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"GRAVE THREAT TO INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY"

CRIMINAL LAW REVISION COMMITTEE CONDEMNED

"The proposals of the eleventh report of the Criminal Law Revision Committee are a grave threat to the civil liberty of the individual," says a memorandum issued by the National Council for Civil Liberties. "They represent a dramatic tilt of the scales of justice towards the prosecution. What is more, the arguments on which the proposals are based signify a singular departure from the traditional defence of the innocence of the accused until proven guilty." The N.C.C.L. memorandum has been widely circulated amongst members of Parliament and the legal profession as the first phase of N.C.C.L.'s campaign to prevent the implementation of the Criminal Law Revision Committee's proposals. In a press statement last week the N.C.C.L. said that public opinion, "which has always been hostile to the Committee's proposals," was its strongest ally in this case.

The accused's right to silence

The C.L.R.C. proposes altering the defendant's traditional "right to silence" because this gives "an unnecessary advantage to the guilty" and hardened criminals use the right as a ploy "to avoid conviction if caught." N.C.C.L. comments: "The Committee produces no evidence to support the implication that a substantial proportion of those who fail to answer police questions do so in order to hamper the police." In any case, "much the same fallacy is involved here as it would be if it were argued that a National Health Service was not needed because the wealthy and sophisticated know how to look after themselves."

It cannot be assumed, says the N.C.C.L. memorandum, that because a suspect refuses to answer police questions he necessarily has guilty motives for doing so. "Apart from the fact that he may quite properly not reply to what is clearly an improper question, a suspect may remain silent because he is confused or uncertain where questioning is leading." He may simply be unable to remember the relevant facts.

Right of access to legal advice

On the subject of Legal Advice, N.C.C.L. says that the C.L.R.C.'s suggested changes, "which would fundamentally reduce the safeguards available to suspects," run counter to the present tide of legal policy which would make legal advice more free available to the public. "The C.L.R.C. recommends that the Judges' Rules—the only authoritative source in which the right of access to a legal adviser is affirmed—should be abolished in their present form altogether."

N.C.C.L. also takes the Criminal Law Revision Committee to task for advocating immediate changes in criminal procedure because of the rise in crime. "Whether there are 5,000 or 500,000 offences in a year," comments the National Council, "each case involves an individual whose right to justice must be protected . . . The citizen needs safeguards—the numbers involved are immaterial."

The N.C.C.L. memorandum opposes not only the C.L.R.C.'s conclusion, but also challenges its methods. "The Committee's report," says N.C.C.L., "is too often marred by the uncritical adoption of propositions for which little or no evidence exists and for which the Committee itself provides none." Next month N.C.C.L. hopes to publish the present memorandum, together with its recent commentary on the Judge's Rules, as a pamphlet.

GOD AND GENERAL AMIN

The pathetic plight of some 40,000 Ugandan Asians threatened with expulsion from that country because they have retained (or been forced to retain) British nationality, has received wide sympathy in the press. Only the radio, it seems, mentioned the underlying obscenity in the drama, a statement by Uganda's President, General Amin, that he decided to expell the Asians because God advised him to do so in a dream.

A generation ago a certain Austrian corporal claimed to be the instrument of God in his zeal for Jew-baiting and the pursuit of *Lebensraum*. Since then we have had Yahya Khan and President Nixon! Let us pray, if you will pardon the term, that here we will all show a little godless magnanimity towards these luckless 40,000 if the god-fearing General succeeds in an African up-dating of Cromwell's "Hell or Connacht" policy.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HOMOSEXUALS

The Committee for Homosexual Equality has submitted evidence to the Lord's Select Committee on the second Anti-Discrimination Bill. CHE's evidence argues the case for broadening the scope of the Bill to include discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. "This," says CHE, "could be done with only minor alterations to the wording of the Bill."

Copies of the evidence can be obtained from the General Secretary, CHE, 28 Kennedy Street, Manchester M2 4BG.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Overseas Subscriptions. Would overseas subscribers please note that subscriptions, when due, should be paid by cheque, International Money Order (but not ordinary money order), or postal order (where valid).

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL. Telephone: 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1NL.

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.

London Young Humanists. Saturday, 19 August: fund raising party at Ealing. Ring 01-997 4792 for details.

NEWS

THE SUPERSTAR SAGA

Since the last *Freethinker* went to press, William McLroy, General Secretary of the National Secular Society and author of the leaflet, *Jesus Christ Supersham*, appeared on B.B.C. Television's "Nationwide" (8 August) with Tim Rice, who wrote the lyrics of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Dana Gillespie (who plays Mary Magdalene in the show) and Brigadier Harry Deane of the Salvation Army. Mr. McLroy wished the show well, but countered any suggestion that it would herald a new Christian revival. The chances of people turning to God after seeing *Jesus Christ Superstar* were no more probable than that "an impressionable young man will go off and join the Navy after seeing *H.M.S. Pinafore*."

As mentioned briefly last week, a dozen N.S.S. members turned up outside the Palace Theatre to distribute copies of *Jesus Christ Supersham* among *Superstar* first nighters. They were not the only tract distributors: the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary also appeared with banners ("At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow"—we are waiting. . .), and leaflets saying "Jesus Christ is alive today." Their singing (technically illegal there, so we are told) should not give the Salvation Army any anxiety about maintaining its reputation in that respect. Dennis Barker, *The Guardian's* Sincere Correspondent, wrote that much of the N.S.S. literature was "purloined craftily by friends of the German sisters," but we suspect that he was carried away by his own wishful thinking in this respect. Certainly the whole affair was very colourful and amiable, and all parties seemed well satisfied, not least Mr. Rice, who commented: "It's all good for business."

We hope to publish a review of *Superstar* next week.

SUPERINFECTION

Although the initial reviews of *Jesus Christ Superstar* were not over-enthusiastic we shall be very surprised if the show's promoters have to sell their shirts to defray any losses. The publicity has almost certainly assured it of a very good run, and some of the songs are highly infectious, as we found when visiting the offices of our fraternal organ, the People's Revolutionary Atheist Daily, *The Episcopophagist*, where the Hon. Peregrine Burke (Editor) was gaily singing the *Superstar* theme song to himself! Caught *in flagrante* he tried to wriggle out of his embarrassment by sliding into the last two lines of the "Marseillaise."

In West Bloomsbury both hell and Jesus have broken loose, with respectable residents up in arms from Coit Street to Prince of Darkness Square because of the endless din of souped-up, transistorised Jesus-rock music emanating from Humanist House, every-trendy headquarters of the Assembly of Bloomsbury Heretics, who have cast aside their fashionable naked yoga/meditation exercises to immerse themselves wholesale in the relevant, constructive and highly meaningful pursuit of "ethical Jesus consciousness" (both with, and without, revelation), "agapés", and "Jesus encounter groups". The sleepless local residents have found a lean, hungry, and somewhat over-eager leader in the person of Dr. Ilych Haczemann, whom we last saw slinking around an alleyway in the hope of serving a writ on A.B.H. High Moderator, His Beatitude Roger Montmorency, who has now added a shoulder-length wig, gilded polystyrene halo and white kaftan to his regalia.

S AND NOTES

CLERICAL SCHIZOPHRENIA

"I am likely to be suffering from schizophrenia: in the afternoon I'll be looking at the nude lovemaking scene in the rock Mass picture, *Alpha and Omega*; in the evening I'll be presenting midwifery certificates to nurses. . ."

—The Very Rev. John Hazlewood, Dean of Perth, Australia, quoted by Athol Thomas in the *West Australian* (Perth).

BEWARE OF WITCHES

According to the *Daily Telegraph* (7 August) Mr. Morris Cerullo, founder of the aptly-named American organisation, Evangelism Incorporated, is worried about the growth of diabolism in the United States. He alleges that some ten million Americans dabble in the occult; that 100,000 worship the devil, and that at most American colleges "there is at least one witch and sometimes a coven." Mr. Cerullo is therefore sending a mobile exhibition round the country to warn young people about witchcraft and diabolism. According to the *Telegraph*, "it contains 100 items associated with magic, the black mass, sorcery and blood-drinking orgies."

Satanism and the "occult" have often been in fashion with bored, rich suburbanites, whether in America or Europe; and the *Daily Mail's* "Flook" cartoon strip long ago added their British proletarian equivalent to our mythology: Lucretia Bodger, the modern, with-it Cockney witch who brews all her vile potions on a pressure cooker!

If the whole rag-bag of diabolism and black magic sounds somewhat inane, melodramatic, repulsive and pathetic to normal people, it is surely no more so than orthodox Christianity (of which Mr. Cerullo is an exponent) with its obsession with death by slow torture (crucifixion) and cannibalistic rituals politely described as the Mass or Holy Communion. Perhaps Mr. Cerullo fears that witchcraft may damage Evangelism Incorporated's bank balance.

It would naïve to suggest that satanism, as an organised cult, is entirely harmless. The Manson trials in America could perhaps be cited as evidence of it being socially harmful in certain circumstances. But compared with the appalling legacy of orthodox religious witch-hunting, holy wars, and sectarian persecution it cannot hope to compete.

CATHOLIC DECLINE

The Anglican Church is not the only one currently suffering from a clergy famine (see *The Freethinker* of 12 August). The latest *Irish Catholic Directory* shows that since 1965 there has been a 45 per cent drop in entrants to the religious orders and the Catholic priesthood in Ireland. Retirement and death now exceed recruitment by 200 a year. Meanwhile, in Britain, the Catholic Missionary Society is lamenting what the *Evening Standard* describes as a "serious shortage" of priests. "It is not unknown," says the C.M.S.'s journal, "for some parents to positively stifle a son's or daughter's expressed desire to enter the priesthood or religious life. . . . Far more frequently, the fault lies in a refusal to encourage the first glimmering of a desire for the religious life." Modern materialism is, of course, also blamed. Perhaps seeping common sense is another culprit.

1973 HUMANIST DIARIES

Barbara Smoker* is already taking orders for Humanist Diaries for 1973, which will be available shortly. She describes the venture as "a bit of private enterprise. If it results in a financial loss, the loss will be mine; if it shows a net profit, fifty per cent of it will be donated to the humanist-sponsored Tutume community project in Botswana."

The scarlet-covered diaries measure 10.5 by 7 cm. and contain the usual London theatre and Underground maps, as well as sixteen pages of calendar and general information and another sixteen pages of specifically humanist interest—lists of organisations and publications, anniversaries, and future events. Each week is covered by a two-page spread, which also gives the month's calendar at the foot of every right-hand page. The daily entries list public holidays and (despite growls from some of our own fundamentalists) chief saints' days and religious festivals.

*All orders for Humanist Diaries should be addressed to Miss Barbara Smoker, 6 Stanstead Grove, London SE6 4UD. Including postage, the diaries cost 53p for one, £1 for two, £2.25 for five, £4.15 for ten, and £6 for fifteen.

BOOTH AND BRADLAUGH

The 19 August number of the *War Cry* commemorates the sixtieth anniversary of the "promotion to Glory" of William Booth by trotting out another deathbed story about Charles Bradlaugh—yes, *another* one!

The atheist member of Parliament for Northampton, Charles Bradlaugh, was convinced that William Booth was a fraud and a charlatan; that he was lining his own pockets from the money he was receiving from all quarters for the [Salvation] Army's rapidly expanding social programme.

It is said that at the hour of his death, Bradlaugh continued to repeat, 'General Booth's accounts! General Booth's accounts!', hoping to the last for an exposure. But, of course, there was nothing to expose.

Oh no? Well for a start we will "expose" the fact that Bradlaugh died in a coma, rendering the quotation rather unlikely. And if it was conceivably true, then it rather finishes off the old Christian lie about Bradlaugh's slobbering death-bed repentance, does it not?

As G. W. Foote wrote in *The Freethinker* for 1 September 1912: "General Booth is lauded to the skies . . . for his 'social' work. It is really one of the greatest impostures of the age . . . The philosophy of it was like that of the Irishman who lengthened his shirt by cutting a piece off the top and sewing it on the bottom."

FREETHINKER FUND

We are most grateful to those readers and friends of *The Freethinker* who continue to give generously to the Freethinker Fund. Unlike the camp-followers of the "King of Kings" the anti-church mice who labour on behalf of democracy, doubt and disbelief cannot count on tithes and ill-gotten real-estate for their sustenance. Every little penny (or inflated pound) helps.

In particular, thanks are due to the following contributors: Anonymous, £1; Mrs. A. Bennett, 45p; G. J. Davies, £1.45; L. Dignam, £1.05; T. V. Eberhard, £1.28; D. Harper, £3.35; A. W. Harris, 25p; J. A. Kane, £1.10; James Kent, 35p; Margaret Knight, £1.45; P. J. McCormick, 22p; S. C. Merrifield, 35p; W. R. Price, £3; W. Shannon, 45p; George Swan, 20p; Mrs. L. Van Duren, 25p; E. Wakefield, 26p; T. Wallace, £5. Total for July: £21.46.

ROBERT CHAMBERS, PIONEER EVOLUTIONIST

R. W. MORRELL

Although I share the sentiments expressed by Nigel H. Sinnott in his interesting article "Darwin Remembered,"¹ I found the opening quotation from Huxley somewhat inapt. Huxley writes of Darwin discovering "a great truth trodden underfoot, reviled by bigots, and ridiculed by all the world . . ." Unfortunately Huxley himself must be included among the "bigots," for many years earlier he had savagely attacked the pioneering work on evolution, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, written by Dr. Robert Chambers and published without any indication of authorship in 1844, in a review which appeared in the *British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review* in 1845. Of Chambers's book he wrote that he was irritated "by the prodigious ignorance and thoroughly unscientific habit of mind manifested by the writer."² Later in life Huxley developed qualms as to the accuracy of his attack, and was honest enough to voice them in the chapter he contributed on "The Reception of the *Origin of Species*" to the *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (1887).

Huxley's criticism of Chambers, who, ironically, talked him into attending the meeting of the British Association where he clashed with Bishop Wilberforce, was both unfair and inaccurate. It was undeniable that the *Vestiges* was a highly speculative composition, but a considerable portion of it, particularly the geological data, was quite sound for its period, a fact which Huxley as a geologist should have recognised, and which in fact has been recognised by another eminent scientist, the anthropologist Sir Gavin de Beer, in his invaluable introduction to the recent Leicester University edition of the *Vestiges*. The attack on the author of *Vestiges* by Huxley was similar, although more modest in tone, to the metaphorical flood of vitriolic ire poured upon the unfortunate head of its then anonymous author by the Cambridge geologist the Rev. Adam Sedgwick. This justly famous scientist concluded that the author was a woman for "I cannot but think the work is from a woman's pen, it is so well dressed, and graceful in its externals. I do not think the 'beast man' could have done this part so well." In a letter to the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Macvey Napier, the book is called "a rank pill of asafoetida and arsenic, covered with gold leaf," and in another letter to Charles Lyell it became "Gross credulity and rank infidelity joined in unlawful marriage, and breeding a deformed progeny of unnatural conclusions . . ." The irate Sedgwick agreed to a request from Napier to review the book for his journal. However, this lengthy article in which the reverend geologist sought to tear the *Vestiges* to shreds is sadly termed by his biographers Clark and Hughes as hardly successful, for "notwithstanding its solid merits, and some eloquent passages, it is dogmatic, ponderous, dull."³

Preparing the ground

Darwin, too, was critical of Chambers's book, but late in life he made amends by claiming it to have done "excellent service in this country in calling attention to the subject [evolution], in removing prejudice, and thus preparing the ground for the reception of analogous views."⁴ Writing to Charles Lyell some years earlier Darwin had admitted that Sedgwick's review of *Vestiges* had filled him with "fear and trembling."⁵ The alarm on Darwin's part stemmed from the fact that his own views had turned

away from the progressive creationism of men such as Sedgwick, and in 1837 on his return to Britain after the round-the-world voyage of the *Beagle* he had commenced a notebook which he titled *Transmutation of Species*, then after eight years and several more notebooks came Sedgwick's onslaught.

A. R. Wallace, who shares the evolutionary laurels with Darwin, was greatly moved by the *Vestiges*, but then, significantly, he had been influenced by secularism and with his brother regularly attended the meetings at the Hall of Science in John Street, off Tottenham Court Road in London.⁶ Writing to his close friend the naturalist H. W. Bates, an agnostic and author (at Darwin's prompting) of *A Naturalist on the Amazons*, Wallace dismisses the critics of *Vestiges* and asserts that he does not consider it "a hasty generalisation" (which seems to be Bates's view), but rather as "an ingenious hypothesis strongly supported by some striking facts and analogies, but which remains to be proved by more facts and the additional light which more research may throw upon the problem."⁷ In taking this approach Wallace displays a more scientific attitude than Sedgwick.

Scientific competence

Robert Chambers (1802-1871) was aware of the hostility his ideas would provoke, and being a publisher was equally aware of the possible financial dangers to his firm should he become thought of as an "infidel," hence the desire on his part for anonymity. His authorship of the book was not made public until several years after his death. Some critics of the *Vestiges* have sought to make capital out of the fact that its author was not a professional scientist, thus a recent writer, the anti-evolutionist evangelical, Dr. R. E. D. Clark calls him merely "editor of *Chambers's Journal*"⁸; the description is accurate enough but omits to mention that Chambers was also a Fellow of the Geological Society and eventually a member of its Council, as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, honours not lightly achieved. He was also author of an important work entitled *Ancient Sea-margins, as Memorials of Changes in the Relative Level of Sea and Land* (1848). Professor H. B. Woodward, the historian of the Geological Society and himself a Rationalist, considered the *Vestiges* as "a work of great literary merit," but thought the author to lack "the intimate biological knowledge necessary for a proper exposition of his evolutionary notions."⁹

In his *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists* Joseph McCabe claims Chambers as a atheist attached to no sect, while Dr. Clark calls him "a Christian." McCabe is in fact the more accurate, for even the minister who conducted Chambers's funeral openly gave voice to what many thought when he hastened to assure his listeners that the deceased had, in conversation with him, "evinced the clearest recognition of a personal God," and "I believe [thus suggesting the contrary] a sincerely attached member of the Episcopal Church of Scotland."¹⁰

With his *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* Robert Chambers challenged the weight of the religious and scientific establishment of his day. His achievement lies not so much in the theory he advanced, for it was too

imaginative to be of real scientific value in the practical sense, being, as certain of his critics correctly suggested, more by nature a philosophical work, but in the fact that he cleared the decks for action for when a more factually substantive presentation of the theory appeared, as happened a few years later in the works of Darwin and Wallace, presented initially to the Linnaean Society in 1858, who received them without screaming denunciations but with considerable interest. As to the critics of Chambers who seized with glee upon any blunder he made we can find in the works of the same people much worse. Anyone who reads Louis Agassiz's *An Essay on Classification* will find him seriously claiming that rudimentary organs do not exist for any purpose other than the completion of the design! As Agassiz, a Swiss-American zoologist and pioneer of the glacial theory, was a bitter anti-evolutionist

our attention is never drawn to his scientific shortcomings. In recalling the valuable work of Darwin perhaps it is well to spare an occasional thought for Robert Chambers.

NOTES

- 1 *The Freethinker*, 22 April 1972.
- 2 HUXLEY, Leonard. 1908. *Life and Letters of T. H. Huxley*, 1: p. 242.
- 3 CLARK, J. W., & HUGHES, T. M. 1890. *Life and Letters of Adam Sedgwick*, 2: p. 88.
- 4 JUDD, J. W. 1910. *The Coming of Evolution*: p. 94, quoted.
- 5 BAILEY, E. (Sir). 1962. *Charles Lyell*: p. 160.
- 6 WALLACE, A. R. 1905. *My Life*, 1: p. 87.
- 7 WALLACE, *op. cit.*, 1: p. 254.
- 8 CLARK, R. E. D. 1958. *Darwin: Before and After*: p. 47.
- 9 WOODWARD, H. B. 1908. *The History of the Geological Society of London*: p. 154.
- 10 CHAMBERS, W. 1883. *Memoir of William and Robert Chambers*: p. 334.

THE NECESSITY OF CHANCE!

TREVOR MORGAN

*All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see.*

This pre-Monodian refutation by Alexander Pope appears to have been well understood by Jacques Monod, the formulator of the recent "molecular theory of the genetic code" as revealed in his book *Chance and Necessity*.^{*} In recognising that *direction* is negated by the concept of *chance*, he has brought his powerful intellect and scientific knowledge into the arena of ideological conflict, whereby (in the opinion of this writer) he considers that *chance* is the only effective counter to dialectical materialism. But, since many of the ideas projected by the Nobel prizewinner are already in circulation and can be seen and heard in the writings and debates of liberal-radicals, it would perhaps be of benefit to try to clarify the important points at issue, especially in relation to the age-old conflict of materialism versus idealism.

When viewed from the natural/supernatural, and atheist/religious angle, the distinctive features of the antagonists are fairly clear until we reach the era of T. H. Huxley's agnosticism (we cannot know) and thereafter the sharp outlines become blurred, increasingly so as respectability, position, personal advancement and other *social pressures* exert themselves. Persons with the courage to stand up and declare their atheism invariably forfeit material and social privileges, while their middle-of-the-road "allies" contribute further to the isolation.

Bases of idealism and materialism

Briefly: idealism has its origin in that type of thinking that accepted gods and creation. It considers the mind and the ideas existing therein to be of primary importance. Materialism on the other hand places matter in the primary position and declares the mind to be secondary, a function of the material brain. And to be *consistent* the materialist has to recognise *objective reality*, in other words, "External objects having an independent existence outside of ourselves." It is precisely this that separates, and has always separated, the two sides.

For the historical and dialectical materialist, this fundamental principle prevents him from holding to the absurd concept that, in the final analysis, the rotational action of our planetary system is due to the meanderings of the human imagination.

However, Huxley's teacher, David Hume (1711-76), who developed Locke's scepticism, failed to take the vital step of recognising this principle, and so a kind of half-way house—agnosticism, became established.

Immanuel Kant's "Thing in itself" although "unknowable" was a tentative movement in the progressive direction but failed to cross the demarcation line also.

In returning to *Chance and Necessity* we find at the very beginning, an alleged statement of Democritus: "Everything existing in the universe is the fruit of chance and of necessity." Now, if a schoolboy had written such a fallacy, well . . . would it matter? But it certainly does matter when an eminent scientist, writing about a serious intellectual theory, displays such shocking ignorance in relation to his fundamental support. Any person familiar with the subject must surely know that Cicero was mainly responsible for sowing this falsehood which Jacques Monod seems content to reap. F. A. Lange (1828-75) in his *History of Materialism* says quite clearly in his summing up of Democritus: "Nothing happens by chance, but everything through a cause and of necessity."

After such an initial jolt, one obtains some idea of the type of treatment that is in store for the Highgate-dwelling genius in his "basement accommodation." And sure enough on the first page we see the attack upon objective reality being prepared: ". . . the river or rock which we know, or believe, to have been moulded by the free play of physical forces . . ." The distinction between knowing and believing is of course, mere irrelevance, and what more prolific parents could chance have than the "scientific" incestuous couple, *free play*? Yet it is not until the second chapter that we find M. Monod opening fully the curtains of his mind: "The theory," he informs us, ". . . would anticipate the appearance of such objects as galaxies . . . but would not in any case deduce from its principles the necessary existence of this or that object . . . whether it be the Andromeda nebula . . . Mount Everest, or last night's thunderstorm."

Well, well, well! So this is modern scientific thinking according to Jacques Monod! How far have we travelled beyond the subjective nonsense of Bishop Berkeley?

(Continued overleaf)

THE NECESSITY OF CHANCE!

(Continued from previous page)

Concepts of "chance" and "God"

Well grounded in the idealistic philosophy of Avenarius and his disciples of the Machian school of empirio-criticism, Jacques Monod has produced a theory of *chance*. A word, that up to this present era, has never possessed any scientific validity whatever (the justification, even if granted, of its present popularity rests upon the visual limits of the microscope having been reached); and in this context is merely a modern term used by Monod, whose precursors when attempting to describe that which lay beyond the limits of their knowledge, used the word God.

Had the author of this "best seller" done a little more research, he would perhaps have displayed a higher degree of honesty and replaced the misquote of Democritus by one more in keeping with his school of thinking. Perhaps

from Ernst Mach's *Mechanik*: "In nature there is neither cause nor effect" would have been more suitable (certainly more up to date) than the ancient Greek. And in Josef Petzoldt's *Towards Stability* we can see the basic matter from which he fashioned the "Ethic of Knowledge," which constitutes his final chapter, reveals his mental exhaustion, and terminates his myopic yearnings.

In summing up, we would say that dialectical materialism demands the recognition of objective reality, for only by this principle can man distinguish between illusion and reality. To cast it aside today is to re-enact the great tragedy of the ancient Greeks, and to allow the mind-benders of infallibility once again the right to exercise their mental tyranny. Jacques Monod offers to a world of youth, hungry for ideas, a moulding philosophical gallimaufry that Friedrich Engels aptly called "A pauper's broth of eclecticism."

*Reviewed in *The Freethinker* of 1 July 1972 by F. A. Ridley.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

THE NUN-RUNNERS by Sonia Dougal.

Hodder & Stoughton, £1.90.

In August 1970 the *Sunday Times* carried a story, headlined "The Scandal of the Nun-Runners", which made everyone who enjoys a good juicy exposé lick his lips in glee. It appeared that someone, somewhere, was making a very nice profit out of what seemed like an up-to-date form of slave-trading.

The revelations in fact came from Miss Sonia Dougal, a keen young English convert to Catholicism, teaching English in Italy. Now in this fascinating book she has written a personal account of how she became involved with some of the Indian girls concerned, and finally exposed in the *Sunday Times* a matter which many well-intentioned clergy had felt powerless to disturb.

Miss Dougal was employed by a convent in Florence to teach Italian to a group of Indian postulants. An English woman was picked for the job as it was expected, wrongly, that the girls would speak some English. It soon appeared that there was something odd about the girls. Although mostly well into their twenties, they seemed completely immature, and their answer to questions about their homes seemed implausible. (It later became clear that they were making a concerted effort to deny the poverty of their background). The kindly nuns were puzzled and sympathetic.

Matters came to a head when Marykutty, the most lively and intelligent of the girls, became seriously ill. The doctor diagnosed homesickness, and it gradually became clear that Marykutty must either be sent back to her home in Kerala (which the girl herself insisted she did not want) or to a mental hospital. The nuns wrote urgently and repeatedly to Father Cyriac (the priest who had arranged for the girls to come to Italy) but got no reply. There seemed only one hope for Marykutty; Miss Dougal volunteered to escort her back to India by air, and to take the opportunity to visit the homes of the other girls.

Father Cyriac and other Keralese priests and nuns placed every possible difficulty in Miss Dougal's way, but she is clearly a most determined and conscientious young woman, and she did at last find some honest nuns, who assisted her in visiting the postulants' families, and explained to her precisely how the market in nuns worked. To marry off a daughter a dowry was necessary. A Keralese convent too required a dowry with a girl, and a School Certificate. Father Cyriac's ingenious idea was to collect a relatively small dowry from the families of usually poorly educated girls, then send them to European convents, charging the convent the full air-fare, on which he secretly made a large profit, by obtaining much cheaper student tickets for the girls. However unhappy a girl might be in her convent, and however unfitted she might be to the monastic life, she would insist that she had a vocation and did not want to go home, knowing she would be met with disgrace and be a bitter disappointment to the family which had paid to get her off their hands. They were, of course, girls brought up to have decisions taken for them by their parents, and they did not question the choice of a convent for them, just as they would not have questioned their families' choice of a husband. "It's wonderful really," the Mother General had said, "the way they've left everything and everyone to serve God as nuns in Europe. What it must have cost them! Yet they are so good about it!"

Meanwhile Father Cyriac was making a fortune. Miss Dougal succeeded in speaking to the local bishop and a cardinal, who calmly said they had forbidden Father Cyriac to send girls to Europe, but he took no notice of them. They seemed surprised only at the amount of money the Italian convents had paid.

Presumably this was just how nuns were recruited in mediaeval Europe. The modern European girl's freedom of choice has led to a shortage of "vocations", as well as an expectation on the part of the religious authorities that a prospective nun should have a vocation—that is genuinely want to become a nun, and be really suited to the life. The conflict between Father Cyriac and the Italians came at just this point. To the Italian nuns the girls were postulants, probationers who might or might not prove to have vocations—to Father Cyriac and their families they had been finally disposed of. Father Cyriac would have greatly preferred for Marykutty to have been assigned to an Italian mental hospital, rather than face her embarrassing reappearance in Kerala.

Miss Dougal sent her story to the Vatican, without result. Individual priests and dignitaries expressed horror, but most of them thought nothing could be done. As a last resort Miss Dougal presented the story to the *Sunday Times*. Alas! even this has not sufficed, and even in the last few months Indian girls have been flown to Italy—by roundabout routes to avoid publicity. The Papacy is indeed in a bad way when it cannot control those priests who make money out of a traffic visibly harmful to the interests and reputation of the Catholic Church.

On a careful and unbiassed examination of the facts presented by Miss Dougal (whose integrity seems unquestionable) the European nuns come out well—as innocent victims rather than villains. Marykutty and her companions at least were treated with infinite patience and kindness. The Vatican is revealed once more as a heartless bureaucracy; its behaviour will surprise only those who (like Miss Dougal) still believe it to be endowed with supernatural graces. What emerges about social and moral conditions in Kerala—the traditionally Catholic area of India—and the corruption of the Church there, is quite horrifying.

MARGARET McILROY

A CONCISE HISTORY OF IRELAND by Máire and Conor Cruise O'Brien. Thames and Hudson, £2.50.

Having laboured with distinction as a diplomat, academic, litterateur, historian and politician, Conor Cruise O'Brien is a notable example of that rather old-fashioned breed, the polymath. His latest book is rather old-fashioned too.

Written in collaboration with his wife, a literary figure in her own right, *A Concise History of Ireland* has merits but it remains a profoundly disappointing book. The authors give a clear account of events in Ireland from the dawn of time to the eve of the current crisis but do not venture beyond the bounds of political history as understood by the least inspired of the Victorians. Surprisingly for a socialist, Dr. O'Brien virtually ignores both social forces and economic factors; the coming of the Industrial Revolution to the North, a crucial stage in the development of the concept of two nations in Ireland, is dismissed in half a sentence (perhaps it was hoped that Ulstermen would be appeased by the inclusion of two photographs of Ian Paisley), there is no attempt to analyse the structure of Irish society, and the rôle of the Roman Catholic church is handled with cat-footed delicacy.

In fairness it must be said that the absence of the depth and insight that Dr. O'Brien has given us in other works may be due to the fact that this *Concise History* is one of a series. Within its limitations there is much to praise for the authors have worked in the tradition of the historians of Ireland who write, as they themselves put it, "not to validate competing myths but to find a common historical language in which we today can communicate, with a minimum of recrimination, complacency or boasting, about a past which has moulded us, and also threatens us." Their book may be recommended to anyone who wants a lucid and detached introduction to the troubled history of this tragic but beguiling island. Well produced and lavishly illustrated, it would make a handsome addition to any school library.

T. K. DANIEL

THEATRE

LIQUID THEATRE. Global Village, Charing Cross Station Arches.

If you suffer from B.O., halitosis, boils, infectious or contagious diseases, or any dread of the foregoing, the Liquid Theatre is no place for you. In a range of subterranean rooms you will kiss and be kissed, pummel and be pummelled, touch and be touched, look at candles through slices of orange, listen to a rock band, watch a mime of psycho-social evolution, dance and do sundry other things designed to stir the senses. Those who enjoyed *Hair* and can afford £3.50—which is not expensive in view of the high company/audience ratio—will be delighted by this show.

"Participation" shows, which have involved locking spectators in a cage and shouting obscenities at them, normally rouse my suspicions, but the young people of the Liquid Theatre are so wholesome, friendly and, in their mime, talented, that I was quite won over.

HUIS CLOS by Jean-Paul Sartre and
A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE by Richard Moss.
Unity Theatre.

One of the consequences of trendiness is that when high fliers fall from grace they vanish into outer darkness. Few theatres have, in their heyday, produced as many famous radical actors and dramatists as Unity, but today few places are less trendy. It certainly does not deserve this neglect. Its latest double-bill is a clever combination of surrealist classic and social realist novelty. *Huis Clos*, with its famous message that "hell is other people," which has done nothing to tarnish its author's humanist and left-wing image, is a masterpiece that demands stylish production and playing. In *A Matter of Convenience* Richard Moss has successfully combined *Clochemerle* and *Dixon of Dock Green* in a nicely paced supporting show.

Raymond Cross, Tony Parkin, Jean Graham and Julie Neubert make distinguished appearances in Frank Doherty's stylish production of *Huis Clos*, while Loo Reigns as director and Laurence Davies as a lavatory attendant are chiefly responsible for the different success of the English offering.

DAVID TRIBE

THE ELUSIVE IMAGE

A poet writes. He seeks the words that tell
Of thought that flame and tremble in the brain;
That sear the heart; and fill the soul with pain;
Wild, fierce desires relentless years will quell.

He strives to paint the rainbow dreams of youth;
The hopes and visions of that morning world
Wherein with eager strength and flag unfurled
They march in high crusade for peace and truth.

He hears the varying melodies of life;
The murmuring notes of twilight lullabies;
Harsh discords; and wide-soaring harmonies;
Soft serenades; and blaring songs of strife.

He feels the rising sap; the winter's rage;
The wild stag's fear; the blackbird's ecstasy;
And groping in his mind for words to free
The image, writes them down upon a page.

ELINOR CLAYTON.

LETTERS

Privacy, Liberty and Documentation

The National Council for Civil Liberties is right to express concern about the infringements of one's privacy (*Freethinker*, 29 July). An Englishman's home is now the loo.

There is one point that must be dealt with. A person should have the right to ask for elimination of records of a problem now solved. It is not right that such records should be kept for ever more.

'Private and confidential' should be what it says. Our privacy and confidencies are our own: a civil liberty, the right of all.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

Marxism, Evidence and Reality

Although I am not sure whether to welcome Trevor Morgan's reference (letters, 5 August) to his knowledge of some of my habits, I welcome his admission of "not having grasped the point [I] was making." In fact, I was trying—as briefly as possible—to make several points, on which I now dare to enlarge a little, at the risk of being boringly explicit.

Mr. Morgan holds that "objective reality" is a "scientific fact" and that this follows from scientific evidence that "this world existed before man." Now (although I dislike the thought of paining Mr. Morgan with more "rubbish"), I would agree with Mr. Hinchliff that philosophical sceptics would probably be unimpressed by Mr. Morgan's argument in favour of "objective reality." Nevertheless, from the point of view of scientifically-based common sense, the simple theory that "this world existed before man" would seem to be well-nigh irrefutable, regardless of any evidence. Therefore there is, surely, a scientific impropriety in the claim that Mr. Morgan is making as regards a scientific "fact" being evidence of an "objective reality."

On the question of Marxian theory, I also have to agree in general with Mr. Hinchliff (perhaps, if only because I seem able to understand his argument!); incidentally, it is perhaps worth pointing out that if "objective reality . . . produces images in our consciousness," and "so too does the study of history and sociology," in both cases our consciousness is *selective*.

CHARLES BYASS.

Relative or Absolute?

May I convey my thanks to Professor Hyman Levy for his most stimulating article, "Marxism: Some Points of Theory" (29 July). I can only say "encore"; please let us have some more.

There is just one question mark. Is "I accept no absolutes" a really possible statement? Relativities are relative precisely because they are not absolute but they do not destroy the absolute. The little word "no" indicates an absolute negation in which there is no relativity. That is why we are able to say that some things are "impossible" absolutely, although in some directions we would not dare to define the limits of the possible. It is safe to say that miracles never happen even when we are quite unable to explain what has happened.

I certainly believe that Marx intended both by argument and by historical induction to demonstrate that free enterprise, by constructing a capitalist system of production and distribution, destroys free enterprise and thereby necessitates absolutely the coming of some form of political socialism or communism. I would, however, very much like Professor Levy to explain more fully what he means by "no absolutes."

PETER CROMMELIN.

Pornography as Anti-Sex

Once it was possible to live all one's life, and have a rich sexual experience, without ever seeing another couple in coition. Today, many people spend a great deal of their leisure watching others having sex. It is the sheer unusualness of this that raises my suspicions. There was a time when anyone who wanted to watch others would be suspected of having deep sexual hang-ups. Today, Mr. Broom can accuse me of some fearful sexual hang-up because I do not want to.

I have seen a man, in one of those very human French films of two decades ago, place his hand on a girl's—and the eroticism was tremendous. In one's imagination, one completed the passion.

To see Jean Gabin's bouncing buttocks would have destroyed the imaginings. The depiction of sex in the raw is a confession of creative failure.

A psychotherapist tells me of a patient who was beginning to have creative sexual phantasies about "the kind of woman he would like to make love to." He then saw *Straw Dogs*, and the rape scene "stole his dreams." The technological phantasy was "more real to him than any human being could be." Thus, pornography can usurp our genuine creativity, and block development; it can anti-sexual.

The reason for it is economic. In a recent colour supplement a producer was asked why, having put "bouncing buttocks" in the script (*Under Milk Wood*) he later took them out. "I only put them to get the money," he said.

The continual thrusting of explicit sex under our noses is the last spasm of a dying culture, which, since it has nothing to say, falls back on the sick and sadistic. It is conditioning people to accept even further brutalities, at the hands of the big corporations, and their needs to subject us to continual dehumanisation. When such huge sums of money are involved from perverted phantasy, how absurd that the "freethinkers" can believe it all to be liberating—when it represents a new imprisonment. Study the programme of *Oh! Calcutta!* and see the unholy alliance of the authors of *Bonnie and Clyde*, of *Stigwood* (who put on *The Dirtiest Show in Town*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*) and others who have become millionaires, by exploiting symbolism—Lennon, Tynan.

None of the works mentioned by Mr. Broom dehumanise, encourage voyeurism or reduce sex to a mechanical activity: how can he say this, of the expression of cosmic ecstasy in the temples of Khajuraho? Distinctions are difficult, but not impossible. In the context of Chaucer's poem, and his Debate on Marriage, *The Miller's Tale*, in words, is bawdy, and acceptable. (It is by the way surely the woman's arse that is kissed, not her vagina [line 3734].) In pasolini's new film it becomes voyeuristic and debasing, judging from reviews.

As for the necessity of seeing everything I criticise—I confess to a certain cowardice. I do not want my own phantasies messed up. But did Mr. Broom ever pronounce on, say brothels—without feeling the need to visit one? Or bullfights, without actually attending? I have been studying the script of *Oh! Calcutta!* and realise that I could not bear to witness the humiliation of woman, and the debasement of sex in it, so I will not go. But I have written a book on the symbolism of it—well enough demonstrated in the line, "I didn't come . . . I couldn't . . . so I just peed up you . . ." Can one not draw the line at that? DAVID HOLBROOK.

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