. Cicely's Orders and Rules show that on rising at 7 o'clock she "hath redye her chapelyne to saye with her mattins of the daye and mattins of our lady; and when she is fully readye she hath a lowe masse in her chamber, and after masse she taketh somethinge to recreate nature; and so goeth to the chappell hearinge the devine service, and two low masses; from thence to dynner, during the tyme whereof she hath a lecture of holy matter".

After dinner Cicely gave audience for an hour 'to all such as hath any matter to shewe unto her'. Then she slept for a quarter of an hour and prayed until the first peal of evensong. After drinking 'wyne or ale at her pleasure' she said 'both evensonges' with her chaplain and after the last peal went to chapel to hear 'evensong by note'. Then she had supper during which she recited to all present 'the lecture that was had at dynner'.

But after supper things became much more permissive for then 'she disposeth herself to be famyliare with her gentlewomen and engages in honest myrthe. One howre before goinge to bed she taketh a cuppe of wyne and after that goeth to her pryvie closette, and taketh her leave of God for all nighte, makinge end of her prayers for that daye; and by eighte of the clock is in bedde. I trust to our lordes mercy that this noble Princess thus devideth the howers to his highe pleasure'.

It is reassuring to realise that had Cicely lived in our times she would almost certainly be referred to a psychiatrist by her GP.

ISOBEL GRAHAME.

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