

SEX EDUCATION: NEW NSS PAMPHLET KNOCKS THE PRUDES

"Not only is it, in my view, a 'good read', it contains many things that have long needed to be said", declared David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society, when he chaired a Press conference in London on Thursday. He was referring to the new NSS pamphlet: *Sex Education: the Erroneous Zone*, which has been published at 5s. Written by Maurice Hill and Michael Lloyd-Jones, with a foreword by Brigid Brophy, it makes a forthright attack on many of the misleading, and sometimes mischievous books on sex instruction which are used by teachers and others. Mr Tribe went on to say that for over a century the NSS has helped to promote humanitarian causes, civil liberties and law reform. He continued: "But perhaps our most valuable work—where our contribution can truly be described as unique—has been the chastisement of nonsense. If we have written more about religion than anything else down the years it isn't because we are 'God-botherers', but because this is the field where nonsense has most abounded. This is no mere academic point, for ideological nonsense has a way of leading to social disaster. Many of the areas where this is particularly true have traditionally been linked with religion. One is 'morality'. Another is sex". Brigid Brophy, Maurice Hill, Michael Lloyd-Jones and Martin Page (general secretary of the NSS) also spoke and answered questions.

Memories

Edward Blishen writes: I can't, in these columns, thank God for a lovely, lively, funny, humane, intelligent and generous pamphlet on sex education: so instead I'll thank Maurice Hill and Michael Lloyd-Jones. This is fair enough, since they wrote *Sex Education: The Erroneous Zone*. The fervour of my gratitude will be understood by any who, for review or some other purpose which requires actual reading, have looked at those pleasureless handbooks that appear from time to time, and which purport to give young readers advice and information on sexual matters. I've sometimes thought they can be very little read, by anybody: though a fairly ordinary memory of my own suggests that they may indeed be resorted to in circumstances of some anguish—when one is, so to speak, sexually hopping from foot to foot. The young lady unfortunate enough to be involved in my first experiment had, a few hours later, turned out to be strangely irritable. "I'm all tensed up, good sir", she'd said, "I'm like a bomb that hasn't gone off." (This was in wartime, and the simile had special force). Appalled, and suddenly suspicious that the novels I'd read had *not* told me all I needed to know, I rushed off and bought a handbook. It told me that making love was a most beautiful sequel to some shared emotional experience: for example, playing a duet on the piano. This left me to the rear of my previous position: I played the piano badly, and the young lady played it not at all.

Largely, as Messrs Hill and Lloyd-Jones suggest, these books are bought by parents and teachers and are handed out as a craven substitute for frank discussion. Their pamphlet looks closely at 42 such books—those "most commonly recommended". Only one are they able themselves to recommend, without reservations. In general, they say, these books are "inaccurate, misleading (in some cases deliberately deceitful) and almost invariably contain insidious moralising of the worst kind. They are often badly written, and badly produced by publishers who know that any production of this kind is snapped up by parents and teachers..."

Everything is all Right ...

The fun begins when they examine the various categories of inaccuracy, deceit, evasion and plain incompetence. It is distressing fun, of course. For example, Messrs Hill and Lloyd-Jones have isolated what they call "the *but* complex". Most of these books make a gesture towards the bare truth, but quickly clap to it the figleaf of a "but", and "however", or a "though". Examples here are drawn from the treatment of the topic of masturbation. This is harmless, common—but affects the masturbator "with the mentality of the slave and the lackey": is accompanied by "a general slackness of character which can of course be noticed by friends and masters": is a "bad, childish habit... leading to guilt and shame, secretiveness and swank". ("Swank" is beautiful—but could it be a misprint?) For the old lie that masturbation drives you mad they substitute the new lie that it makes you seedy, unpopular—in some dreary, inexplicit way, despicable. It's extraordinary, the unanimity with which these blind guides replace the genial facts of life with distressing fantasies. In this crooked fashion of theirs—the semblance of enlightenment being held in the foul embrace of actual benightedness—they trot out the old horror of homosexuality: they recreate the old, false alternatives of chastity and promiscuity. Everything is all right, so long as you don't actually do it. And so many of them, trying so desperately to mask old obscurantism with a new breeziness, are false to the simplest physiological and psychological truths. In a section headed "The Non-Facts of Life", Messrs Hill and Lloyd-Jones demonstrate that there is "frequently doubt about the location of the vagina". A doctor-writer endows the male with two scrota. Sperms were often said to arrive in "the tummy", giving rise to a fearful confusion between sexual activity and digestion. Often, plain lies are told: "Your eggs won't get fertilised until you are quite grown-up and have a husband". It's a fascinating, massive demonstration of the fact that those who are dogging one kind of honesty cannot avoid all manner of incidental falsehoods. The very style of writing is affected, very much as the eyes

of liars become shifty and words are stumbled over. And words thrust their double meanings through the surface, too. "Sex", Kenneth Barnes bombinates, "is much more concerned with the whole of a girl than it is with the whole of a boy." (Morecambe and Wise, please copy.) And what mischief swarmed up from the subconscious of the writer who said: "If a boy lets any of his friends know that he is taking a girl out for the first time, it may open the doors to a flood of 'cracks' from morning to night. If this has happened, he may well be feeling pretty sore . . ."

God and Lady Nature are enlisted to cover the plain and pleasant facts with mystery. And personification is drawn upon—another device that commonly marks the presence of embarrassment and the desire to avoid frankness. Thus we have sperms that are "very pleased indeed to find themselves right at the top of the vaginal passage".

Give Them the Facts

As the authors plead, the whole of this gloomy enterprise needs to be replaced by a single, simple aim: "to help children to see sexual experience for what it is—a normal and delightful aspect of human behaviour—and to enjoy it without guilt, fear or danger". "All we have to do is to stop telling young people not to do it." This should be the purpose of a course, in schools, which is not related to biology and certainly not to religious instruction and should be a shared responsibility. It should "give the children, at the appropriate age, all the physical facts of sexual development, puberty, stimulation, love-making, copulation, variations of sexual expression, conception, pregnancy, birth, contraception, abortion, diseases, and the various problems that young people may encounter as their bodies develop". How much more than pleasant good sense that is—how urgent a contribution to human health and happiness. Yet here are these commonly recommended books, nearly every one of which, under a surface of reasonableness, is filled with a censorious fear of our obvious physical and emotional make-up. Nearly all peddle shibboleths which Messrs Hill and Lloyd-Jones heap together under the heading "Sanctimonious Sanctions". Here

and there the NSS pamphlet offers specimens of the kind of advice the authors believe might be honestly helpful: always they include the blessed phrase: "We hope you enjoy it". They do this, splendidly, in the case of masturbation, addressing boys: in her foreword, Brigid Brophy provided a similar statement for girls. Miss Brophy points to the roots of all this evasiveness and plain lying: the writers of these handbooks are united in their deep wish to promote social conformism, and by an obvious fear that liberation in this vital field will lead to other disturbances and the grasping of other freedoms and facts elsewhere. (The phrase "the facts of life" is indeed a loaded one.)

No one can pretend that the enemies of truth and pleasure will be easily dislodged. Here they are, 41 to 1 in this corner alone. (The odd man out is W. B. Pomeroy, whose *Boys and Sex*, a recent Penguin, is "the best sex education book we have seen".) Teachers, not given to large-scale acknowledgement of sexual delight, will be hard to win. But meanwhile, here's a splendidly sane assault on our latterday obscurantists, and all the better for being so witty, so gay and so very intelligent.

I offer a final fantasy of my own, Mrs Thatcher, having read this pamphlet, distributes to all schools a text which is to hang in every staff room. It is taken from a section of the pamphlet entitled "The Real Alternative". "Sexual feelings", it says, "cannot be switched off by cold showers, or even by the flowing prose of writers of textbooks."

SEX EDUCATION — THE ERRONEOUS ZONE

MAURICE HILL and
MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

Foreword: BRIGID BROPHY

5s (plus 6d postage)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

A COMMENT ON FREEDOM OF CHOICE

CORLISS LAMONT

I was delighted that L. Beverley Halstead's review of my book *Freedom of Choice Affirmed* elicited several critical essays concerning the review and free will in general. However, some of the commentators have basically misunderstood my position.

This is particularly true in regard to my treatment of contingency (chance) and its relation to free choice in human beings. G. L. Simons claimed that contingency, as Dr Halstead and I have described it, "is in some strange way outside the realm of cause and effect". Quite to the contrary, I insist that limited contingency is always *within* that realm, and is as much a part of natural processes as its correlative and co-existent, limited determinism.

The Meaning of Chance

As Professor John H. Randall, Jnr., of Columbia University states:

The distinction between what occurs by chance and what does not is not a distinction between what has a cause and what has no cause; it is rather a distinction between two kinds of events, all of which have determinate causes. To occur "by chance"

means, not that there is no reason for the accident, but that factors, themselves determined by their own specific causes, do impinge on other processes, and alter and perhaps even destroy them, without being an essential part of those other processes, without belonging to their distinctive nature.

For instance, a rock falls on the acorn and distorts its growth, or a squirrel eats it, and it never sprouts. These events have no relevance to the process of growing into an oak tree; they are "chance" events, an instance of a process by "violence" from the outside.

My general definition of contingency is that it is "the causal and unpredictable intersection of two or more mutually independent and previously unrelated causal series". A good example is the fatal collision of the *Titanic* with an iceberg in the North Atlantic on 14 April, 1912. I believe that Mr Simons is perhaps confused about the situation because a contingent happening, which always takes place in the present, is usually causally explicable to a large extent *after* the event. It is then a part of history, and history can always be analysed in terms of cause and effect.

(Continued on back page)

CALLING THE VATICAN BLUFF

F. A. RIDLEY

The recent passage of the new Divorce Law by a narrow but significant majority in the Italian Senate undoubtedly represents an event of international significance. The passage into law of a long overdue reform in a land that until recently was still largely medieval in its social outlook, especially in questions relating to marriage and the family, constitutes the heaviest blow yet struck by the anti-clerical Italian forces on the Vatican's own doorstep, particularly since its outmoded sexual ethics rather more than even its theology appear to be the Achille's Heel of the Roman Catholic Church in contemporary society. I do not think that it is an exaggeration to describe the passing of the Italian Divorce Law as the most serious defeat the Papacy has experienced in Italy since the end of its Temporal Power a century ago.

The Vatican over Italy

A recent instructive article in *The Times* pointed out that when the Socialist Deputy Roberto Fortuna first introduced his Bill to legalise divorce he was actually making the 48th attempt since 1878 to introduce such a Bill into the Italian Parliament. The successive failures of his numerous predecessors were due primarily to the unremitting opposition of the Vatican, an institution traditionally domiciled upon Italian soil; headed and largely staffed by Italians, and currently exercising a vast influence upon all departments of Italian social, economic, cultural, and political life. Divorce in its proper secular sense of a legal dissolution of a previously legally contracted marriage has always been anathema to the Roman Catholic Church whose priests have always jealously safe-guarded their medieval stranglehold over what they have regarded as the key institutions of human society, marriage and the family.

This was particularly so in Italy. In 1929, the Vatican gained what then looked like a final victory with the aid of the ex-atheist Mussolini (author of the pamphlet *God Does Not Exist*). A special clause included in the 1929 Concordat between the Papacy and Fascist Italy, laid it down that no Italian marriage celebrated in any ecclesiastical building could thereafter be dissolved except by an ecclesiastical court operating exclusively under the provision of Catholic Canon Law, which of course did not recognise divorce in any proper secular sense of the word. So divorce constituted a breach of the 1929 Concordat; a Fascist law, but one accepted by all Italian Governments up to the present. Naturally, upon the inception of the present successful Bill, Pope Paul and the Catholic hierarchy worked unremittingly for its rejection.

Who Rules Italy ?

The present Bill was brought into the Chamber of Deputies and then the Senate, by a Coalition of the Communists, Socialists and Liberals. It was opposed by the Christian Democrats, the dominant party in the successive Coalition Governments of Rumor and Colombo, both Christian Democrats and Roman Catholics. The Christian Democratic Party was reconstituted after the fall of Fascism by the late Italian Prime Minister De Gasperi, a former Papal Librarian. The links between the Christian Democrats and the Vatican have always been close. However, their Left partners in the Coalition carried the Divorce Bill by a large majority in the Chamber of Deputies and a

small one (14) in the more conservative Senate. If matters take their normal course the Bill should become law at the end of this year. However, having invoked the Concordat in vain, the Vatican had still one ace up its sleeve: its political representatives could demand a popular Referendum on the Bill, if they obtained a sufficient number of signatures in favour of this. According to a recent article in *The Guardian* should such a Referendum have taken place the clericals were relying on the women's vote.

Trumping the Clerical Ace

The promoters of the Bill appear to have trumped this Vatican ace very adequately. Signor Fortuna has consistently posed the leading question: who rules Italy? Its democratically elected Parliament or the Papacy—a Sovereign State in Vatican City and therefore technically a foreign power even if the Pope himself happens to be an Italian?

If the Christian Democrats under presumed Vatican instructions should call a Referendum on the Divorce Bill, the promoters of the Bill would themselves call one on the whole question of the 1929 Concordat and the obvious infringements of national sovereignty that spring from it. Since this Concordat was the work of Mussolini who subsequently ruined Italy, obviously such a Referendum would put the Vatican in the most awkward position. In fact it has, for according to latest report, Pope Paul has accepted defeat—at least “until times do alter”. There will then apparently be no Referendum and the Bill will become law at the end of this year as scheduled. The old fox in the Vatican has been caught in his own net.

“Handcuffed for Eternity”

The Bill itself is a very modest measure. Divorce can only be granted after a marriage has broken down for from five to seven years. But obviously this is only the thin edge of the matrimonial wedge. As a speaker for the Bill announced, people ought not to have to enter marriage “handcuffed for eternity”. The need for such a measure is obviously great; some five million men, women and children (about ten per cent of Italy's population) are at present outside marriage and therefore outside the law. They are in Catholic jargon, either “living in sin”, or else illegitimate offspring of such illicit unions. Once the Bill is passed, no doubt other aspects of the “sexual revolution” of our time will appear in Italy, eventually including perhaps the whole institution of traditional marriage as a viable social institution under modern conditions.

Joining the Queue ?

Meanwhile, although only 30 per cent of the Italian people are regular churchgoers, most of them get married in church. These include many members of the powerful, traditionally anti-clerical Italian Communist Party. It will be very interesting to find out what proportion of these matrimonial converts to Holy Church, will now all subsequently revert to their previous anti-clericalism and join the long queue that will gather outside the Italian law courts on the day they first administer modern Italy's first secular divorce law.

FREETHINKER

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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 St., 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.

EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Salisbury Hotel, King's Road, Brighton. Saturday, 14 November, 6.30 p.m. for 7 p.m. Annual Dinner. Tickets 22s 6d in advance from C. W. Millard, 142 Western Road, Hurstpierpoint.

Humanist Holidays. Christmas House Party, Osborne Private Hotel, Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight, 23 to 28 December. Details from Mrs Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Leicester Secular Society. Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Sunday, 15 November, 6.30 p.m. Commander Edgar Young: "Lenin's Economics".

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8. Sunday, 15 November, 7.15 p.m. A meeting. Speaker: David Pollock.

Medical Aid for Vietnam. Hampstead Old Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, London, NW3. 13-15 November, 10 a.m.—10 p.m. Exhibition and sale of Contemporary Art.

South Place Ethical Society. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1. Sunday, 15 November, 11 a.m. Geoffrey Ashe: "The Apocalyptic Humanism of William Blake". Tuesday, 17 November, 7 p.m. Jean Straker: "The Humanist Nude".

MEMORIAL EDITION

WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Preface DAVID TRIBE

Introduction Professor ANTONY FLEW

PRICE 3/- (plus 6d postage)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

NEWS

NSS APPEAL

During the last four weeks a group of volunteers have been working during the evenings and weekends at the headquarters of the National Secular Society. They have been unpacking and cataloguing a large number of books, pamphlets and other material which was presented to the Society on the death of C. Bradlaugh Bonner, a grandson of Charles Bradlaugh.

A room on the first floor has been redecorated, and it is here that the Bradlaugh Collection will be housed. There will be an opening ceremony before the end of the year.

Despite the free services of Ian Hebdon, Christopher Morey, Kevin Page, Martin Page, Moira Kuebart, S. D. Kuebart and Eric Willoughby, the cost of decorating and furnishing the room is quite considerable. The Trustees of the National Secular Society have issued the following appeal:

"Thanks to the generosity of Mr Basil Bradlaugh Bonner, great-grandson of Charles Bradlaugh, MP, the National Secular Society has been donated a unique and immensely valuable Bradlaugh Collection. This Collection comprises many of the private papers, portraits, presentation scrolls, pamphlets, books, and other fascinating materials that belonged to Charles Bradlaugh and his family.

"Bradlaugh, who founded the National Secular Society in 1866, is today recognised as one of the great Victorians. He was—and remains—a symbolic figure in the long struggle against ignorance, superstition, injustice and inhumanity. The National Secular Society takes pride that it was—and remains—identified with the campaigns inaugurated and sustained by its founder. His name and influence live on—the only form of immortality of which we are aware. It is, therefore, in full recognition of the community's debt to Bradlaugh that we urge all those who are interested in British social history or concerned with the development of freethought and reform to give generously to this Appeal, so that the Bradlaugh Collection may be housed and maintained in a manner worthy of a great pioneer.

Donations, which will be acknowledged, should be sent to the National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

A NEW THREAT

Organisations like the Panacea Society, the Lord's Day Observance Society and the Victory Tract Club have been part of the British scene for so long that we have come to regard their daftness with amused indifference, even affection. But the United States seems to be a breeding ground for Christian groups which are so socially dangerous and nasty that their export to this and other countries can only be described as deplorable.

The Radio Church of God is such a body and has several thousand adherents in this country. Its programme seems to be a hotchpotch of Bible-based teachings reinforced with extremely Right-wing political ideas. Like the Exclusive Brethren it has caused much division and unhappiness in families. Its income is enormous. Members pay tithes ranging from 10 to 50 per cent of their income, and this enables the "church" to distribute, free of charge, six million copies of its glossy monthly magazine. It also pays

S AND NOTES

PUBLICATIONS

for over 200 radio broadcasts in the United States, and for full page advertisements in national publications. The financial and emotional pressure exerted on members certainly pays dividends.

Anti-religious organisations and journals are often accused of flogging a dead horse. It is true that the larger churches are declining in membership and influence. But this is happening in Britain mainly, and even here the more fundamentalist and reactionary sects are flourishing. In some respects they add to the gaiety of nations; but they also cause great unhappiness in a world where people are subjected to fears and pressures of all kinds.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Sir John Newsom, a former Director of Education and author of the Newsom Report, said recently that Catholic education was under fire "even from within the Church". He continued: "We must resist. If our Church fails then all fails . . . Catholic education is as much concerned with the Day of Judgement as with A- and O-levels, and that is a fearful responsibility".

Fortunately, a growing number of Catholic parents are beginning to take their responsibilities seriously. They are ignoring the teachings of the Church on such questions as "artificial" birth control. This will greatly improve the quality of Catholic family life, and Catholic parents (who are as anxious as non-Catholics to equip their children for a career and a full life) will want to send them to schools where they are likely to receive the best instruction in academic subjects. In many areas this will be a non-Catholic school.

They will have to face strong opposition from priests and Catholic teachers, but if the 1944 Education Act is amended so that RI and acts of worship are discontinued in State schools, Catholic parents will find it much easier to resist the pressure by obscurantists within their own Church.

WOMEN AND CHRISTIANITY

The Vatican document on liturgical reform makes it clear that women are not as equal as men in the one true Church. They may not serve at the altar, although they will be permitted to read from the Scriptures, say a prayer for a specific purpose and lead the singing. And they may perform such chores as greeting churchgoers at the door and collecting offerings.

In the United States the American Lutheran Church's decision to approve the ordination of women as ministers may cause a split. The extremely conservative Lutheran Church Missouri Synod is expected to rescind the pulpit and altar fellowship with the ALC. Before the ballot Dr Gerherd Belgum, one of the candidates for the ALC presidency—he was narrowly defeated—circulated a paper to delegates. In it were listed sections of the Bible which, he claimed, "proved that God in creation placed man in a position of authority over the rest of creation, including women". No nonsense in the good book about women's liberation!

TITLE	AUTHOR	Price	Post
Rebel Pity: The Life of Eddie Roux	Eddie and Win Roux	45/0	2/0
RI and Surveys	Maurice Hill	1/0	4d
Religion and Ethics in Schools	David Tribe	1/6	4d
Religious Education in State Schools	Brigid Brophy	2/6	4d
Ten Non Commandments	Ronald Fletcher	2/6	4d
The Cost of Church Schools	David Tribe	4/0	6d
A History of Sex	G. L. Simons	9/0	1/0
Humanism, Christianity and Sex	David Tribe	6d	4d
103: History of a House	Elizabeth Collins	1/0	4d
Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare	David Tribe	2/0	4d
The Necessity of Atheism	Percy Bysshe Shelley	1/6	4d
The Secular Responsibility	Marghanita Laski	2/0	4d
The Nun Who Lived Again	Phyllis Graham	6d	4d
An Analysis of Christian Origins	George Ory	2/6	4d
New Thinking on War and Peace	A. C. Thompson	1/0	4d
A Humanist Glossary	Robin Odell and Tom Barfield	3/6	6d
The Vatican Versus Mankind	Adrian Pigott	4/0	1/4
Evolution of the Papacy	F. A. Ridley	1/0	4d
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James Maxton and British Socialism	V. S. Anand and F. A. Ridley	4/0	6d
The Bible Handbook	G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball	7/6	1/2
What Humanism is About	Kit Mouat	10/6	1/6
The Humanist Revolution	Hector Hawton	10/6	1/6
Pioneers of Social Change	E. Royston Pike	10/6	1/6
The Golden Bough	J. G. Frazer	20/0	2/6
Religion in Secular Society	Bryan Wilson	15/0	1/3
The Humanist Outlook	Various	35/0	2/2
100 Years of Freethought	David Tribe	42/0	2/2
Catholic Terror Today	Avro Manhattan	12/6	1/6
Materialism Restated	Chapman Cohen	5/0	1/4
The Martyrdom of Man	Winwood Reade	10/6	1/9
Morality Without God	Chapman Cohen	6d	4d
Catholic Imperialism and World Freedom (secondhand)	Avro Manhattan	15/0	2/2
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The Dead Sea Scrolls	John Allegro	5/0	1/0
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Rights of Man (paper)	Thomas Paine	7/0	1/4
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The Hanging Question	Edited by Louis Blom-Cooper	15/0	1/0
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Thomas Paine	Chapman Cohen	1/0	5d
Morals Without Religion	Margaret Knight	18/0	1/2
The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism	Bertrand Russell	6/0	1/0
Why I am Not a Christian	Bertrand Russell	3/0	6d
Impact of Science on Society	Bertrand Russell	6/0	1/0
Mysticism and Logic	Bertrand Russell	6/0	1/0
Authority and the Individual	Bertrand Russell	7/0	1/0
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The Conquest of Happiness	Bertrand Russell	9/0	1/2
Marriage and Morals	Bertrand Russell	8/0	1/2
Bertrand Russell's Best	Edited by Robert E. Egner	15/0	1/6
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BOOKS

REVOLT INTO STYLE by George Melly

Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 50s.

In the past a man might turn to religion as the only available source of pageantry and incident; but today we have Pop Culture which teaches people to find the pageant in their own environment, to appreciate (say) the visuals of petrol pumps, which lays on the music to be used rather than to be listened to, which issues passports to the country of "Now". For the essence of Pop is the instant success, rather than personal style and meaning, the living in the present as the real heaven of beautiful people and their fantasies.

Right? Then let's all join in? But there's the rub. Pop is tied to the young, its glory and its tragedy of age-limit making it something incapable of development after a certain point. It is not foolish then to fear that it may be followed by a wave of Puritanism, for the repressive have an opportunity to move in while the beautiful people are being phased out and before the next revolt can be formalised.

But what is Pop Art? Why should we think it has virtue in its own rights and wrongs, this culture based on a rising standard of living? Those who want to know can have no better guide than George Melly. He was really in the scene of the '60's, when "swinging London" had significance as a caricature of traditional capitalism.

OSWELL BLAKESTON

WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM ?

by Norman Mailer. Panther Books, 6s.

The Confessions of a Justified Sinner (reviewed in the *Freethinker*, 7 November) owes much of its unique flavour and power to the high originality and skill with which James Hogg manipulates what Henry James called "the accursed autobiographic form" and even the "darkest abyss of romance". Such qualms did not of course prevent James himself from frequently and eagerly exploring the abyss, though what he brought up did not always satisfy him, nor have they deterred Norman Mailer, whose last two novels, *The American Dream* and *Why are we in Vietnam ?* are both narrated by their central characters. *Why are we in Vietnam?* is in particular an intended and achieved tour de force in this medium. The hero is a Texan adolescent well equipped with the problems and obsessions considered natural to his age and country, but equipped too with a brilliant verbal style which belongs only to Mr Mailer. Most of his narrative concerns an expedition to Alaska with his father and his best friend in pursuit of two or perhaps only one of America's proudest myths, the grizzly bear and the virility principle. The book bristles with observation and fancy and if it appears to answer the question of the title inadequately if at all, this does not impair the rich enjoyment of its effect. But that it is so enjoyable is something it owes mainly to Mailer's success in finding and sustaining such a remarkable and individual voice for DJ, the narrator; which, paradoxically, also seems the greatest potential source of weakness. Although DJ's language has the compression, the flexibility and the polished vigour of poetry, it is in reality a highly sophisticated and self-conscious pastiche, combining quite disparate modes of expression in a coherent style. It makes use of the kind

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of expressions and much repeated swear words that DJ's living equivalents might be presumed to use, but in a context of literary allusion and high articulateness which would make them superfluous. All of which raises doubts (encouraged actively by DJ) about the reality of the events he reports and above all about his actual identity with the character he claims to be, which, while it increases the enjoyment of the book read as a sort of intellectual game, inevitably diminishes the emotional significance of the events it describes for the reader. If DJ's world is not a real one even perhaps to himself, it may well appear to lose some of its authority as an insight into the consciousness of a real society. It might of course be the case that Mailer did not intend DJ's narrative as a commentary on the values and obsessions of contemporary America, but if so his choice of title seems unaccountably perverse. It is perhaps more likely that he is yet another honourable victim of "the terrible fluidity" of the "darkest abyss". But the compensations for this apparent failure are certainly rich: the interview evoked by DJ between his mother and her psychiatrist, episodes on the hunting expedition and especially the scene where DJ, after 100 pages of cocksure sexual reference, finds himself too gauche and timid to make any use of his one opportunity for a homosexual advance to his friend; these and much else are wittily and brilliantly done.

TONY HALLIDAY

DRUG ADDICTION IN BRITAIN

by Sean O'Callaghan. Robert Hale, 35s.

Today we are used to "instant books" on the "great issues of the day". Though most of *Drug Addiction in Britain* could have been written—and much of it may have been written—a few years ago, it has the breathless style and evidence of skimmed scholarship of the modern instant book. A lot of it consists of extended quotations from obvious sources and interviews with addicts, none of whose stories the author has checked up on to establish an authentic case history, and too few in number to offer a statistical picture of either hippy folklore or the extent of drug addiction. The sections on pharmacology and drugs legislation are decidedly shaky and, though advertised as something of an undercover man in exotic places, the author has in London accepted those who announce an altruistic concern for addicts at their own face value. Where, one wonders, and on what is his typewriter now bouncing away?

According to the blurb he is "staggered by the apathy with which drug addiction is still regarded in Britain". According to the figures—and he is unable to produce anything worse than the Vere Institute prognosis of 1967—one might instead say that, compared with other social problems, this one has provoked a conspicuous hysteria. I don't wish to underestimate the tragedies involved, but only the preservation of a sense of balance will persuade those at risk to exercise forethought. I'm not a member of the pot lobby—not anyway till there is some weed equivalent to the breathalyser—and haven't smoked it myself, but I'm quite convinced that Mr O'Callaghan's lurid account of the horrors of hash will cause derision among all partakers of the odd joint and perhaps make them dismiss with the same scorn his warnings about heroin, which

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is another thing entirely. The author has however redeemed himself from the conventional middle-aged, middle-class attitude by including alcoholism among the "drug addictions", though he hasn't included tobacco.

With engaging frankness he quotes an addict who slates his earlier writings on the grounds of inaccurate sensationalism (not of his own invention but that of his informants), and the suspicion arises that he has little hard evidence for his present allegation that the Mafia is in charge of the dope-rings in Britain as they would seem to

be in America. When I was investigating the drug problem three years ago I came to the conclusion that amateur or semi-professional operations at a far lower level were then sustaining the traffic, and I doubt if the position has changed much since. Indeed some social workers suggest that in Britain the "drugs scene" is already, at least for the moment, on the way out (to be replaced by mysticism, nudity or "aggros" according to taste). And the closing down of certain casinos, where big-time crooks were able to exchange "hot" money lawfully, cannot have improved the Mafia's prospects. Nevertheless there is much sense in the author's incidental observations and the addicts' stories he recounts are at least racy. Perhaps for that reason, and certainly for others, his book is unlikely to fulfil the educational role claimed for it.

DAVID TRIBE

TELEVISION: GIELGUD AND OSBORNE

PETER COTES

Sir John Gielgud co-ordinated a Shakespearean entertainment, *Hamlet Revisited* (BBC-2) like the assured, elder statesman actor he is. He knows the play, and narrated as well as spoke the great speeches with a fine flourish and regard for the job in hand. We were in a playhouse for the time that he was on; only his supporting cast of contemporary Hamlets and pretentious directors, intent upon analysing the unanalysable with their wafflings and self-importance, upset the balance of the programme. However, when the nonsense grew too horrendous we were mercifully cut back to the one genuine Hamlet on the scene. It was the misfortune of this viewer to have to listen to so much bunk uttered by a supporting cast, who could have as easily been discussing *Up in Mabel's Room* or *Getting Gertie's Garter* as the Prince of Denmark. This self-conscious dwelling on the second-rate when the first-rate was available, together with a self-indulgent production showing the main actor entering and leaving a theatre as though treading on coals of fire, made this a narrow miss when it could easily have been a winner all the way. Later, on the same channel, playwright John Osborne was to make some apt and unpretentious remarks about acting and writing for television, scotching the fallacious notion currently held in trendy circles, that any scribbler or first year drama student can, given the even breaks, "make it" on the box. It's true, of course, that they do get the chances. It is equally true that many of those who are constantly being exposed to the gaze of the masses have no qualifications whatsoever, any more than the writers who have never bothered to learn their craft. Their masters and employers, all too frequently having little discernment or taste, and frequently a positive aversion to professionalism, offload such "writers" and "actors" on their captive public. I suspect the truth is as Osborne saw it; there's precious little real television talent around today. Only much that passes as talent. It's always been a scarce commodity, but never more so than at the moment. One warmed to Osborne, at the same time sympathising with him in his plight in being badly interviewed in this particular *Late-night Line-up* programme. Despite the title *Angry Young Man*—a gimmick if ever there was one—Osborne, no longer "young" and containing what "anger" he possessed admirably under the circumstances, which I would have found provoking, was subjected to a barrage of childish questions unsuited to his stature as a writer and a social thinker of consequence. Most sensible people know his viewpoint about a great many things, but once

again he had to "explain" himself. Osborne is not a particularly good interviewee at the best of times. He's possibly a shade too thoughtful for that pat glibness that on-the-spot reporters demand. However, he is a patently honest witness with a modest personality, prepared to go on record as saying that much of today's youthful behaviour is both brutal and brutish; that there is an absence of kindness and gentleness in human relationships which he finds depressing; that life today had most certainly not sent *him* further to the Right politically. But not once did Osborne evince that impatience with the questioning that he could justifiably have done; not even when he was asked facetiously what he would feel about having a statue erected to him in Sloane Square, because of that historic first production of *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court Theatre having revolutionised the English theatre in the 1950s. The playwright look pained. But still that chitter-chatterer went on; embarrassing his "victim" surely and, I suspect, more than one viewer. Certainly only a man true to himself and faithful to a rational viewpoint, held in a liberal fashion down the years, could risk having meaning misinterpreted and honest opinions garbled, albeit unwittingly, in the manner that John Osborne did on this occasion.

The television production of Osborne's new play *The Right Prospectus* which was the ostensible reason for his appearance in *Late-night Line-up* was barely discussed; I don't know if it was a shining masterpiece or a dismal flop. (I was watching the Gielgud programme when *The Right Prospectus* was transmitted, cursing those BBC "planners" for this unnecessary clash of two important items.) But I do know Osborne deserved better than he got, the play being skated over and once again we were treated to the trotting forth of that telly "personality cult". In this case only one "personality" was evident in the duologue, and that was the interviewer rather than the talented interviewee. A pity.

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LETTERS

The Sanctity of Life

I wish to deal with the points raised by Diane Munday, general secretary of the Abortion Law Reform Association (*Freethinker*, 31 October).

1. Mrs Munday appears to be saying that as we do not "pontificate on the 'sanctity of human life'" when we cut a finger, equally it is inappropriate to do so when we kill an unborn child. This, of course, begs the question. In my booklet, I urged that any coherent definition of a human person, applied equally to an unborn child. Furthermore, after twelve weeks or so, an unborn child not only is a child, but even looks like one.

It is true that we do not "pontificate about the sanctity of life" when we cut a man's finger. We should, perhaps, do so when someone proposes to cut his throat. It is interesting, incidentally, that Mrs Munday should scornfully place "sanctity of human life" in inverted commas. I would have thought that the history of the last 30 years was hardly such that we could afford to treat such phrases with derision.

2. So far as the reality of the unborn child's humanity is concerned, I repeat the question I asked in my booklet: In what sense is an unborn child only "potential" in a way that a newly born baby, a school child or an adolescent is not. We are all "potential" in the sense that we change from day to day and our bodily cells grow older and decay.

3. Mrs Munday seems to say that the doctor who recounted the history of the unborn child in the bucket is a fool or a liar. Likewise, we are to take the *British Medical Journal's* leader about the admissions to hospital of women with pelvic cancer being delayed because of abortion operations, "with the same sized pinch of salt as it is necessary to take many of RCOG's other statements". I direct your readers to the 1968/69 Annual Report of ALRA. Here, the opponents of abortion are condemned for "discrediting the good name of the Medical Profession". Dear me!

The Luton baby is of course, by no means the only gruesome occurrence to have come to light since the 1967 Act came into operation. Doctors have told me personally of similar incidents. But I was forgetting—you can't believe a word these medical men say.

4. Mrs Munday makes the statement that the unborn child who cried must have been viable and that, therefore, the abortion concerned was in breach of the Law and should have been reported. I can hardly believe that Mrs Munday is so naïve as to believe that an appalling number of abortions now taking place are not of viable children. Apart from this, there is a proviso to the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, which explicitly permits the killing of even a viable child, in certain circumstances.

5. Once again, I will simply repeat that I do not accept statistics on faith, though I appreciate the temptation to swallow figures which appear to provide useful propaganda. Again, I repeat that even if it were shown that the number of illegal abortions in the past in any way resembled the sort of figure Mrs Munday and others like to bandy about, this would not provide justification for the deliberate, legalised destruction of even one human being. There were, of course, pogroms in Eastern Europe before 1930, but I suppose it would strike most people as odd to say that Hitler did nothing wrong as he simply put the exterminations on a regular and legal basis.

6. I did indeed write to Mrs Munday in 1968—to find out what her Association had to say for itself. In my naïveté, I simply like to hear both sides to a question. I wondered then if ALRA had any good arguments. I am still waiting to hear them.

MARTIN MEARS, *General Secretary, LIFE.*

Some readers may be wondering whether obstruction to humane and rational abortion laws comes only in the shape of an uncertain god or in the form of certain Members of Parliament. Be that as it may, from Mrs Diane Munday (*Freethinker*, 31 October) comes a humane and rational reminder that "unfortunately" there are "only two real alternatives today". From such a viewpoint there follows the educational responsibility to work for the elimination of "conflict" between "the potential" and the "the fully developed". Alas, even here, the gods are obstructive.

CHARLES BYASS.

(Continued from page 362)

Contingency and Determinism

It is a bit odd that Mr Simons, who continually cites science and scientific law to support his determinism, does not see that the existence of contingency is implied in every *if-then* deterministic law that men discover and utilise. For the very meaning of *if* as a conditional conjunction involves contingency. A natural law does not take effect unless a contingent event comes into play as the *if* factor.

Again, Mr Simons appears unscientific to me in his stressing that *in principle* "A total description of a person's mentality . . . would allow a prediction to be made as to choice in any conceivable circumstance". But then he at once concedes that "this is not a *practical* possibility" and so admits that all-inclusive determinism can never be scientifically proved.

Ian Gordon Wilson stated that I seem to imply that "the existence of free-will follows on from a demonstration of the existence of contingency". However, what I say in my book (p 62) is that contingency merely *makes possible* freedom of choice, without guaranteeing its actualisation. "Contingency", I assert, "was a reality in the cosmos during millions and billions of years before the race of man evolved; yet there was no free choice, because there were no intelligent beings who could take advantage of the openings presented by contingency." Thinking man is able to reflect upon the alternate or plural potentialities created by contingency and to freely choose one to actualise.

There are many other points in stimulating discussion of free choice that I do not have the space to cover. So finally let me just say that I concur in general with one writer's suggestion that more attention should be given to the individual's direct, immediate and powerful experience of freedom of choice. In attempting to show this experience to be an illusion, the determinists remind me of Christian Scientists who claim that pain is not real, and the Hegelian Idealists who assert that all matter is essentially mind. In short, there is something terribly artificial in the position of the determinists, and we must insist that in this continuing philosophic argument the burden of proof is on them.

European Conservation Year, 1970

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