

# The FREETHINKER

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## CAUSE FOR CONCERN: PAULINE JONES

The refusal of the Home Secretary to release Pauline Jones, sentenced to 21 months' imprisonment for kidnapping the baby Denise Weller, is now causing almost as much public concern as that felt by many people whose hearts went out to the Weller family during the tragic and agonising weeks when the police were scouring the country looking for the missing child. In prison Miss Jones had the privilege of being visited by a "distinguished and anonymous psychiatrist" (male or female, one wonders?) who opined that the prisoner was not suffering from "a severe psychiatric disorder which requires hospital treatment"; that she was not medically unfit for imprisonment; that any psychiatric attention she needed would be available in prison; and that the best form of treatment would be to encourage her to turn her mind to a future normal life, and try to qualify for parole. The current publicity had, *of course*, been the harmful factor.

What utter, heartless and damnable cant!

This poor young woman has been through an experience which has entailed suffering enough for two people's lifetimes. Forsaken by a philandering fiancé she then loses the baby she was expecting, and presumably wanted. In her distraction and grief, doubtless exacerbated by the powerful hormone surges that can follow both miscarriages and natural births, she takes another woman's baby and retreats with it into an introverted phantasy-world. Had she had a prompt legal abortion, or had her baby and palmed it off on to an adoption society, she would have been patted on the head by social workers; had she committed infanticide she would probably have been put on probation; but no, she had an overpowering maternal impulse and took another's child, as in nature a wild creature will when suddenly deprived of its young. And so she is sent to prison: what for? In the imbecilic hope that this will deter another desperate young woman from doing the same thing? Or just for the sake of public retribution?

The ultimate obscenity in this whole issue is that around the time when Pauline Jones was sent to prison (originally for three years) a man was sentenced to a much shorter term in jail for beating up a baby so badly that the child will be mentally impaired for the rest of its life. In contrast, Denise Weller is now alive, gurgling and well in her mother's arms.

What Pauline Jones presumably needs is to be removed from a harsh, dreary prison routine to somewhere where she can have complete rest and peace, and where she can be discreetly supervised (she has threatened to take her own life) and receive, over a period of months, intensive and loving care. Demonstrations are planned for 15 January in London, Manchester, Hull, York and Bristol to protest against Miss Jones's continuing imprisonment. It is to be hoped that by the time that this number of *The Freethinker* is published they will no longer be necessary.

## PRISON RATHER THAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Despite the fact that they have renounced the Catholic Faith, a Staffordshire couple, Mr and Mrs Bernard Greatrix, of Rugeley, have been ordered by the Secretary for Education to send their 11-year-old son, Stephen, to a Catholic secondary school, the Cardinal Griffin School, Cannock.

Stephen originally attended St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Rugeley, but the Greatrixes wanted his secondary education carried out nearer home and under non-denominational auspices. After taking him to Aelfgar Comprehensive School, Rugeley, for five weeks, and being repeatedly turned away, the parents renounced the Catholic religion and informed the County Council of their having done so. Nevertheless, the Department of Education and Science, in the person of Mrs Thatcher, has upheld the Council's ruling on the grounds that the Greatrixes would involve the authority in "unreasonable public expense" if Stephen went to school in Rugeley, though the Cardinal Griffin school is six miles away.

The decision makes no difference, Mrs Jane Greatrix has said. "We are determined that Stephen will go to the local school. We are quite prepared to go to prison if we have to."

Once again sectarian education, and the 1944 Education Act, upon which it feeds, are interfering with people's lives, freedom and reasonable exercise of choice. This time the Greatrix family may well find that their are not the only voices raised against the system. Good luck to them!



## DID JESUS EXIST? Part 1 ★

G. A. WELLS

Mr Hinchliff has argued, against the thesis of my recent book *The Jesus of the Early Christians*, that "the origins of Christianity make most sense with an historical Jesus". He finds that my book relies too heavily on arguments from silence, and he says that because there are so few references to Jesus' crucifixion under Pilate in Jewish, pagan, and even in the earliest Christian literature, it does not follow that no such event occurred. With this I agree, and I reply that, like most of my critics, he has exaggerated my dependence on silence. The very earliest Christian documents not only fail to suggest that Jesus lived on earth in the then recent past, and say almost nothing of his human biography, but they also represent him as a divine personage. These earliest documents do not include the gospels, which were all written after AD 70—in my view up to thirty or forty years afterwards. But they do include the principal Pauline letters (dated by general consent at about AD 60) and certain other epistles in and outside the New Testament. Paul does not suggest that Jesus worked any miracles or delivered any of the ethical teachings familiar to us from the gospels, nor does he say anything about clashes between Jesus and Jewish or Roman authorities, but instead describes him in such terms as "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for in him were all things created".

### Cult of Living Persons Short-Lived

Let me press the implications of these facts for the problem of Christian origins. If Jesus really lived on earth between AD 1 and AD 30, he was either a divine personage or merely a man. If his divinity be accepted, then there is indeed no problem in accepting that he founded a religion in which he himself came to be worshipped as the Saviour God who takes away the sins of the world. If however, he existed as a mere man, then the supposition that a human being could have become such an object of worship within a few decades of his death is without parallel. Men who demanded or received divine honours in or near their lifetime have never founded cults which persisted. They were mostly men of considerable political or military influence (e.g. the Pharaohs, Lysander, Alexander the Great and his successors) whose cults did not long survive their own political power. Gibbon notes that the same is true of the deified Caesars. Mortals who were deified long after their death (e.g. Imhotep, 2,500 years after, and Appollonius of Tyana, 200 years after) cannot be regarded as true parallels to a human Jesus who was immediately hailed as a saviour god. Greek lore includes "heroes" (e.g. Hercules, Asklepios) who may have been originally regarded as mortal men and later deified, or who were originally considered as divine and later provided with human biographies. In neither case is it likely that they ever really existed, and the period in which they were extensively worshipped is much later than their supposed lifetime. Asklepios, for instance, figures in Homer as a skilful physician whose sons were doctors in the Greek camp before Troy. Only centuries later was he widely worshipped as a saviour god.

Paul must have envisaged Jesus' to earth to suffer, die and rise again, as having occurred later than the reign of King David, from whom he says Jesus, as man, was descended. But there are many centuries between

David and Pilate, and it is quite possible that Paul had no clear idea of when Jesus suffered on earth, any more than the worshippers of the pagan saviour gods of the time knew when it was that these deities underwent a like fate. This tentative conclusion from Paul's silence can be strengthened by further positive evidence. If Jesus had lived in the first century, Paul would presumably have heard of him from contemporary reports. But he expressly alleges that he did not learn about Jesus in this way. He says that his knowledge came from "revelation", from the trances and visions to which he was prone, and which "revealed" Jesus to him as a "mystery". His references to Jesus are in the language of mysticism, of which the use of prepositions is symptomatic: in Christ, unto Christ, through Christ, to Christ—suggesting some indescribable relation between Christ and himself.

What has to be explained if we are to understand early Christianity is not the fabulous biographies of the gospels, but the much earlier and truly historical conviction of Paul (who never saw Jesus alive) that Jesus, risen from the dead, had recently appeared to him. Of relevance here is the fact that such divine appearances were by no means unknown in the rival faith of Paul's day. Dr R. E. Witt, in his *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World* has noted that initiation into the pagan mystery religions involved "a personal meeting with the god" and that Isis afforded "comfort through visions". Paul's visions thus seem to represent a psychological experience not uncommon in his time. Pagans and Christians alike were then seeking knowledge (*gnosis*) and wisdom (*sophia*) as mysteries revealed to an uncritical faith which stamped doubt as a vice. This faith was not so much belief in certain propositions as faith, confidence or trust in a person, in a god. He need not be visibly present. His presence must be felt. To certain mystical temperaments this kind of feeling may be very strong.

### Paul's Motives and Their Basis

Mr Hinchliff points out that the parallels between Paul's faith and the pagan mystery religions do not include the crucifixion of the god. But the lack of precedent does not necessarily mean that Paul's "Christ crucified" must refer to a recent historical Roman crucifixion. A crucified person is, according to the Jewish law, accursed, and Mr Hinchliff imputes to me the view that Paul "more or less invented" the crucifixion in order to free gentile Christians from the burden of keeping the Jewish law. In fact I nowhere ascribe such a motive to Paul, nor do I envisage him as consciously and cold-bloodedly inventing the crucifixion of his Jesus, whether for the purpose of dishing the Jews or for any other end. I would explain Paul's basis for preaching "Christ crucified" as follows.

Such men as Paul (or whoever were the real founders of Christianity) lived in a world of pagan and Jewish sects, and the confrontation of innumerable distinct systems of

(Continued on back page)

\* This is the first of a two-part answer by Professor Wells to Philip Hinchliff's "The Logic of New Testament Criticism" (*Freethinker*, 20 November 1971). Mr Hinchliff will then make a joint reply to this and to Robert W. Morrell's "Christianity and Nero's Rome" (18 December 1971).



# HERBERT PAUL: A GLADSTONIAN DISCIPLE

ERIC GLASGOW

In its bare political outlines, there is little that is particularly outstanding or stimulating, about the life of Herbert Paul (1853-1935): a product of Eton and Corpus Christi College, Oxford, he was the Liberal MP for South Edinburgh (1892-5) and Northampton (1906-9), and he served as the Second Civil Service Commissioner (1909-18). Politically, he was always a devout follower of Gladstone, and it was perhaps because of that overshadowing and luminous comparison that, as a speaker, he never shone in the House of Commons. His equipment was good for those strenuous and exacerbating Parliamentary purposes for he had been the President of the Oxford Union (1875), and in 1878 he was called to the bar by Lincoln's Inn; but today, and especially within the limited context of this present essay, he is certainly better remembered for his sustained and surviving literary work, a good deal of which merits more attention than it generally receives now from the average British reader.

## Freedom and Respect for Justice

Besides producing many thoughtful and apposite leaders for the *Daily News* Herbert Paul also turned out a profusion of quite solid books, all of them bearing upon British history or literature, and all of them, too, indelibly permeated by his stout support of traditional British liberalism: "His watchwords are constitutional freedom and respect for civil justice, and he sometimes gives the impression that he is still fighting the battles of 1832 or even 1688".<sup>1</sup> It was in such a spirit, too, that he wrote a firm if also rather superficial defence of Macaulay, whose historical outlook he broadly followed, even to the extent of ignoring the importance of the economic factor in the evolving fate of England. For that reason, although one may still read, with much pleasure and profit, Herbert Paul's *History of Modern England*, in all its five daunting and magisterial volumes, one cannot rely upon its lucid, lapidary prose, or its well-modulated and regular periods, to reveal much of the deeper factors which formed and transformed the English society up to the first decade of the twentieth century.

"The Annual Register tempered by epigrams" is how that *History* has been described.<sup>2</sup> It is a fair criticism, and one, too, which is true of the general character of most of political and historical analysis by Herbert Paul; perhaps, also, of most of the writings of that strong tradition of British liberalism which Herbert Paul so exactly represented. Nevertheless, and only partly as curious survivals from the years before the "Strange Death of Liberal England", it is worthwhile to seek out and to read many of Herbert Paul's works.

His voluminous *History* (of 1904-1906) may be too solid and heavy, for other than occasional reference; but, besides it, we have his *Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (1901), his *Matthew Arnold* (1902), his *Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone* (1904), and his *Life of Froude* (1905). All of those books are still characterised by a very welcome and illuminating measure of urbanity and assurance; and Herbert Paul could be witty, too, as when he termed the over-long biography of Charles Lamb, by E. V. Lucas (2 vols., 1905), "the methodical annals of a non-methodical life".<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps, indeed, it is for his literary criticism, rather than for the large and more barren reaches of his ostensibly political history, that Herbert Paul is better to be remembered and assimilated. At any rate, it would be a pity to permit the greater fame, as an essayist, of his contemporary, E. V. Lucas (1868-1938), to obscure, for us today, the abiding appeal and value of Herbert Paul's own two slim collections of essays—his *Men and Letters* (1901) and his *Stray Leaves* (1906). As the *Dictionary of National Biography* so rightly affirms, these are books which continue to provide "conclusive evidence of the breadth and variety of his knowledge", and the latter of the pair contains two interesting and scholarly papers on Greek literature and religion. What so bows to the image and the reality of Greece can never be remote from the vital elements of insight and civilisation; and so even the somewhat restricted historical and literary discernments of Herbert Paul, made and moulded by the factors of a different age, acquire their own evident components, of relevance, inspiration, and durability. Despite the limitations of his inherited and absorbing Gladstonian Liberalism, Herbert Paul must still emerge, even in our contemporary setting, as "an attractive figure"<sup>4</sup>; and his writings, no less, can claim and reward the homage of our attentions.

## NOTES

- 1 John Gross 1969, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*: p. 123.
- 2 *Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement 1931-1940* (1949): p. 679.
- 3 John Gross, *loc. cit.*
- 4 John Gross, *loc. cit.*

## CROSSING ONESELF

'Spectacles, testicles,  
 Wallet, and watch'.  
 Black-suited, anonymous,  
 He crosses off his tools  
 Against the world,  
 The women, and the boss.  
 But once he sees for himself,  
 There is no fear of loss.  
 He need no longer clutch  
 His wallet for security.  
 Plainly, the crotch  
 Is the crux of the body,  
 Without the sin, or impurity.  
 He will not cross himself  
 Any more; or bow down.  
 He can tick alone;  
 Or cross with someone else.

NORMAN ILES



## THE FREETHINKER

Editor: NIGEL SINNOTT

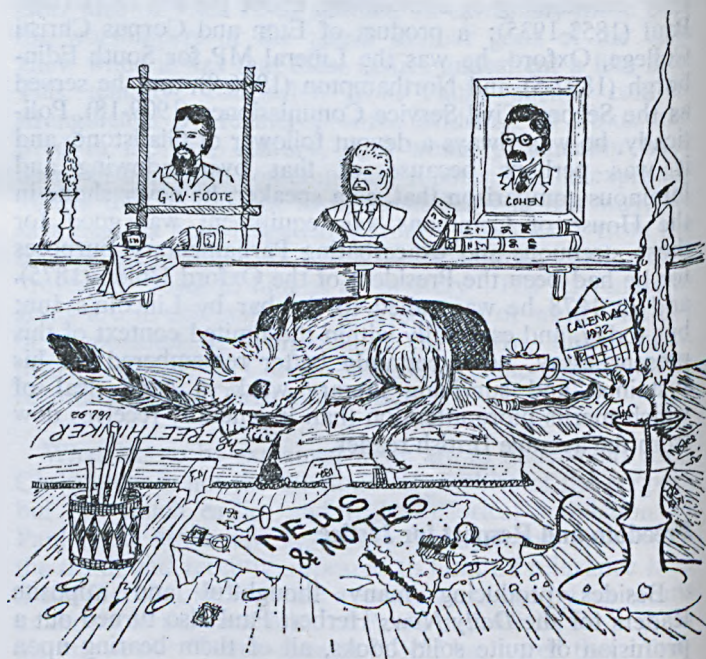
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# NEWS



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*The Freethinker* is obtainable at the following addresses.  
**London:** Collets, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N1; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), E1; Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, N1; Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1; Freethinker Bookshop, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. **Glasgow:** Clyde Books, 292 High Street. **Brighton:** Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road, (near Brighton Station).

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 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

## EVENTS

Ashurstwood Abbey Secular Humanism Centre (founded by Jean Straker), between East Grinstead and Forest Row, Sussex. Telephone Forest Row 2589. Meeting every Sunday, 3 p.m.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Sunday, 16 January, 6.30 p.m.: "Women's Lib." (various speakers).

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8, Sunday, 16 January, 7.30 p.m.: Hugh de Garis, "The Ethical Implications of the Possibility that Man may replace Himself with Super-Thinking Machines".

National Secular Society, The Clarence, Whitehall, SW1, Friday, 21 January, 8 p.m. Public Meeting: Avril Fox, "Religion—Has Christianity Killed It?"

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 16 January, Lord Brockway, "Religion and Humanism". Tuesday, 18 January, 7 p.m.: Dr Graham Owens, "A New Approach to Teacher Education".

## BOOK APPEAL

In checking our stock of back numbers of *The Freethinker*, we find that, in fact, we do not possess a complete run of the paper. We would be very glad to hear from anybody willing to donate or sell the following issues: vol. 18 (1898), vol. 22 (1902), vol. 81 (1961), and vol. 83 (1963). Also, our only copy of vol. 2 (1882) is incomplete. The NSS Library would welcome any old bound volumes of *The Freethinker*, *National Reformer*, *The Secularist*, and *Secular Review*.

On behalf of South Place Ethical Society's Library we have been asked to appeal for a copy of Richard Garnett's *Life of W. J. Fox* (1909/10). William Johnson Fox (1786-1864) was Minister of the old South Place Chapel (from 1824), leading member of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and MP for Oldham. South Place still possesses a number of Fox's publications, and an excellent collection of his MSS. and correspondence (historians, please note!). Garnett (1835-1906) was an adolescent prodigy who became Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum, and wrote a number of other scholarly biographies.

We trust that this appeal will be read by sympathetic eyes before this country's entire stocks of rationalist publications are shipped off to the United States.

## GIFT TO SOUTH AFRICA

The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge is to make a gift of £10,000 to the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa for the purpose of setting up a Johannesburg-based publishing house to deal with books in Afrikaans, Xhosa, and other languages which SPCK has been publishing in London until now.

A South African government spokesman recently stated that declared unbelievers in formal religion would not be allowed to enter South Africa for immigration purposes.



# AND NOTES

## OTIOSE GROPINGS

"The anti-religious propaganda of the movement is not popular today, and is probably regarded as otiose. Most of the social causes which humanists support have their own specific lobbies. I believe there is a general social role for the humanist movement in the context of today, but we are still groping to find it."

Harold Blackham, philosopher and writer, interviewed in *The Ethical Record* (January 1972).

## ALMOST AN INDUSTRY

Among the Christmas cards received by the Editor of this paper was one whose postmark bore the following advertising slogan:

"Londonderry: gateway to industry."

We had never thought of bigotry, hatred and terror as industries before, but must concede that they have now reached a proportion almost to justify this category.

## VENEREOLOGY: A NEW PROPHYLACTIC

"Clean living" (as the notices in public lavatories used to warn us) may well be the best way to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, but venereologists will doubtless be heartened to hear that preliminary trials with the drug Progonasyl in Nevada indicate that it provides almost complete immunity from venereal disease when used regularly, in this case by prostitutes. The World Health Organisation has also called for more sex education and venereal disease information to combat what it calls "genital pollution". Of the 20,000 VD cases dealt with by the St Louis Hospital in Paris, their ages ranged from 12 to 84: in both cases the patients had been taken to a brothel by close relatives. In some modern cities, however, hippie-type sub-cultures are contributing more to the spread of venereal infections than old-fashioned commercial prostitution. "If you can't be good, be careful" is also sound, if cynical, advice, and the failure, until now, of the medical and pharmaceutical industries to develop a sound prophylactic (other than the condom) against VD does not seem altogether a fortuitous oversight.

## MODESTY—NEW GUINEA STYLE

In this age of Pupil Power and Little Rainbow-Coloured Schoolbooks, traditionalists can derive a crumb of comfort from the fact that someone, somewhere, still cherishes the fleeting glimpse of an ankle. The following extract, on the subject of mini-skirted teachers, came from a letter received by the Papua and New Guinea Education Department:

"We want you to make a rule forcing teachers to wear long skirts. It's very wrong. When these teachers turn round to write on the blackboard the children are seeing things that are not right for them to see. We hope you will tell the teachers about it because we don't like to tell them ourselves."

## FIFTY YEARS AGO

A little girl was afraid of the dark. "Darling," said her mother, "don't be frightened. When Mamma takes away the candle Jesus is in the room."

"Oh, Mummy," wailed the young hopeful, "can't you take Jesus away, and leave the candle?"  
(from *The Freethinker*, January 1922).

## CUSTARD PIE IN THE SKY

Portrayal of Jesus as a clown in "Godspell", the "Pop" show, could well have made a refreshing point, thinks the Rev. W. W. Davidson, Vicar of St. Stephen and St. John, Westminster.

Writing in his parish magazine, Mr. Davidson says: "The clown is surely the most loved member of the pantomime of circus cast—if anything goes wrong on stage or in the circus ring the clown is the man sent to the rescue."

I would have thought that the details of the birth and "resurrection" of Jesus fell more into the category of prestidigitation rather than clowning, but this does, at least, give some explanation for the antics of Jesus's more trendy modern disciples. Christianity, after all, is no longer "packing 'em in" like it used to in the old days.

The vicar further points out that the young singer playing the part of Jesus in "Godspell" read St. Matthew's gospel right through for the first time and became fascinated with Jesus. In consequence, "He finds playing him as a clown perfectly natural and vital. . . I am sure many of us should see this play and see Jesus from another point of view."

Er. . . quite. Over to you—Peter Simple!

## MIXED RECEPTION TO ANGLICAN/CATHOLIC AGREEMENT

The news that a joint Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission has reached "substantial agreement" on the doctrine of the eucharist has been warmly received by the Assembly of Bloomsbury Heretics. Speaking at a press conference at Humanist House, the Assembly's headquarters, on Monday last, the High Moderator, His Beatitude Roger Montmorency said, his eyes glazed with rapture:

"This agreed statement is a major breakthrough for those of us who are working towards a synthesis of the Open Society; the day may now not be far off when our meaningful and constructive efforts will be consummated in our being able to enter into spiritual and eucharistic communion with the Anglo-Catholic churches".

"In the meantime", he said with an urbane gesture of the hand, "we shall continue to lunch on stone-ground crispbread and unfermented grape juice."

The opposite view appeared the following morning in the form of a swingeing leading article by the Hon. Peregrine Burke, no-nonsense editor of the People's Revolutionary Atheist Daily, *The Episcopophagist*, which denounced the Assembly for "proposing a *ménage à trois*". Describing the agreed statement as "a monumental sell-out to the Scarlet Whore of Babylon by the Church of England" he went on to appeal to his readers to start organising gun clubs in the London area, "before it is too late, and the tramp of jackboots resounds across (what will be renamed) Swiss Guards Parade".



# FREETHINKER REVIEWS

## WHAT ARE EUROPEANS ?

by G. K. Young. Conway Paper No. 1. South Place Ethical Society, 10p.

A few years ago, I read Mr Young's book *Master of Indecision*, which was apparently an inquiry into something called the political process. All I remember about it now was being irritated by its woffly inconclusiveness. It is sad to see that Mr Young has not improved over the years. He meanders. He flits from one topic to another, juxtaposing half-truths, untruths, and the occasional flash of insight with reckless abandon. He has some weighty, if unoriginal, points to make, but makes them with a gay disregard for intellectual sobriety. Even if we allow for the limitations imposed by the lecture format, which was the origin of this pamphlet, the impact of what Mr Young has to say it regrettably lessened by his indisciplined style.

"Europeans", for Mr Young, are characterised by a supreme confidence in the universal validity of their ideas and the universal relevance of their institutions. They are therefore prone to imagine that the "human element" can be dispensed with—that the preservation of institutions come before individual welfare. One result of this process of ascribing autonomy to human creations has been what Marxists term the "reification" of ideas; that is, treating ideas as things-in-themselves. To Mr Young, the concept of "equality" is one such idea, indeed the dominant one in western culture, and it has been imposed willy-nilly on the diversity of individuals in the western countries. Apparently, "those who point out the unmistakable and continuing inequality of men are threatened with a fate akin to the gas ovens". Now it is, of course, quite true that the dogmatic, unbending application of a doctrine in general destroys human happiness, but this does not seem to be Mr Young's point. Rather, he thinks that "equality" is somehow foreign to the very nature of man. Throwing out the ideas with the speed and verve of a candy-floss machine, Mr Young alights like a butterfly on the idea of "equality", only to hop off again without even noticing that it represents exactly that concern for individual welfare that he criticises as absent in the West.

For Mr Young, the pursuit of "objectivity", by which he broadly means the growth and application of science, involves a sacrifice of the individual. Reason is a hard master, and its drive for "objectivity" entails the "cutting out [of] human beings". This Mr Young sees as a typical European characteristic, and a dangerous one; for it leads to the belief that only the European approach is valid, and that the experience of other cultures is not relevant. It is difficult to assess how far Mr Young's analysis is correct, as he talks in large generalisations, but virtually the only example he gives is the Chad Republic in the southern Sahara. The desire of the "Europeans" to impose an artificial unity on this tribally divided country has merely led to bloodshed. Far better to let them work out their own destinies rather than foist on them our European concept of the unitary state.

Now all this is, at best, a dangerous half-truth. Mr Young seems not to realise the extent to which the so-called "new" countries of Africa and Asia are compelled

by circumstances to adopt the western concept of a centralised nation-state. The "nation", indeed, is the great unifying force that attempts to bind together tribal societies. It may be that the new rulers of the ex-colonial nations have to inherit artificial boundaries linking together different tribes and peoples, but they then choose to perpetuate these boundaries without further European intervention. In a sudden about-turn, Mr Young condemns the "disorder" that results from this application of European values, such as "objectivity", which may in turn impugn the "essential and unique European character". Objectivity, far from being potentially harmful to mankind, now becomes commendable, but only it would seem in the European context. But surely the application of scientific method, and the use of reason rather than emotion as a guide to policy, are right all over the world, not just in Europe. Here, as elsewhere, it is not clear to me just what Mr Young is trying to say.

Not that he stays to work out his ideas, for the next topic he skips on to is the "case for diversity". Whereas Europeans have tried in the past to conceive their identity "in terms of ideas and institutions which we have attempted to realise objectively", now the fundamental notion of "Man" has been debased to mean man as European culture sees him. This is not necessarily the same as the interpretation of other societies, and Mr Young is exercised enough about this to warn that the "monolithic notion of Man" has become an obsession which will "destroy" us. Exactly how is most unclear, for Mr Young tosses out this thought right at the very end of his pamphlet. But he foresees a clash with other forms of "self-consciousness" in which the Europeans will lose out, since political and commercial pressures in the West "encourage appetite, self-indulgence and not restraint". It is hard to accept that these are particularly European vices; what matters is that western technology is so far advanced that our affluent societies consume far more than their share of the world's resources. But basic economics are barely mentioned in Mr Young's tract, which has a great deal to say about "identity" and "objectivity" and very little to justify our paying it much attention.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF



"Don't tell me, Dear, that in this day and age you still believe that John Allegro exists!"



# EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS

G. F. WESTCOTT

Up to the present day morality has been dealt with subjectively, on assumptions and hypotheses which cannot be tested scientifically. It seems to me that, based mainly on the sciences of evolution, psychology and sociology, a theory of ethics (defined as the science of how human beings should behave, or what constitutes right conduct) could be developed, capable of being described objectively and of being tested scientifically.

To start with, it is important to examine the process of evolution to see whether the process is a fact and whether it shows a direction, function or purpose.

In biology a direction is clearly evident. Life evolved from non-living matter to form complex units capable of reproduction. At first living units evolved in the direction of adaptation to survive and increase in their then existing environments. Then we find individuals combining into groups to fight successfully against others in the struggle for existence and competing against other species in the same habitats. With the coming of man, societies become more elaborate, class systems and divisions of labour developed, so that large competing civilisations and even empires became possible. In this period the strength of a large society depended on its cohesion and the acceptance by the society's members of a common basic ideology and a common purpose, which was made possible by the inventions of speech and, later, of writing.

Animal societies rely mainly on the instincts of copying, on the pleasure-pain principle, on repetition, etc., for social conformity, but, not later than the Urban Revolution, many other methods of consolidating large groups evolved, and I think it likely that, among these, new tendencies to think along certain inherited lines appeared which helped to strengthen the position of leaders (e.g., Jung's archetypes, the idea of the supernatural birth of the hero, miracles as evidence of divine intervention, etc.). Religions and secular governments developed which used such faith-producing factors, combined by association with the emotions and the arts.

## Printing and Science

Science began to develop rapidly after the introduction into Europe of printing from movable type, woodcuts and copper engraving in the fifteenth century, which helped to broadcast reliable duplicated scientific information capable of being tested. Science has provided a steadily increasing knowledge of our external environment and of the universe, and man is beginning to learn how to adapt to his needs, not only his immediate surroundings but also even his cosmic environment. It is surely right to continue scientific research, but if we are to develop an evolutionary ethic we shall need particularly to encourage the study, not only of evolution but also of psychology (how people actually do think and behave) and sociology (including the political and other social controls over the conduct of individuals).

In early civilisations it was not necessary (indeed it would probably have been disadvantageous to society) for people to store much information in their minds, or to develop more than limited powers of reasoning. Human mentality has changed very little since those days so that,

even today, in human thinking, reason is usually swamped by the many subjective factors which made the early civilisations possible. The present method of civil government, by discussion, by forming committees and by bringing in experts to advise on particular matters, is unsatisfactory and unreliable.

As the human mind seems limited in its ability to store information accurately and to deal with it rationally, I think we shall have to make increasing use of the additional help provided by electronic computers and thinking machines, which it would be right to improve as quickly as possible for these purposes. Perhaps, eventually, machines may be constructed capable of storing all known scientific knowledge and capable of processing these data to solve, as accurately as the information permits, any scientific problems set before them.

So far, it seems to me that the function or direction of evolution has been, in general, to increase adaptability to, and freedom, consciousness and understanding of, existence. (Perhaps evolution is essential for everything that exists!)

## Evolution must be Accepted

Whether we regard evolution as the method God has used for the purpose of producing Man, or whether we regard evolution simply as a natural phenomenon, the present tendency of thought in modern advanced societies seems to be fairly evident. Slowly, owing to delay by traditional inertia, many people are rejecting those basic ideologies which depend mainly on indoctrination and faith in dogmas derived from the past (which cannot, as yet, be definitely proved or disproved) and are trying out others, including those which rely mainly on contemporary scientific theories capable of continuous verification in the present time.

Though we cannot see clearly where evolution may next lead us (perhaps towards the control of the direction of evolution itself), it is right for us to try to discover this direction. But we must be cautious. Evolution in the past has sometimes led to stagnation and even death (e.g. the dinosaurs), so that we must therefore ensure that humanity remains sufficiently adaptable to meet any changes which might occur.

I contend that evolution is a fact which must be accepted. To ignore or reject it might result in human degradation or annihilation. Therefore it is right that people should behave in a way which is compatible with *continuous* evolution.

## THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

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## BHA SUBMISSIONS TO THE LANE COMMITTEE

The British Humanist Association, in its submissions to the Committee on the Working of the Abortion Act, believes in principle "that abortion ought to be the private decision of the woman concerned".

"We recognise", says the memorandum, "that the 1967 Abortion Act is not based on the concept of abortion as a private decision, but on the concept of justification by 'grounds'. We believe these grounds to be largely artificial, and that the extent of regional variation in NHS abortion demonstrates this to be the case". It states further that the BHA believes that, ideally the present Act should be "further liberalised along the lines obtaining in the State of New York".

In considering the law as it stands, the BHA submissions express concern over the difficulty of obtaining an NHS abortion in certain cities such as Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield. "In these areas, in 1970, there were less than four NHS abortions for every 100 live births. In London, the home counties and Newcastle, there were more than twice this number. We do not believe that women in Birmingham . . . and Sheffield need abortions so much less than their counterparts elsewhere . . . This means that many women with legitimate grounds for abortion even under the present limited law are being denied abortions or are forced to obtain them privately or even possibly criminally."

The BHA goes on to call for the setting up of specialist abortion units employing methods such as the American out-patient suction technique. "The safety record of these methods is outstanding . . . They are carried out very early in pregnancy, and are therefore less distressing to both patients and medical and nursing staff."

The report advises that the long-term answer to the abortion problem is to improve the efficiency of contraceptive methods, and also to educate young people in "sexual responsibility". The submissions conclude by stating that the BHA believes that "the overall effect of the Abortion Act has been entirely beneficial" in that it has "prevented a deterioration in the health of many women, and lifted a heavy load of anxiety from the shoulders of many more". The BHA believes that the problems with the working of the present Act are "essentially temporary", and states finally that, "We subscribe to the Family Planning Association's motto: 'Every Child a Wanted Child'".

N.S.

## DID JESUS EXIST? PART I

(Continued from page 18)

belief would lead to some confusion. In some it would lead to general scepticism, but in most it would merely unsettle the particular traditional beliefs and open the way for religious novelties. Exchanges of views and opinions between people of different intelligence and cultural background brought together in the Roman Empire would lead to an amalgamation of various ideas expressed in the literature and traditions of the time. Such syncretism is well illustrated by the Book of the Secrets of Enoch, written about AD 30 by an orthodox Hellenistic Jew who

borrowed from every quarter, and incorporates Platonic, Egyptian and Zend elements into his system. With all this in mind, it becomes easier to understand how the pagan-inspired idea of a suffering and dying redeemer would seem to Jews to be substantiated by many elements in their own traditions. Here are a few such elements.

It was a familiar thought in the first centuries BC and AD that when suffering was greatest, the Messiah would be nearest. It required no great transition in thought to ascribe to him some of the suffering associated with the time of his coming. Again, Zech. 12 : 10 mentions lamentations over a martyr "whom they have pierced" after all heathendom gathered at Jerusalem and perished there. The Talmud interpreted the passage as a reference to the Messiah ben Joseph, who—certainly in post-Christian Jewish thought and possibly earlier—is placed alongside the Messiah ben David as a war leader who is to be slain in battle (and who thus suffers, but not by way of atonement).

## Parallels in Pre-Christian Judaism

Furthermore, in the apocalypse of Ezra (written late in the first century AD) the Messiah is to die after a reign of four hundred years—an unchristian idea unlikely to be a Christian interpolation. His death is not there attributed to disease, maltreatment, nor to any kind of suffering, but by a process of distortion the idea of his death could be linked with the suffering and death of religious personages mentioned in the literature of the times. The Dead Sea Scrolls show that the Essenes of the first century AD kept alive the memory of the sect's leader, who had been tortured and probably killed by the official priesthood of Jerusalem some time before 63 BC. The Pharisaic Testament of Benjamin makes this patriarch prophesy that "a blameless one shall be delivered up for lawless men, and a sinless one shall die for ungodly men". From this it is quite clear that the idea of vicarious suffering and propitiation was not unfamiliar to pre-Christian Judaism. The Assumption of Moses, an apocalypse written shortly after the death of Herod, tells how, after a period of godlessness and persecution, a man of the tribe of Levi named Taxo will, with his seven sons, surrender willingly to death in fidelity to the law, whereupon the time of salvation will appear. The idea is that his special fidelity has achieved so much atonement that this time could be delayed no longer. Such a passage could give rise to a vague belief that a great turning-point would come in a time of dire distress as a result of a voluntary death.

(To be continued)

## THE RIGHTS OF OLD PEOPLE

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