

The FREETHINKER

The Secular and Humanist Weekly

Registered at the Post Office as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 BY G. W. FOOTE

Vol. 92, No. 17

Saturday, 22 April 1972

3p

THE RIGHT TO DIE

Modern astronomy has created for the human imagination a vision of the universe that makes it seem altogether incredible that the earth should be the one and only place where there are living things and living persons. It is certainly not beyond the bounds of possibility that life is always living "somewhere". In that sense it may be said that life is eternal, but not in any other sense. Where life is, there is death. Living matter may begin as a "fortuitous concourse of atoms" but sooner or later the concourse breaks apart and the living matter becomes dead matter. Life is partly a matter of chance, partly a matter of choice, but after a time it becomes mainly a matter of habit. We have acquired the habit of living for an approximate "duration" and we tend to be somewhat shocked by any human attempt either to extend or to diminish the "natural duration" to which we have become habituated. But there is nothing in nature corresponding to what Christians call an "immortal soul". Death must come and it comes not as a division of "soul" and "body" but rather as the end product of a natural process of mortality to which, being mortal, we have a right.

One can claim the right to die without having any suicidal intention or any desire for immediate extinction. It is sufficient to know that the right is there and that it can be used when necessary as an emergency exit from life. The right to die provides a psychological defence against the danger of life becoming too long or too wearisome or too painful or too much without any kind of rational justification. Humanism is what people think and do in their most rational moments. It reflects the "rationality" of a "rational animal". As the cultivation of a rational mind is the one thing more than any other that seems to justify the continuation of an animal life, humanists are rather less likely than others to make any premature demand for the right to die. Odd as it may seem I believe that the frank and public acknowledgement of the right to die might actually reduce the number of tragic suicides. I cannot help feeling that the fact that suicide has been condemned as a sin makes it rather more of a temptation to some minds. If people feel that they have a perfect right whenever they choose, they may perhaps postpone the exercise of the right until tomorrow, and tomorrow need not come until we want it. Humanists are not likely to kill themselves in any passing mood of despondency; nor are they likely to suffer from any lack of purpose in life, so long as there remain human errors and fallacies that can be corrected by rational argument.

Enough of a good thing

But if an individual humanist reaches a point when he has conclusive evidence that he can be of no further use to anyone or anything, he would be not unwilling to accept the lethal draft or injection. It is possible to have enough of a good thing even when the good thing is life itself. There is no virtue in paying lip service to the sacredness of life when this consists in nothing more than the prolongation of senile decay or incurable imbecility. I have an elderly relative who occupies a place in a geriatric public ward. The complete lack of any privacy is one of the worst features of her situation. She frequently expresses

a desire to die as she knows perfectly well there is no hope of recovery to health and happiness. I can see no reason why she should not be granted the one and only remedy that can do her any good. There may be no happiness in death, but I am sure there is no suffering or pain. One can imagine a life without pain, but one cannot imagine a pain without a living or a sensitive subject. When mercy and compassion dictate the action, there can be nothing unethical or anti-social in hastening the natural process of mortality to its one predestined end. It would be a less painful world for the dying if the medical fraternity were less Christian but more humane in their ethical attitude to death. It would be a far less painful world for the sick and the dying if doctor and patient could come to regard themselves as fellow-travellers to the grave, rather than alien creatures bound on entirely different journeys.

Killing can be an Act of Mercy

Even those who attribute a supernatural origin to the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" are usually quite willing to acknowledge that there is such a thing as justifiable homicide. Not all killing is foul murder or tragic suicide or sheer accident. Killing can be a philanthropic act of mercy and compassion. That is one of the facts of life. It ought to be given some public acknowledgement in the laws of a free society which is also a civilised community.

It is a common error to identify positive and negative with good and evil. It is a great mistake. Nothing can be more positive than life, yet life can become supremely terrible. Nothing can be more negative than death, yet this particular negative is for everyone the ultimate good. As a matter of logic, there is no conflict between the right to say "No more" to life and the more positive right to attempt a record longevity. All that I have tried to suggest is that in a civilised community the way out of life could be made much easier than it is.

PETER CROMMELIN

DARWIN REMEMBERED

NIGEL H. SINNOTT

Charles Darwin (born 12 February 1809) died ninety years ago on 19 April. "None have fought better," wrote his "bulldog" in the cause of evolution, T. H. Huxley, "And none have been more fortunate."

He found a great truth trodden underfoot, reviled by bigots, and ridiculed by all the world; he lived long enough to see it, chiefly by his own efforts, irrefragably established in science, inseparably incorporated with the common thoughts of men, and only hated by those who would revile, but dare not. What shall a man desire more than this?¹

This year marks also the centenary of the publication of Darwin's book *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, one of his less successful works in commercial terms but nevertheless described in one of the theological reviews as his "most powerful and insidious"² production. 1872 was also the year in which appeared the sixth edition of *The Origin of Species*, the last to be published in his lifetime. Despite his age and his illnesses, this new edition carried a note of triumph, for in it Darwin wrote: "Now things are wholly changed, and almost every naturalist admits the great principle of evolution."³

The legacy of this shy, meticulous genius, the gentle agnostic haunted by a need to justify with facts and argument his smallest theoretical claim, and perpetually hamstrung socially and physically by psychomatic ailments of various sorts, is remarkable. "Indeed," wrote Sir Gavin de Beer in his preface to the Oxford University Press reprint (1958) of the sixth edition of the *Origin*, "the study of history, literature, art, music, or, more generally, of ideas, is today inconceivable against any other background than that of evolution . . . The realisation that the things which exist are as they are because they have become what they are is not the least of the benefits which have accrued to man as a result of Darwin's demonstration."

On 18 April 1882, the day before he died, Darwin addressed his wife in these words: "I am not the least afraid

of death. Remember what a good wife you have been to me. Tell all my children to remember how good they have been to me."⁴ We do well to remember Darwin's homely humanism, stoicism, and his unimpeachable intellectual integrity when many people today still believe in religion for fear of death. Neither should we forget the patience and courage shown by Darwin and his lieutenants (such as Huxley and Haeckel), for we find ourselves in age in which superstition and prejudice are still in evidence; in which Jesus Freaks and trendy manifestations of the new anti-science and unreason are by no means uncommon. Perhaps as rationalists in the 1970s we should hang our heads a little in shame for our having dozed when we should have been guarding what the nineteenth century freethinkers won.

The great Victorian scientists have their monuments both on the bookshelves of the world, and in terms of bricks and mortar. Huxley has his in Kensington, and Hooker at Kew; Darwin's is Down House, Downe, near Orpington, Kent, where he lived from 1842 until his death. Under the auspices of the Royal College of Surgeons Down House has been lovingly maintained as it was during Darwin's lifetime and is open to the public; a former curator was Sir Arthur Keith, the famous anthropologist and director of the R.P.A. As a scientific Mecca the house deserves at least one visit by every freethinker worthy of the name.

NOTES.

- 1 HUXLEY, T. H. 1882 April 27. "Charles Darwin" *Nature* [reprinted in Huxley, *Darwiniana* (Collected Essays, 2): p. 247].
- 2 DARWIN, Francis. 1887. *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* 3: p. 172 (quoted).
- 3 KEITH, Arthur. 1955. *Darwin Revalued*: p. 157 (quoted).
- 4 IRVINE, William. 1956. *Apes Angels and Victorians*: p. 177 (quoted).

THEY BOTH WENT WRONG!

I. S. LOW

If you think about economic problems one thing becomes clear—both socialists and anti-socialists have been making the same mistake; they look at things from the point of view of producers not consumers.

The real object of economic policy is to supply us with the goods and services we need—the food, clothes, education, entertainment and so on. We are all consumers and we only produce so that we can consume. We should therefore concentrate on getting the things mentioned in the last sentence but those of the right kind and in the right quantities. But what do we do? We concentrate on getting more wages for workers and more profits for employers. I call this the Producer Approach. It causes many muddles.

For instance: miners demand a rise in wages. They get it. That means coal prices go up. So steel workers and car workers all have to demand rises, again sending prices up, so the miners are not better off and may have to demand another rise. To get these rises the workers often have to strike. And these strikes do not seem to bring us to the classless society Marxists talk about in which all work for the good of all. Instead we have a society where everybody cheats everybody else on a scale that would make a nineteenth century capitalist shudder.

Also employers, capitalists or whatever you like to call them, have to make a profit. With modern large-scale production, this means they have to sell a lot. So they have to persuade you that you need two more cars when you already have a perfectly good one. Result: the world's resources are used up very quickly, salesmen have to waste time on unworthy activities, and (as regards the car industry) our roads get dangerously congested! The whole business is described well and wittily in J. K. Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*.

Profits, Quantity and Quality

Another thing. If you have to sell at a profit you have to try to make sure your goods have a high price. It is a principle of economics that prices of goods rise when the demand for them exceeds the supply. So producers try to keep supply down. We thus have employers working out cartels, rationalisation schemes to reduce the number of plants (coal pits at the moment) and trade unions trying to prevent too many people entering a particular trade. The Producer Approach causes too much to be produced—and too little!

It also causes a decline in quality. To produce a good article costs too much. You will realise that if you think of some of the things you buy—towels that do not dry and so

on. In chapter one of *Anatomy of a Merger* by Robert Jones and Oliver Marriott (a book dealing with the merger of G.E.C., A.E.I., and General Electric) we read: "In the post-war years the three big electrical companies were dominated by engineers who . . . produced a fine product, sometimes regardless of cost. When they came to make television sets and washing-machines their natural inclination was to produce an equally splendid piece of engineering while their more up-to-date competitors realised that . . . lower costs . . . were the keys to success." Clear enough; a free enterprise system and the Producer Approach operate against good quality goods.

To take a slightly different instance. I live in a small town near a big industrial city. The bus service is lousy! The buses are stifling in summer, freezing in winter, dirty, badly lit and uncomfortable (in 1972, when technology has reached such a peak that we can explore the stars!). Often you cannot see out of the windows for filth. The buses are often late: you stand, usually in the rain, for endless minutes till you find yourself thinking wistfully of General Tanz in Kirst's *Night of the Generals*, the disciplinarian who insists on everything being done at the right time. When the bus at last arrives the drivers just about kill you. Frequently they go on "go-slows" or strikes, whether justified or not, which cause discomfort and inconvenience to the passengers and always result in the same passengers having to pay higher fares. Complaints about the buses are many and bitter. And the passengers are definitely and overwhelmingly working-class, so the Marxists (and those who think like them) need not shout about "middle-class outlook."

If industries were controlled by committees of consumers these things would be avoided. Such committees should be representative of all income-groups, age-groups, and have the best technical advice and information. Of course it needs a lot of working out, but this is the fault of the people who have been neglecting the Consumer Approach for years.

The Mixed Economy

In general I favour socialism (public ownership of the means of production and distribution) as an economic system, to prevent the messes mentioned in the fourth paragraph of this article, also to stop the environment being ruined (the beautiful scenery of Northumberland and Durham is being wrecked by uncontrolled industrialism, for instance that wild region of great waterfalls, Upper Teesdale). But I have come to believe in a mixed economy

(not an economy organised by Mr. Heath!). The state should own the main industries so that the people can get the necessary goods and to make sure the economy is run properly. But some people find self-realisation in business. So some private firms should be allowed, to give scope for real initiative, to prevent the state getting too powerful and because this makes things more interesting.

"Milk and water socialism!" sneer some people—including some supporters of capitalism! Perhaps the latter would prefer blood and fire socialism? But what matters is, not what a system is called, but whether it works.

In the 1930s it was proved that unrestricted capitalism (or private enterprise) does not work any longer. It caused slums and slumps, unemployment, poverty, and coffee being dumped in the sea while millions were starving. But if the state owns everything there is a danger of centralisation, bureaucracy, and lack of imagination. Witness East Berlin, where there is a reasonable standard of living, but you hardly ever see anybody smiling (and no wonder—with bookshops full of dull Marxist textbooks—duller than usual, I mean!). And sometimes you see people smiling in East Berlin—with amusement, at the goose step, which the East German army goes in for!

I would like to make two more points. Firstly: to run an economic system we need a lot more knowledge and information. There should be a number of men and women working full-time gathering information and ideas, thinking it over and working problems out. And these people should be working for and recruited from the whole world. I doubt whether are enough of them in any one nation, and if you have such a body recruited from a single nation, they will only have experience of the conditions of that nation alone, while a world body would include people who would know about many different situations and many different ideas.

Also, no nation has enough raw materials to supply itself. No nation therefore has real control over its own economic system. Therefore the resources of the world should be pooled. For this reason, and that mentioned in the last paragraph, an up-to-date economic system requires world government.

No doubt my ideas will meet lots of opposition, but I think these ideas have the advantage of being right. Anyway, we need new ideas to liven things up. All the ideas prominent in the political world today are dead and dull and dated. Up the Consumer Approach! Up World Government!

FROM FREUD TO IRELAND

R. READER

In view of what has been happening in Ireland (and is beginning to happen here) attention may be called to the striking parallels between clinical neuroses and certain manifestations of religious belief.

It is now generally agreed that clinical neurosis starts by the individual being exposed to great fear in circumstances in which he is unable to react against it: hence its onset is usually during childhood. For example, a young child may be suddenly, and perhaps unjustifiably, harshly punished by an exasperated parent who has hitherto treated it kindly. A child does not always understand adult motives, and its fear may become an anxiety which is then repressed into the unconscious. Thereafter, one of two things may happen. The anxiety may be adequately com-

pensated for by the subsequent esteem and affection of the child's entourage, in which case it will later show no markedly abnormal character traits; or, if such esteem and affection are not forthcoming, then the repressed basic anxiety will produce hostility, which will later influence all the child's relations with the external world. The child will begin to set up private mental barriers and defences, designed to compensate for, and allay, the unconscious anxiety, giving bizarre traits to his personality. Thus he may be overtly suspicious and hostile to a varying degree, ranging from the general "touchiness" of mild neurosis to the almost complete withdrawal from reality seen in the psychoses and insanities. Or the child may begin to make

(Continued on page 134)

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.

The *Freethinker* can be ordered through any newsagent, or obtained by postal subscription from G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd. at the following rates: 12 months, £2.55; 6 months, £1.30; 3 months, 65p; USA and Canada: 12 months, \$6.25; 6 months, \$3.13.

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.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

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

Action Bangladesh, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Saturday & Sunday, 22 & 23 April, 10 a.m. (both days): Emergency Conference for Relief, Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Bangladesh.

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.

Havering Humanist Society, Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane, Tuesday, 25 April, 7.45 p.m.: Mrs. G. Stanley, "One Punishment is Enough" [Prison After-care].

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday, 23 April, 11 a.m.: Dr. Stark Murray, "Ethical Values and Medical Care." Tuesday, 25 April, 7 p.m.: Dr. Don Bannister, "Man, Psychological Explorer—The Work of George Kelly."

NEWS

"NEW HUMANIST"

The Rationalist Press Association's familiar monthly journal, *Humanist*, is, we are informed, shortly to undergo a metamorphosis and emerge at the beginning of next May under the title of *New Humanist*, with a larger number of pages and with contributions by such well-known writers as Kenneth Allsop, Richard Neville and A. J. Ayer. We trust that it will also continue with the "Personally Speaking" column by Hector Hawton, whose forthright commonsense and humour is widely appreciated.

We hope that the new journal's current publicity drive will pay off, and we wish *New Humanist* and its editors a lively and successful future. In passing we should perhaps reassure readers of this weekly that we are resisting the temptation to rename it the *Old Freethinker*!

THE DECLINE OF THE WEEKLIES

On a less happy note we observe that yet another small-circulation journal, the Independent Labour Party's *Socialist Leader*, has had to change from being a weekly to appearing fortnightly. An earlier, and similar, casualty this year was the Unitarian paper, *The Inquirer*.

Whether or not one agrees with the policies of *The Inquirer* or the *Socialist Leader* the fact remains that this trend is an ill omen for those who value freedom of expression and of the press. Papers of this type provide a useful platform for minority opinions, and with this general decline of the weeklies, and the contraction of the press as a whole owing to the pressure of ever-increasing costs, we shall receive comment and opinion more and more only from a very small number of large-circulation publishing corporations on the one hand, and from the near-monopolistic broadcasting media on the other. Such a prospect is neither desirable nor healthy in a free society.

Ninety-one years ago *The Freethinker* started off as a monthly, but rapidly went fortnightly, and finally became a weekly. It would be tragic if ever this trend had to be reversed simply because of monetary considerations. We hope therefore that last week's appeal for the Freethinker Fund will not pass unnoticed by those able to ensure that humanism and secularism continue to have a weekly voice in this country.

REPORT ON THE BASQUES

The Minority Rights Group, the independent research unit which provides information about international situations, has recently published a report dealing essentially with the Basques in Spain, but also making some comparisons with the Basques in France and with the Catalans. The author is Dr. Kenneth Medhurst, a lecturer at Manchester University who specialises in Spanish and Latin American Affairs.

The report, which includes a map of the Basque Country, examines the root causes of local nationalist movements, such as the militant E.T.A. ("Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna"); looks at the position of the Basque language and culture and the Basque country's economy; and at the rather interesting part played in the present controversy by the Church (some interesting parallels with Ireland here). Dr. Medhurst, who visited the Basque country to write this report, comes to the conclusion that Basque

S AND NOTES

hostility to the Madrid régime is deep and widespread, but that some elements within the Spanish government and army are beginning to have doubts about the present policy of repression; others fear that if concessions are made to the Basques it will also encourage the redevelopment of Catalan nationalism, crushed at the end of the Spanish Civil War.

The Basques is obtainable from the Minority Rights Group, 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG; price 34p (35p over seas) post free.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

A meeting was held on Saturday, the 20th inst., at the Victoria Hall, Bayswater, to urge the claims of women to the Parliamentary franchise. Mrs. Fawcett, who presided, delivered a telling and animated address in support of the object of the gathering. One of the resolutions that was passed expressed the opinion of the meeting that the extension to women of political rights, by strengthening in them the sense of responsibility and the duties of citizenship, would be attended by results conducive to the highest welfare of the State.

—From *The National Reformer*, 28 April 1872.

THE FROST FRACAS

"The question of God," a writer in the *Catholic Herald* tells us, "seems to rouse all the worst instincts in people, particularly in atheists or anti-religionists; they rave and shout and try to impose very rigid ideas of what God is like and why they don't like him." He was referring, of course, to the Frost Programme on "Does God Exist?," shown on Easter Sunday.

My own impression, from being in the studio audience, was that the raving and shouting was rather monopolised in this case by near-hysterical believers, as is virtually admitted by the *Methodist Recorder* which commented: "The way in which David Frost conducted his Easter programme . . . demonstrated how best to keep in check both those who ramble and those intent on destroying simple, heart-felt faith."

I would disagree about the rambling; and find that the overwhelming majority of both my (non-evangelical) Christian and irreligious friends agree that the programme was appalling and superficial in the extreme.

CLERICAL DRAG

"If my laundry persists in listing cottas, surpllices, and albs under the generic term 'Nightgown' I have no objection, especially since it works out cheaper that way. But when a frilly green nightdress comes back instead of a cotta, it does seem a bit of a drag."

—Pennyfields, in the *Church Times* (7 April).

NINETY YEARS AGO

In one respect, Salvationism [the Salvation Army] excels all previous revivals. It is unparalleled in its vulgarity. The imbecile coarseness of its language makes one ashamed of

human nature. Had it existed in Swift's time, he might have added a fresh clause to his terrible indictment of mankind. Its metaphors are borrowed from the slaughterhouse, its songs are frequently coarser than those of the lowest music-hall, and the general style of its preaching is worthy of a congregation of drunken pugilists. The very names assumed by its officers are enough to turn one's stomach. Christianity has fallen low indeed when its champions boast such titles as the "Hallelujah Fishmonger, the "Blood-washed Miner," the "Devil Dodger," the "Devil Walloper," and "Gipsy Sal."

—G. W. Foote in *The Freethinker*, 23 April 1882.

NO LONGER YOUTHS ARE WILLING . . .

Vatican statistics recently released and quoted by Michael Wilson in the *Catholic Herald* (7 April) show that in the six years from 1964 to 1970, 13,440 ordained priests left the Catholic ministry. "More serious," he writes, "is the situation in close on 40,000 parishes which are without a priest . . . A further 70,000 pastoral centres have no resident priest at all."

Meanwhile, the Catholic, Anglican and Free Churches in the North of England have issued a "Call to the North" to "work out a way of making the Christian faith intelligible to those at present out of touch with Christian worship and activity." They might as usefully try to square circles or design working models of perpetual motion machines.

Welcome as the continuing decline of organised religion must be to readers of this paper, it cannot be assumed that it necessarily leads to a corresponding growth of reason and common sense. In some quarters, at least, old-fashioned religion is being replaced by such bunkum as drug tripping, astrology, spiritualism, and political fanaticism. The tasks of freedom, reason and moderation are by no means yet done.

O TEMPORA ! O MORES !

Gloucester City Planning Authority has received "informal approaches" from the Cannon Inns catering group for permission to turn St. Nicholas' Church, which has a well-known leaning spire, into a "medieval banqueting hall."

The same firm has converted the former home of Robert Raikes (founder of the Sunday School movement), also in Gloucester, into a public house and restaurant named—the Dirty Duck !

NO PRIESTESSES NEED APPLY

"Just as motherhood belongs exclusively to the female sex, so priesthood belongs exclusively to the male sex."

—The Rt. Rev. David Hand, Bishop of Papua New Guinea, on hearing that his former secretary, Miss Mary Belfry, was hoping to become a priest in the American Episcopal Church.

During a big thunderstorm over London on 11 April Westminster Abbey was struck and damaged by lightning. The "Freethinker" offices were spared . . . Friends and influence in low places . . . ?

FROM FREUD TO IRELAND

(Continued from page 131)

extravagant demands on others for consideration and attention, striving to secure this by setting himself tasks which are usually beyond his powers, or by adopting an inordinately humble, ingratiating, self-depreciatory attitude in order to gain the protection and patronage of those more stable than himself.

All these attitudes are based on anxiety unknown either to the neurotic or the outside world, and consequently unforeseen situations continually arise. Chance words and actions by other people are seen as dangerous attacks on his private mental constructions, which must be parried—nearly always by retreating to new positions and erecting further barriers. Hence the neurotic's behaviour appears bizarre to others, and makes him difficult, if not impossible, to get along with.

Belief, Neurosis and Psychosis

Coming now to religious belief, the quiet, inward conviction of a divine plan does not, of course, constitute neurosis. But when believers, whose inward convictions rarely tally, herd together into groups in order to enforce collective interpretations of their individual mystical conceptions upon the rest of the world, heedless of the most lamentable material consequences, then we have a neurosis which, as in the case of Ireland, develops into a psychosis of a most dangerous kind.

The onset and development is precisely the same as that of clinical neurosis, except that the initial fear is always fear of death—an abnormally intense fear enhanced by certain religious practices imposed on young children. This fear becomes a repressed basic anxiety, producing hostility which, as in the case of clinical neurosis, may show itself in various ways. For example, an abnormally bitter struggle is waged by certain believers to gain prestige and power. Others, again, may adopt an unnatural meekness in seeking the protection of others. At the same time, an elaborate private mental system of artifices and justifications is codified into dogmas which are meaningless for the normal person. As in the case of clinical neurosis, chance words and actions may evoke antagonism and hate: hence the notorious friction that has always existed between various sects of believers, the mystical conceptions of each sect being viewed by the other as dangerous attacks upon its neurotic edifices.

Highly Contagious

Lastly, both clinical and religious neuroses are highly contagious. Normally stable persons in continual contact with a neurotic often commence to adopt the latter's bizarre patterns of thought and behaviour.

The realisation that, in fact, both clinical and religious neuroses are diseases has most important consequences. At the present time, clinical neurosis is a recognised mental problem, and increasingly large numbers of neurotics are today under psychiatric care in order to discover, and if possible, remove the basic reasons for their artifices. In most cases, the condition improves. But in others it deteriorates. Should this happen, and an individual suffering from a clinically-defined neurosis or psychosis take a turn for the worse, and lash out with a broken bottle, there is a rush of feet, and, without further parley or discussion, he is interned.

But—and this is the amazing thing—if that selfsame person, in addition to lashing out with the bottle, also yells

that he is being discriminated against, persecuted, or oppressed religiously, politically, or economically, by another religious sect, then time will be given to him to calm down, perhaps assisted by a few rubber bullets, and in his quieter moments he will be gravely listened to, the matter pondered, and everything possible done to make things easier for his projects!

In short, psychiatrists—not politicians, financiers and economists—are required, and temporary internment is useless. We do not require barbed wire fences to prevent these unfortunates from getting at one another: we require permanent fences to prevent them from ever getting at, and infecting, the outside world. The matter, in fact, goes far beyond the present Irish troubles. Religious neurosis is the mainspring of our pseudo-scientific society's expansionist delirium—the basic cause of all our social, economic and political troubles, showing in a hundred neuralgic places in the world today. It has been the underlying cause of all the wars of history, and, failing some vast general awakening and defensive measures, it will be the basic reason for the disappearance of *Homo sapiens* and perhaps of all life itself.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PAPACY IN THE MIDDLE AGES by Walter Ullman. Methuen, £4.50.

In spite of its title, Professor Ullman has actually produced a quite substantial book, in the course of which he has managed to compress both a great deal of factual material along with much interesting and penetrating analysis of the evolution of the papacy during the medieval era. Incidentally, he gives a generous connotation to the term "Middle Ages", extending them at both ends, so as to embrace the entire epoch between the official toleration of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine in A.D. 313 down to the actual threshold of the Reformation in the opening years of the sixteenth century. The result constitutes an encyclopaedic survey, though one imagines that the uninitiated may find it rather heavy going in parts. Nevertheless, it represents a mine of information and an indispensable reference book to any student undeterred by its formidable apparatus of scholarship. Incidentally, there are also one or two rather stylistic peculiarities, notably the learned author's invariable habit of prefixing the recurring term "Ruler" with a capital R! Surely a rather strange anachronism in this "century of the Common man"?

Perhaps the most important deduction to be drawn from the chequered annals of "The ghost of the Roman Empire" (as Thomas Hobbes so aptly described the papacy) is that the institution itself is far more important than are the individual popes, since popes, good, bad, indifferent, and occasionally great, are merely birds of passage that come and go but the papacy itself remains! One could perhaps term the institution as substantially and essentially a bureaucracy: a bureaucracy that appears at times to have the secret, if not of eternal youth, at least of perpetual resilience. Here too, the individual popes, most of them typical bureaucrats (particularly the most successful ones) have often played an ambiguous role. Several times indeed, as our author dryly comments, "It would be true to say

that the papacy as an institution was greatly in need to be defended against the popes". This remark was made in particular about "The dark age" (in every sense!) of the tenth century papacy; that selfsame era expressly stigmatised by the official historian of the papacy, Cardinal Baronius, as "The Age of the Whores". However, the papacy as an institution not only recovered from this dark age, as it later outlived that of the Borgias but went on to attain its zenith, its golden age, during the High Middle Ages, between 1100 and 1300. Evidently, "The ghost of the Roman Empire" like its secular original, represents an organism of enormous vitality that can absorb incumbents of every kind and calibre; just as the secular Roman Empire knew how to survive even a Nero or a Caligula. Perhaps the most valuable lesson to be learned from this able book is that the papacy should never be judged by the popes, but always vice versa.

The evolution of St. Peter's successors has been the reverse of smooth, in fact, it has been little more than a succession of wars, spiritual, and often physical as well, both inside and outside Christendom. During the epochs specifically treated by our author a number of major combats, again both spiritual and temporal, can be briefly indicated. Within the confines of Christianity itself, the Medieval papacy began its autonomous career with a successful revolt against a secular hegemony of the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople. It actually destroyed this empire in 1204 by the agency of a secular crusade, and ultimately survived it. To fight the "Roman" Empire in the East, it created the "Holy Roman" Empire in the West under Charlemagne (A.D. 800). But during the Middle ages, this empire also turned against it, and particularly under the Hohenstaufen dynasty, represented by Frederick Barbarossa, whose grandson Frederick II ("The Antichrist"), came near to reducing the papacy to the role of a mere imperial chaplain. However, Rome triumphed over both empires, and eventually survived both. But she has been less successful in her struggle against modern rationalism from the fourteenth century onwards.

Meanwhile, on the primarily religious front, Rome fought a whole series of "Survivals and Arrivals". Islam, against which she directed a whole series of Crusades in East and West alike (usually unsuccessful, since the creed of the Koran survives as still her primary religious rival); against the Manichean Albigenses, whom she exterminated in a successful crusade (thirteenth century); not to mention such later Medieval sects as the Hussites and Lollards, ruthlessly suppressed in and after the thirteenth century by the Roman "Gestapo", the Inquisition. Professor Ullman actually breaks off his narrative just as a new heresy, Protestantism, rose over the papal horizon.

As our author makes admirably clear, different ages think, as well as act, differently! To appreciate the motives of the Medieval papacy, as of the Middle Ages in general, a different wave length is necessary, especially as such fundamental modern ideas, as we often take for granted, such as individual liberty and the toleration of dissident minority opinion, appear to have been entirely unknown in the "Ages of Faith"; a fact that comes up, notably, in Dr. Ullman's penetrating analysis of the Psychology of the Medieval Inquisition.

The only serious criticism that one could perhaps bring against this admirable book, is that it appears to indicate a certain lack of perspective. Our author is perhaps too much of a Medieval specialist to see the papacy as a whole? Hence, while his book ends at the Reformation, the papacy itself did not end there, as its concluding pages

appear rather to imply: there followed the extremely resilient papacy of the Counter-reformation. "The Catholicism of a State of Siege," as I have elsewhere termed it. While today, particularly since the Second Vatican Council, yet another era in papal annals, the Ecumenical era, is making currently laborious (though so far at least, not conspicuously successful) efforts to get off the ground. But at any rate, the papacy did not end at the Reformation. Perhaps these later epochs in papal evolution will presently find appropriate historians as able and learned as Dr. Ullman is a specialist in Medieval history? Meanwhile, there is much to be learned from this major contribution to Medieval ecclesiastical history and its leader the papacy.

F. A. RIDLEY

HENRY VII by Derek Pitt.

Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, 60p.

Normally the concise biography is a boon to the general reader, giving him some knowledge of a subject he may not wish to study in detail. The brevity of such a book is its whole purpose, but at the same time the reader's downfall because only those with some previous knowledge can balance what they read and decide on its value. Derek Pitt's *Henry VII* is a very simple account of the reign and times of this king. To his credit Mr. Pitt covers his subject well and gives a good outline, but he is not an expert and has plainly gathered his information from some of the standard works without further study.

His facts are generally correct, although he gives at least one false date (the Treaty of Pecquigny was signed in 1475, not 1471), and some of his ideas, such as the finding of Richard III's crown under a hawthorn bush after the Battle of Bosworth, are more legendary than historical. Mentioning the Princes in the Tower, he says that "no serious historians subscribe to the ingenious ideas put forward there" (in *The Daughter of Time*) "and we may therefore assume that the young king and his brother had been put out of the way by Richard III, probably in 1483." If he had examined the period in more detail Mr. Pitt would realise that most serious historians express some doubt about the Princes' disappearance, and Richard III's innocence is given very plausible evidence in one of the most scholarly biographies concerned with this period.

Mr. Pitt's work is sadly unscholarly. By its style it might well be thought a schoolbook: perhaps as a teacher he finds it difficult to forget his normal work. He even refers to "what is called in history the Renaissance" and then explains its nature—surely something that, as they say, every schoolboy knows—and some of his descriptions of the life of the time are trite generalisations. "The houses of even the wealthiest would seem unbearably uncomfortable to us", he says, but in the great tradition of historical fiction "logs sizzled merrily in the enormous fireplaces."

For some reason, rather than dealing with the reign chronologically, he has taken it by themes: Henry's claim and accession, his achievements, domestic affairs and European politics. Only a vague sense of time comes through and despite the brief chronology at the end it is somewhat confusing. Perhaps the cautious will find this book valuable as a guide or as an introduction to more detailed reading, but for the historically-minded the most valuable items are the photographs.

CELIA SMITH

SEX AND DEHUMANIZATION by David Holbrook.
Pitman, £2.00.

We are all concerned today with the dehumanising effect of the machine-based corporate structured society upon its members. We might therefore approach David Holbrook's latest book with the expectation of finding a useful critique to place in our liberal armoury. After all he is well known as a sensitive, sympathetic creator and ceaseless worker.

What we find is the most frightful and saddening, uselessly rubbish. Mr. Holbrook's sensitivity has run away with him. He is apparently in the midst of some deep personal crisis and this hodge-podge of semi-coherent substantially secondhand raving is the result. Holbrook reads the big bludgeon into every modern mention of sex, and hatred into the minds of modern women. He never makes his own attitude explicit, even in an introduction added, he says, at the request of his publisher. His publisher was right, but did not press hard enough. Holbrook still gets away without stating his own attitudes frankly. This is not to say they are not clear: they are.

Holbrook hates sex. He wants to expunge every last mention of it; to keep it in the realm of personal mystery. Do not teach, he says in a dreadful parody of what he ought to say. Dr. Gilshoft is at his elbow here, I suppose.

Why be angry? There is after all a case to be made. Holbrook himself has done it better in poetry in the past. A couple of years ago early Women's Libbers were putting protest stickers on advertising posters which used the female as a carrot.

Peter Lomas in a short and kind preface puts the case in a nutshell. One is angry because this book does not itself make that case. One is anxious because the constant quoting from the pundits of psycho-analysis and foreign newspapers gives the book an aura of authority which Holbrook's own, otherwise well deserved reputation will reinforce. Despite its own internal contradictions the book will make an impact, however, tiny, in the ranks of those who man the forces of dark under the absurd banner of light.

Above all, one is angry because this book is anti-education and anti-human. That said, let us, for Mr. Holbrook's sake as well as ours, forget all about it and start again.

HOWARD BRADWORTHY

LETTERS

"To Encourage the Others"

This letter may make some bizarre form of literary history. It cannot be a common occurrence for an author to come to the defence of one of his reviewers, but in view of the comments contained in your letters column of 8 April, I have no alternative.

The most interesting aspect of the letters from Charles Byass and Arthur Francis is that both men have the temerity to attack Michael Lloyd-Jones's review of my book *To Encourage The Others* though neither has taken the trouble actually to read the book! That really is a definitive example of freethinking, or rather free-for-all thinking.

Mr. Byass declares that the fact that a person is under arrest does not affect his responsibility for the subsequent actions of an accomplice. In view of the fact that prior to the Craig/Bentley case this issue had never been considered by the courts of this country and was not properly considered at their trial or Bentley's subsequent appeal I would like to know from Mr. Byass what

legal precedents he can quote. His letter states that he raises this point "as a matter outside the Craig/Bentley case." This may come as a shock to him, but the review, and indeed by book are solely concerned with the Craig/Bentley case.

If Mr. Francis cares to read my books he will see that I have gone to some lengths to attack not only public ignorance concerning epilepsy but also public prejudice towards epileptic sufferers. What makes Bentley's epilepsy highly relevant is the strong possibility that he suffered the equivalent of an epileptic attack during the Croydon gun battle. Whether Mr. Francis likes it or not, when a person is involved in an alleged crime such as the one that Bentley was found guilty of and that person suffers from epilepsy, then the possibility that the epilepsy was the direct causation of the "crime" can never be safely ruled out. That is not merely my opinion, but the opinion of a considerable body of the medical profession including amongst others a world authority on human brain-waves, Professor Sir Denis Hill, who performed an EEG examination on Bentley.

One final point, Derek Bentley was not merely an illiterate epileptic sufferer. He was mentally retarded with an I.Q. of 66 and a mental age of 10. If the letter writers expended a little less energy on irrelevances and a little more on demanding a public inquiry, justice might finally be seen to be done in the case of Craig and Bentley.

DAVID A. YALLOP.

Democracy and Electoral Reform

Peter Cadogan's letter (1 April) reminds me of what Christians say—that Christianity has not failed; it has been found difficult and not tried. We cannot say that representative democracy is a failure, so long as we have only half a democracy.

The growth of scale certainly does present difficulties, but there clearly are matters that need to be decided on a very large scale. Mr. Cadogan himself says that the nation-state is out of date, and there will sometime have to be a world authority for some world problems. At the same time, there are other questions which concern only a single nation, a city or a hamlet, and we need to have local machinery to deal with these. This need is recognised in the pressure for neighbourhood councils.

Mr. Cadogan recognises that some form of council is necessary, but he wants those councils to be composed of volunteers. Are they not so composed now? For seats in the House of Commons or on a local council, there are usually two or three times as many volunteers as there are seats. All that Mr. Cadogan suggests is a different way of deciding which of those volunteers shall in fact be accepted; he wants them to be chosen by lot instead of by election.

I agree that choosing by lot would in many cases give a more representative assembly than we get now—for instance, in the case of those local councils which are composed solely of members of one party. However, it is by definition a very chancy business; why not make sure that representatives will include spokesmen for all the opinions held by considerable numbers among those whom they represent? That is what the single transferable vote form of proportional representation achieves, and it also ensures that the elected representatives will not be mere puppets dancing to the tune of some party organisation; because if the voters can insist on electing the persons they want, in defiance of any party organisation, the present excesses of party discipline become impossible.

ENID LAKEMAN,

Director, Electoral Reform Society.

Literary Standards in "The Freethinker"

Mr. Bensley's letter of 8 April raises the question of humorous, literary and philosophical standards in *The Freethinker*. Alas, we cannot all be Lady Bracknells, and it is surely no fault of the Editor if journalistic style, in general, has been somewhat less sophisticated ever since Hemmingway and the *Reader's Digest*. Similarly, it is one of the sad facts of life that few political writings seem able to achieve the high density of Marx, and even fewer philosophical ones the lucidity of Ayer. However, apart from clumsy humour and low standards of style, "laboured points" are still points. What pains me most is the absence of criticism of such "points"—whether such criticism achieves one's favourite style or not seems less pertinent to *The Freethinker* than that such criticism should be reasonably rational. Incidentally, I would agree with Mr. Bensley that some of Charles Byass's writings are "painfully unfunny."

CHARLES BYASS.