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B.H.A. CALLS FOR UNITED IRELAND

In a recent statement on Northern Ireland, Kenneth Furness, the General Secretary of the British Humanist Association, has called for the suspension of the Stormont Parliament, and unification of all Ireland within a five year period. "Economic exploitation and inequality, together with prejudice and intolerance lie at the root of the troubles in Ulster today", he said. "Powerful pressure groups fight for domination of the government, the schools and industry at the expense of those who matter most—the people of Northern Ireland. Bitterness between Protestants and Catholics, between North and South, grows daily. The past we can do nothing about, for the future something can be done."

The BHA, after consultation with "leading humanists" throughout Ireland, then goes on to suggest various measures by which the present political situation might be resolved:

The Stormont Parliament should be suspended and replaced by direct rule from Westminster with a minister of Cabinet rank resident in Northern Ireland, and this minister should be advised by a council composed of representatives of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland, "including the official and provisional branches of the IRA, who should in return for their participation on this council undertake to call off the present campaign of violence".

Internment, says the statement, should be ended, and in return for this the leaders of the present civil disobedience campaign should undertake to co-operate with the authorities again.

The BHA proposes the immediate establishment of talks between the London and Dublin governments to secure the unification of the whole of Ireland within a five-year period. Such unification would depend upon the adoption of a secular constitution and secular education system by the Irish Republic. During the five year "interim period" the British government would pay a subsidy to enable Dublin to bring the social welfare system in the Republic up to the same level as that in Northern Ireland.

Meanwhile, says Mr Furness, "The British government should subsidise the development of nonsectarian state schooling in the North, whilst gradually withdrawing financial assistance from sectarian schools and training colleges".

Taken overall, the BHA proposals should be welcomed by the vast majority of humanists, both in Britain, and "over the water". Objections may be raised to the length of the "interim period": five years might well encourage the growth and organisation of a very powerful backlash from ultra-Unionist and other interests, and there may also be anxieties about IRA participation in the government of "Ulster", but the proposals to end the fifty-year-old farce of Irish partition seem eminently sensible. Opposition

must, of course, be expected from the conservative wing of the Irish Catholic hierarchy who can be relied upon to fight tooth and nail to defend denominational education, and will quite happily sacrifice Irish unity to this end. Fortunately, however, there is now the makings of a liberal, radical element in the Church, especially at Maynooth and in some of the religious orders, and so whilst a hard campaign lies ahead, we may be surprised by some of our allies (as well as by some of our antagonists).

PAULINE JONES

The news that Pauline Jones has, following considerable press comment and public demonstrations, been transferred from Holloway Goal to Askham Grange open prison is a timid step in the right direction.

The Home Office has at least had the decency to drop its previous "whitewash" report of Miss Jones's condition, and has now admitted that her health, both mental and physical, did indeed justify public anxiety. In fact Miss Jones is in danger of losing her hearing.

There still seems no need for keeping Pauline Jones in a prison at all, whether open or otherwise. Why not an ordinary nursing home?

SECTARIAN EDUCATION VERSUS THE GREATRIX FAMILY

On a happier note we are pleased to record that the Greatrix family, who renounced their faith to prevent 11-year-old Stephen from going to a Catholic secondary school, have reached a compromise with Staffordshire Education Committee.

The education authority has finally agreed that Stephen Greatrix, whose family live in Rugeley, may attend a non-Catholic school in Litchfield, six miles away. The authority, back by Mrs Thatcher, had previously insisted that Stephen attend a Catholic school in Cannock, 12 miles away, whilst the parents had wanted him to attend a comprehensive school in Rugeley itself. Mr and Mrs Greatrix had been prepared to go to prison rather than that Stephen should go to the Catholic school.

INTERVIEW WITH CONSTANCE CUMMINGS

ANTHONY MASTERS

From the very first preview of O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, which opened recently in a revival by the National Theatre at the New, one thing was clear: the production and Miss Constance Cummings were both a tremendous success. Every night there are eight or ten curtain calls, at an hour when most of the audience must be wondering how to get home. John Mason Brown's "strange yet noble pleasures of high tragedy" grip the house in a spell; it is precisely the sort of feat and experience that an interviewer, even the actors themselves, often cannot illuminate.

The part is a marvellous one, and the play magnificent, if dangerously over-written. Miss Cummings, for all her detailed underplaying, manages to hold her own against such formidable competition as Sir Laurence Olivier. But in contrast to her highly-charged performance as a shy, weak, rather silly woman driven by morphine addiction and frantic feelings of inadequacy to complete nervous collapse, meeting her is much more like meeting one of the poised, penetratingly intelligent characters she has played in comedy. One cannot be surprised that the parts her husband, the playwright Benn Levy, wrote for her seem to reflect her charm, her perpetual youth and her sharp, unpredictable wit.

If bored with great actresses (an excusable reaction), one could do a fair enough piece on most without actually meeting them. Unforgettable flashes of personality can be got from agents, and the flat, the servants, the pets, the husbands or otherwise, the period furniture uneasily jostling with the kinetic art, can safely be imagined. Indefinable charm is such an easy thing to write about. The next role is automatically the greatest, the present capital city her spiritual home, and the present author a dear personal friend who is busy making a scenario out of the script for some unimaginable fee.

Deeply Committed

Constance Cummings must have read this once or twice, with appropriate changes; by now her reaction would probably include not only peals of laughter but a few choice suggestions. Sense of humour is the weapon with which she keeps those two bitches, success and failure, firmly in their place, and one has to admit it is more appealing than common-or-garden false modesty, though as it happens she is modest as well. Even the elegance of her Chelsea house, like her own, is tempered with irreverence; it is unexceptionable but it is lived in. She cannot find the (Mediterranean) maid and will go out calling "Josephine!" in half a dozen different inflections, or she breaks off a disenchanted political discussion to describe with relish how a Tory lady at the Brighton conference was rudely roused from forty winks by her marcasite brooch sticking into her chin. She has always done glamorous women marvellously; fine, but you mustn't miss the irony. Not that *Freethinker* readers would. She has often appeared at performances organised by the National Secular Society and is deeply committed to its aims and to the kind of liberal causes that her husband (an MP in the Atlee Government for five years) championed in Parliament.

Her performance in *Long Day's Journey*, showing in the words of one critic "the most delicate artistry . . . a

performance to travel across the country to see", is a feat of impersonation fired by intense sympathy. We found it impossible to discuss any political or social question without looking at it in terms of the *people* involved, their feelings, their backgrounds, their weaknesses and prejudices, their needs as human beings. The play has its miscalculations and *longueurs*, but it is written with complete sincerity, and has so to be played. O'Neill is really exploring his own past, the dilemma and the pain of his own mother and the frustrating tangle of relationships within his own family, all reacting on each other in the worst possible way. His father, the great romantic actor James O'Neill, was a handsome, extrovert Irish charmer, with a distinct streak of the peasant which manifested itself in a strongly professed respect for Catholicism, a tendency to be dogmatic ("Shakespeare was an Irish Catholic"), and an often ridiculous parsimoniousness. The life to which his wife condemned herself by marrying him was one for which her convent upbringing and her simple, repressed, dependent nature made her totally unfitted. The result was breakdown.

Nice, Conventional Girls

"One can get very impatient with her—somehow you've got to use that smallness of outlook and intellect of hers to suggest her pain, which is very real. She cannot cope, she cannot enter into the spirit of the thing—the uneven hours, having to live like a gypsy, bearing children in hotel rooms at the back of nowhere. When women like that get married they do not adjust, they expect to carry on in the same way as before. They are expecting more to find a father than a husband. I know women like her, who are brought up in happy, loving homes, who are popular at school just because they *are* very conventional and like being confined in whatever is the proper, ladylike thing to do. That was my own mother in a way, and what she rather hoped I would be like, which I wasn't very much. I'm afraid . . . A conventional husband, a society where she could have mixed and the boys would have married nice conventional girls, and she might have been all right." But she is not sure even about that. The trouble maybe goes deeper still to Mary's repression and the blindness induced by upbringing in both her husband and herself. O'Neill's house is under a curse as much as Agamemnon's.

Like the Oresteia, and even *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the play presents almost relentless gloom and is a severe test for both cast and audience. Performances can take up to four hours and a family all of whose members are addicted to either morphine or bonded Bourbon, as well as to a certain morbidity, is not cheerful company. But on the stage the play creates its own pace. "It has this curious weight and inevitability; the repetitions are constructed with such care, it seems so colloquial but it's really meticulously written. It's very relentless—thought what goes on in the play is nothing compared to what they were really like. We've been reading the biographies. The father comes out as by far the most likeable character. Eugene doesn't come out well; his outlook on life was awfully sharp and acid, he seems so unloving and ungiving.

"What really redeems the whole play is the father's speech in Act IV where he tells of the terrible poverty of his youth, how it made him throw away a promising career

in the classical theatre to make money out of this marvellous part [O'Neill senior played the Count of Monte Cristo 4,000 times] which was his nemesis. You laugh with that man and at him, and for once in the play you warm very much to him; you see and you understand, and then suddenly he says he's wasting money and gets up and turns the light-bulbs off, and you really don't know whether to laugh or cry. That arouses a real human response."

The couple in *Long Day's Journey* have always between them the shadow of their dead son (called in the play, with grim humour, Eugene); just so have George and Martha in another of Miss Cummings' most famous performances, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Martha too is a pretty testing part; one French actress said that it wrecked her nerves, her looks, her health, but there was one thing she could not tolerate—to let anyone else play it. I asked Miss Cummings which part was more punishing.

Marvellous but Ghastly

"In a way, Mary's more difficult—you see, with Martha there's so much on the table for you to pick up that if you just did that it would seem staggering to anyone seeing the play for the first time. Of course that isn't the whole story. My first reaction was that it was a marvellous play but it

was *ghastly*. I thought 'My God! what horrible people!' I said to people, 'A man like Martha's father couldn't possibly be President of the college'—actually, I was assured he could, as very often they're just these high-powered tycoons who are good at collecting money for the college and they don't have to be able to spell C-A-T. When I first saw it, I was riveted and horrified, I couldn't have left the theatre, but at the end I felt as though I'd been beaten from head to foot with . . . shillelaghs or something. When I started to play it, the most curious thing happened: all the ugliness and abrasive quality started to disappear from the play, and a human and poetic quality started to come out—until finally there didn't seem to be anything in it at all that was really ugly, or even harsh. Sad, yes, and wasteful—but more and more you began to realise that it was written by a poet. Albee really is a poet."

Anyone who still thinks of Martha as a bitch, or a cat with claws out, can ponder on that—just as anyone who finds Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey* tedious and petty; or Volumnia in *Coriolanus* incredible and intolerable, or Giraudoux's Leda in *Amphitryon* 38 inane, should ask what has made them what they are, what they must feel like, why they torment or manipulate other human beings with an equal right to live. But if anyone finds that too much effort, he could go and see Constance Cummings play them. That should do it.

RATIONAL DISCRIMINATION

CHARLES BYASS

In certain superstitious circles, and even in some humanist ones, the labels of "atheist" and "secularist" can still be enough to give a person a bad name. In such circles, the less precise label of "rationalist", though still pretty bad, would seem to fare a bit better. Although an irrational state of either godlessness or secularity is indeed less desirable than a rational one, yet of all such currently pejorative humanist labels (which includes "freethinker") that of "rationalist" is surely the one which most justly deserves to give a somewhat questionable reputation to its wearer.

Apart from any of its theological or philosophical connections, the label "rationalist" is, after all, worn without shame by those humanists who say that they "believe in the supremacy of reason". Such an uncompromising definition does, surely, not only ask for a few innocent misunderstandings but call for a few qualifications on its own account.

Surely, no "rationalist" who is worthy of the name believes that supreme reason has been, or is being displayed in the behaviour of the human species; reason points rather to unreason as being, so far, the greater influence. From the viewpoint of our shameless "rationalist", the present critical state of existence is the result of unreason working against the potential rewards of reason.

The most comprehensive example of human unreason at work perhaps be that of humans at war with each other. There are of course countless examples which would serve to illustrate the self-inflicted suffering which results from allowing unreason a false supremacy. It is this misplaced supremacy of unreason which our "rationalist" unashamedly seeks to displace and to replace with reason. But this is not to believe that every expression of human unreason results in suffering or is in itself inferior to reason; indeed, the very desire to avoid further suffering

is itself based, ultimately, on human unreason. Yet in the thoughts and actions which are taken towards fulfilling that desire, the application of reason presents us with a supreme authority. And if in working to fulfil that desire unreason has its parts to play, they are those parts which are found to be acceptable by reason.

Our unashamed "rationalist" surely acknowledges the reasonable strengths as well as the unreasonable weaknesses of unreason. The basis for believing in the supremacy of reason is surely on the evidence that only a critical application of reason can we discriminate beneficially between one human unreason and another.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday, 25 March 1972

Reception 6 p.m.; Dinner 6.30 p.m.

THE PAVIOURS ARMS

Page Street, London SW1

Speakers:

HELEN BROOK

(Guest of Honour)

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

GEORGE MELLY

JILL TWEDDIE

★ Dress Optional

★ Vegetarians catered for

★ TICKETS £1.75 from NSS,

103 Borough High Street, London SE1 1NL

THE FREETHINKER

Editor: NIGEL SINNOTT

103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1 1NL

Telephone: 01-407 1251

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

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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. Manchester: Grass Roots Bookshop, 271 Upper Brook Street, 13, 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.

Humanist Holidays. Details of future activities from Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone: 01-642 8796.

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.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 6 February, 5.30 p.m.: Christopher Macy, "Humanist Approach to Psychology".

Leicester Humanist Society, Vaughan College University Centre, St. Nicholas Circle, Leicester. Monday, 7 February, 7.45 p.m.: Professor Bernard Crick, "The Individual and Politics".

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Sunday, 6 February, 6.30 p.m.: J. A. Millar, "Freethought and Art".

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday, 6 February, 7.30 p.m.: discussion on "Social Morality is Anti-Social".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 6 February, 11 a.m.: Richard Clements, "Teilhard de Chardin and Modern Humanism". Tuesday, 8 February, 7 p.m.: Christopher Macy, "Psychology and Philosophy".

South Place Buffet Dinner, Friday 11 February, 7.30 for 8 p.m. Guest Speaker: Lord Willis. Dress informal. Tickets £1.50 (incl. wine) from Margaret Pearce, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. (Telephone 01-242 8032).

NEWS



CIVIL LIBERTIES GUIDE

The National Council for Civil Liberties has brought out a Penguin Special entitled *Civil Liberty: The NCCL Guide*. This is the successor to the NCCL's *Handbook of Citizens' Rights*, but the scope of the new book is much wider and includes subjects with which the NCCL has not hitherto been involved, such as tenants' rights, and the rights of motorists. Twenty-seven areas of rights are covered, ranging from court procedure, legal aid and immigration, to tribunals, censorship and industrial relations. In addition there are résumés of rights in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS

The one-eyed god the other Sunday offered evening viewers Malcolm Muggeridge and "The Reason Why—Violence?", immediately followed by Jimmy Savile and "Songs of Praise" from Broadmoor Hospital!

BANNED BY BISHOP

The Dundee city Police Committee has banned by 5 votes to 3 the Ken Russell film *The Devils*, about demonology trials in seventeenth century France. The ban came as a result of complaints from—guess who?—the Right Rev. William Hart, Catholic Bishop of Dunkeld!

But of course episcopophagy is obsolete and uncouth in the "Permissive" society!

S AND NOTES

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The National Secular Society's Almanack for 1872 listed G. W. Foote as Secretary of the London Republican Club.

The National Reformer of 11 February 1872 announced that "On Monday, evening Jan. 29th, the largest and most brilliant party that has ever assembled in the New Hall of Science, met to celebrate the 135th anniversary of the birthday of Thomas Paine . . . In the Hall were displayed busts of Paine, Voltaire, and Robert Owen, and portraits of Paine and of Clio Rickman, his friend and biographer. The table on which Paine wrote several of his works, was the object of much interest". Speakers at this gathering included Austin Holyoake, Moncure D. Conway, Edward Truelove, and G. W. Foote. Between the speeches songs were sung by John Lowry.

NINETY YEARS AGO

"Last Sunday Miss Annie Swift fell down dead while teaching a Bible class at Salisbury. If such an incident had occurred in a Freethought hall it would have been bruited abroad as an instance of the Almighty's vengeance."

The Freethinker, 5 February 1882.

ANOTHER ANNIVERSARY

Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim, the famous Anglo-American engineer who invented, amongst other things the Maxim machine gun, was born on 5 February 1840. This year is also the sixtieth anniversary of the publication of Sir Hiram's famous collection of anti-religious anecdotes, *Li Hung Chang's Scrap-Book* (1912). Now Maxim really was a militant atheist! He died in 1916.

PROMISCUITY AND THE PILL

Dr R. S. Morton, described by *The Guardian* as "one of Britain's leading authorities on venereal disease" has claimed that the contraceptive pill has caused more harm than thalidomide. In his new book, *Social Freedom and Venereal Disease*, Dr Morton says that "The accumulation of cases of long-term individual misery and venereal disease as a direct result of its use is more calamitous than anything precipitated by thalidomide"; and that the prescription of the pill for single girls is to be condemned.

As usual, when the medical profession starts moralising, it tends to get carried away from the fundamental issues. The pill was produced as a highly reliable means of preventing conception, and *not* as a prophylactic against venereal disease. Leaving aside cases of non-venereal and congenital syphilis, it remains generally true that venereal disease is contracted by the feckless and the sexually promiscuous who certainly did not appear on the world scene with the pill. In the past such people tended, if they used contraceptives at all, to employ the condom, which did, of course, confer some protection against infection, and this may account for the recent increase of some of the VD figures. The fact remains that a mutually faithful couple run a near negligible risk of pregnancy and VD from using the pill, but a higher risk of accidental preg-

nancy with other methods. If the pill is wrong for single girls because it leads to VD, then why is it not wrong for promiscuous marrieds?

Fear, whether of venereal disease or unwanted pregnancy, is good grounds for prudence; it is not the best basis for morality, sexual or otherwise. If there is a case against promiscuity it is that it is unromantic and dehumanising.

The pill has added a dimension of security and relief from anxiety in the lives of a large number of ordinary, decent women, whether formally married or otherwise. Women at last have the freedom of being able to control their own bodies and most, in my submission, do not abuse it

MRS. WHITEHOUSE : APATHETIC ?

"That the British Humanist Association, with a membership of well under 3,000, should have such an influence upon the life of the country is witness not only to the persistence of its members, but is a monument to the apathy of the rest of us."—From the January number of *The Viewer and Listener*, edited by Mary Whitehouse.

Really, Mary, your modesty is positively indecent!

DEADLIER THAN THE MALE

The *Socialist Leader* reports that Derby Council has decreed that only persons wearing "normal bathing costumes" may take part in mixed sauna bathing.

The Chairman of the Baths Committee has defined the regulation dress for sauna-ing in these terms: "A normal bathing costume for males is one which covers that part of the anatomy which is dangerous to the female of the species, and the normal costume for females is one which covers that part of the anatomy which is even more dangerous to the male of the species".

Any questions?

LITTLE BLACK SCHOOLBOOK ?

Quest News Service reports that many teachers in multi-racial schools are trying to make the curriculum relevant to the pupils they teach. One method being tried in some schools is through "Black Studies" courses. Tulse Hill School in South London, for example, is offering Black Studies as part of the GCE 'O' Level General Studies course. It will cover a number of fields including the problems of black immigrants in England, and the history, political systems, and social and cultural patterns in a number of countries and continents, including the West Indies, Africa, Latin-America, Afro-America, India and China.

In that part of the course which deals with the position of the coloured immigrant in England, pupils will look at the special problems of the West Indian, African or Asian immigrant, and will also study one immigrant community in depth. They will look at the situation regarding jobs, housing and education and will do some work on the development of black organisations in Britain. Some time will be spent on the history of parliamentary legislation on immigrants, and there will also be a psychological study of the nature of prejudice.

BOOKS

THE RATIONAL SOCIETY by S. J. Gould.

Auguste Comte Memorial Lecture. University of London Athlone Press.

The trouble with "rational" and "irrational" is that they are boo-hurrah words. They tend to get thrown around fairly indiscriminately to shore up our prejudices and evade the need for thought. Thus, most progressives would, I imagine, check off the following as "irrational": the Catholic church on birth control; Concorde; the inflated earnings of pop singers compared to (say) teachers; and the economic policies of Tory governments. Not so the conservative—or not necessarily so, as he starts from a quite different set of values. And, as Alasdair McIntyre acutely pointed out in his *Secularisation and Moral Change*, we no longer have a shared moral vocabulary or established moral authority, so that there is no commonly accepted standard by which to judge the "rationality" of our actions.

Professor Gould's thoughtful lecture, now published in pamphlet form, attempts to explore the implications of this moral relativism. Why is it that two people, equally intelligent and informed, can yet disagree violently about the "right" or "rational" answer to a given moral, social or political problem? Clearly because they make wholly different value judgements about what is "best" in a given situation. Yet these divergent ethical judgements are, in turn, allegedly based on "reasons" which are held to be relevant and appropriate. The justification of a belief lies in the appeal to a set of standards which, taken together, comprise the canon of "rationality".

Unfortunately, it is precisely here that we detect a crucial ambiguity in the notion of "rationality". Firstly, actions deriving from beliefs founded on the evidence, and not infringing other objectives or goals of the individual, can be called rational. But so can actions which stem from principles or theories that a great many people would find morally repugnant. If, for instance, you really believe that the Jews are a menace to civilisation, as Hitler did, you presumably would not demur at their extermination. On this view, rational actions are those satisfying the principle of consistency. As it is quite possible to hold "perverted" views, reason logically about them, and act accordingly, are we allowed to term the Nazis "irrational"?

Of course, my use of the word "perverted" is question-begging. The Nazis did not regard their Jewish policy as wicked. The Pope maintains that his stand on contraception is the only morally correct course for humanity. To get round the problem of surreptitiously introducing our own notions of right and wrong into the definition of rationality, Professor Gould lays great emphasis on the need to relate a given belief to the evidence. For example, as it is very difficult to produce cogent evidence that the Jews are a threat, the Nazis stand condemned as irrational as well as immoral. With the reservation that policy-making in practice cannot wait until all the facts are in, Professor Gould holds that the rational society "cannot subscribe to the view that any one course of action and its corresponding idea is quite literally of supreme importance"; for that would be to maintain a belief or ideology unrelated to the constant need to test it against the facts.

The other attributes of Professor Gould's rational society can be seen to turn upon this fundamental affirmation. Along with other sociologists of the Talcott Parsons

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school, Professor Gould thinks that the rational society is based upon, and sustains, certain social values, such as the "common good", and hence is committed to the liberal theory of citizenship and equal rights for all. As there is no absolute truth, and no escape from the requirement to test beliefs against the evidence, the procedures and principles of the rational society logically demand intellectual freedom. Dogmas of exclusiveness and superiority are anathema. What authority there is in the rational society must be "self-renewing"; that is, it must constantly justify itself to the mass of citizens who have not participated in the law-making process, or who may suffer from the arbitrary enforcement of the law.

This Professor Gould deems an important antidote to the "confusion" and "restlessness" that springs from the pace and scale of technological change. For if people's lives are to be changed, often drastically, by technology, it is only right that such change is not imposed by an élitist few on the reluctant many, but compelled instead to explain itself. Regrettably, Professor Gould is not nearly so clear on exactly how this is to be done, as he is on the dangers of the meritocratic society itself. Thus, power will in future rest with the information-processors, who will push through the computer revolution that has hardly begun; and their esoteric decision-making procedures will inevitably centralise themselves more and more, frustrating the aspirations of the non-élites who may, as a result of their exclusion from power and influence, turn against science and "reason" itself. Professor Gould detects a major clash between what Parsons has called the "functional needs of the institutionalised order", such as loss of privacy through the vast accumulation of computer data, and élitist decision-making by technocrats and experts; and the nominal ideals on which society is grounded, such as democracy and freedom—ideals which our complex systems of social control still affirm, but are seen to deny, or not live up to, in practice. But to end with a plaintive cry to the technocrats to broaden their notion of the "functional needs of the institutionalised order" to include the satisfaction of popular expectations seems to me intellectual abdication, contrasting sadly with the rest of Professor Gould's acute and perceptive analysis.

Many people will ask that the rational society be characterised not so much by its procedures as by what it does to better people's lives. Why Concorde rather than houses and schools? Why subservience to Catholic reaction rather than freely available contraception and abortion? Why pollution and squalor instead of a clean environment? Such questions just restate the problem explored by St Simon and the so-called "utopian" socialists of the early nineteenth century: that human society is governed not by principles but by men, who fail to recognise what for St Simon was the only binding authority, that of science. Nowhere, not even in Marx, was the optimism of the nineteenth century so forcefully expressed as in St Simon, who believed that he had established a science of society and a code of conduct so blindingly obvious that men would automatically regulate their affairs to create the necessary harmony of interests. The anarchistic nature of the social reorganisation for which St Simon called is on a par with Lenin's absurdly simplistic theory of government set out in his *State and Revolution*. Administration, not coercive government, was the natural consequence of

REVIEWS

the adoption of scientific method in industry, as in the rest of society. But, as Professor Gould points out, there is no exact parallel between scientific authority geared to the idea of truth, and social or political authority geared to material advantage. Their objectives are not the same, nor does the application of science always bring material benefit. And the principles that reflect the very nature of things, that are blindingly obvious to all, just do not exist. For, if they did, there would be no need for ideologists to implore us to observe them.

What hope is there for rationalists caught in the political no-man's-land between competing ideologies? Professor Gould offers little apart from the somewhat vague hope that the "common good" will be discovered and expressed by the technological society he rightly criticises. But he does touch upon, without fully discussing, one way round the problem, in his insistence that the appeal to evidence is vital for rational actions, at all levels from the individual to government. Thus, disagreement about positive statements—what is, or will be, or has been—is appropriately settled by an appeal to the facts. Not so with so-called *normative* statements—what *ought* to be—as these depend on our judgement about what is good or bad. Now it is, of course, illegitimate to argue from what *is* to what *ought* to be, much as people often do this. For example, it is fairly clear that Catholic opposition to the pill generally has undesirable social consequences, of the kind familiar to *Freethinker* readers; but it does not follow that the Catholic view on birth control is therefore *wrong*. And, strictly speaking, I shouldn't have used a question-begging word like "undesirable" as this loads the case against the Catholics. But the logical gulf between positive and normative statements is not absolute. For we can point to the practical consequences of a belief that we *ought* to do so-and-so. If the results of applying the normative statement are as predicted, then it has received some positive support. Or not, as the case may be. To give an example, if we think that the government ought to cure inflation on the grounds that inflation is worse than unemployment in its effects on people's lives, then we will urge the government to curb inflation even if this means an increase in unemployment. As it is at least potentially possible to point to the consequences of both inflation and unemployment, this helps to determine the validity (in practical, if not strictly logical, terms) of the normative statement. So it is here, it seems to me, that Professor Gould's hope that people can observe the *procedures* of the rational society may bear fruit. At least, I hope, we can listen to each other.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

MORALITY, LAW AND GRACE.

By J. N. D. Anderson. Tyndale Press, 50p.

Relations between morality and law have been for some time a subject of controversy, since Lord Devlin initiated the debate in a lecture in 1959 and was answered by Professor Hart. Professor Basil Mitchell took up the theme from a Christian point of view in the Cadbury Lectures

of 1966 (*Law, Morality, and Religion in a Secular Society*), and now in another lecture series another professor who is both a jurist and an evangelical Christian enters the field. Professor Anderson's two main lectures are on morality and law; the other three chapters deal with morality in the context of determinism, the permissive society, and religious faith.

On determinism, Professor Anderson reviews the arguments and takes a middle-of-the-road line, without pretending to be versed in the subtleties of a difficult question. And although as a Christian speaking to Christians he is quite uncompromising on the moral demands made by Christian belief, he is moderate and open-minded in an exemplary way in all his discussion of the practical issues involved. He makes his points and expresses his opinions frankly without humbug or hypocrisy. However unacceptable they are, and must be, to secularists, they can be given the respect due to the author.

In the main lecture on morality and law he is, in effect, going beyond a Christian audience and recommending to non-Christians as beneficial to society, the moral teaching of Christianity and, where appropriate, legislation based on it. But from a non-Christian point of view this is a counsel of despair, the familiar Christian assumption that there is no rational basis of morality which can become universally acceptable. There is no way out of this *impasse* without making a necessary and careful distinction between the morality of social obligation and the morality of personal choice. This Mill tried to do in the essay *On Liberty*, from which the argument on law and morality takes its start; but the contemporary argument abandons the distinction instead of establishing it on its proper ground, and this leads back to hopeless confusion.

In the second chapter on law and morality Professor Anderson tackles the central question, or what should be the central question, in the current debate: how far can social morality be valid in an unjust society? He is not in two minds about the duty of the Christian to be absolutely committed to the quest for social justice; but how far should he go in civil disobedience or revolutionary action against a tyrannical government? Here, again, Professor Anderson demonstrates the complications, dilemmas, ambivalences which make it more than difficult to give a clear answer. His own ultimate certainty and anchorage in an absolute that transcends the situation enables him to be clear-eyed in his survey of the doubts and confusions on the ground; but he is not, as most Christians used to be and some may still be, above the battle. No doubt he could not agree with Dr Kauda of Zambia that Christ if he came today would carry a gun, but he understands the point, that Christians living in this world today have to take a stand on issues of justice which may involve them in violence.

In the last chapter Professor Anderson speaks only to Christians, since he is examining the relation of morality and law to the divine grace of the Christian gospel. The notion is that this grace supersedes law and morality, but how and when? That is theology—or perhaps folklore. One strength that Professor Anderson brings to his task is that he is versed in Oriental religions and laws, and he therefore takes a comparative look at the questions he discusses. This does not shake his own firm position as an orthodox Christian, but it makes him an unusual spokesman for Christianity on law and morality, and one who is more attractive and persuasive than most theologians.

H. J. BLACKHAM

LETTERS

Religious and Moral Instruction

In the leading article of your 4 December 1971 issue ("Education Secretary Discusses School Religion with NSS Deputation") Mr David Tribe is quoted as saying: "The argument frequently put forward in favour of compulsory religion in schools that children learn morals through religion, is disproved by the prison statistics".

Now I contend that Mr Tribe is wrong, and so are the silent majority—meaning the members of the deputation. In my opinion the most important part of Religious Instruction in schools is to inculcate a code of morals, and the Bible stories are only a means of confusing children into accepting this narrow and rigid moral dictatorship without question. A friend once said to me that morality is a matter of opinion, not fact: what pleases me is good (and right) and what displeases me is bad (and wrong). However, Man is a social animal and has always lived socially and collectively, and therefore needs a social morality.

ROBERT MCKEAN.

The Editor comments:

I rather suspect that Mr Tribe and Mr McKean are more in agreement than this letter seems to suggest. I cannot speak for David Tribe, but my own objections to legalised RI are twofold: firstly I consider it wrong to inculcate into children contentious beliefs as if they were historical facts; and secondly I very much doubt whether "morality" as I understand it, i.e. the capacity to make and act upon moral decisions, can be taught in an academic sense at all. A child's moral attitudes are largely determined by its relationships with its immediate family and home background; schooling might undermine these, but can only add to them in a rather peripheral fashion (if the child is at an ordinary day school).

Information, Please

I believe I read somewhere that the Bible was first written some hundreds of years after the crucifixion.

Can you please let me know if you have any information in this direction.

M. D. SILAS.

St Paul and the Historical Jesus

In his reply to Mr Hinchliff, Professor G. A. Wells writes that "it is quite possible that Paul had no clear idea of when Jesus suffered on earth". Yet in Galatians, chapter 1, Paul describes how, three years his conversion (i.e. about AD 36) he went to Jerusalem and stayed for a fortnight with Peter, meeting none of the other apostles "save James the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19). A further visit fourteen years later, when he quarrelled bitterly with Peter, is described in the following chapter. It is inconceivable that the main theme of these discussions should not have been Christ's life on earth! Presumably, Professor Wells regards these passages as interpolations, but it is hardly a scientific procedure to dismiss as unhistorical all Biblical passages inconsistent with one's presuppositions.

All the myth theories of the origins of Christianity (including that of Professor Wells) seem to me to suffer from the grave defect of demanding a greater degree of credulity than Christianity itself.

JOHN L. BROOM.

"Noble Savage"—Fact or Fable?

The article about the sad plight of the Indians in America contained much that was sense and much that was dubious.

As a member of the maligned Almighty Orthodox Medical Profession perhaps I may be permitted a few comments. (Incidentally, in what way are we "Almighty"? This epithet will come a surprise to most of us!)

In all illness there is a strong emotional factor. No doubt the medicine man with his mumbo-jumbo has a strong influence on primitive communities. But this influence may be for harm as well as for good—and it is usually based on fear—always a bad way of trying to achieve anything constructive.

To deny primitive peoples the benefits of modern scientific knowledge—medical or otherwise—is to deprive them of the right to enjoy the fruits of civilised progress which we in Europe take for granted.

To the rationalist all religions seem equally idiotic, and activities of Christian missionaries, while usually well intentioned, all too often have the disastrous effect of breaking down tribal customs and trying to impose an alien creed totally unsuited to primitive communities living in the stone age.

What we should all aim to do for these backward nations is to preserve what is best in their own cultures while training them to use European know-how for their own benefit.

To leave them entirely alone, to "stew in their own juice" as it were, would be as heartless as trying to force them to conform to everything that is conventional in the West. A compromise must be worked out by both sides; a difficult and extremely complicated task.

One of the great tragedies of what is happening in Rhodesia today is that when the Colonial Office took over the administration of these African colonies it was on the strict understanding that it was for the benefit of the Africans, the suppression of slavery, and only until such time as the Africans were ready to rule themselves. That so many African states, having acquired their freedom, have turned into dictatorships is a great tragedy; and shows how dreadfully difficult it is to instil the virtues of democracy into primitive peoples.

CLAUD WATSON.

Catholic Education and Children

A sidelight on the kind of denominational teaching which could result in untold damage to children came to light in a letter (*The Guardian*, 20 January 1972) from two students of the Catholic Corpus Christi College, London, now so much in the news since the resignation of all the staff. I allude to their quotation from the Penny Catechism issued in 1971 under the *Imprimatur* of Cardinal Heenan.

By the question and answer method children are instructed:

"Q. After your night prayers what should you do?"

"A. After my night prayers I should observe due modesty in going to bed; occupy myself with the thoughts of death; and endeavour to compose myself at rest at the foot of the cross and give my last thoughts to my crucified Saviour."

As an example of mental cruelty to a child this seems hard to beat, especially for highly strung and sensitive children on whom it could have disastrous emotional effects. Anything less conducive to sleep it would be hard to imagine than being urged to concentrate on death and a somewhat problematical execution on an ancient gallows.

Children can, no doubt, be rendered more submissive and amenable to the system of "mind-control" so necessary to the maintenance of Catholic power which works on the principle of "catch them young". It seems to me that grants from public funds should not be given to educational establishments propagating this sort of teaching which can only result in a slave-mentality to a priesthood such as operates in Ireland, Malta and several other areas one could name.

The two students are to be congratulated upon calling attention to this Catechism.

ELIZABETH COLLINS.

What is a Humanist?

I often wonder what exactly *is* a humanist? Is he a deist, atheist, pantheist, mystic, optimist, or pessimist? In politics is he a Tory, liberal, socialist or anarchist? In regard to food, is he a vegetarian or a meat-eater? Is he a temperance man or spirit-drinker? Or is he just a plain humbug?

The word "humanist" is a very loose term, and it seems that it can mean a lot of things, and nothing. We all know what a *humourist* is: that is, a person who produces humour to make us laugh. The suffix "-ist" added to the word "humour" does not tax our brains at all, but added to the word "human" it does, as it leaves us no wiser. Therefore it seems to me that the humanist is motivated by a word which is devoid of any rational meaning.

Perhaps a humorist would be the best label for the humanist, at least until we get the proper definition of the word.

IAIN MCGREGOR.

Can any of our "thumb-nail definition" writers offer any assistance here? (Editor).

HELLBENT

We believe in God.

Who—or what—the hell is God?

That is blasphemy.

What the hell is blasphemy?

Knocking God.

Hell's bells . . .

Charles Byass