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"THE ORIGINAL MALE CHAUVINIST PIG"

—N.S.S. PRESIDENT'S DESCRIPTION OF 'GOD'

"The god of the Old Testament—that is, the god of Judaism, of Christianity and of Islam—is the original male chauvinist pig," said the President of the National Secular Society, Miss Barbara Smoker, in her opening address to the Society's annual general meeting in London on 10 June. "You do not have to read many pages of the first book of the Bible before this sexist attitude of the supposed deity is made quite clear: 'Unto the woman he said, I will multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.' It is no accident that the pioneers of the modern feminist movement in the first half of the nineteenth century described themselves as freethinkers, rationalists, naturalists and materialists, and that their successors in the Women's Lib. movement mostly label themselves atheists, agnostics or secularists. For Christianity and other orthodox religions are, and always have been, essentially anti-feminist."

Women—the last mainstay of religion

"Unfortunately", Miss Smoker added, "the self-perpetuating social conditioning of women is generally so successful that they readily accept the rôle in which male-dominated religion has cast them. Women are the last mainstay of orthodox religion. Without the women, who make up the greater part of their congregations and act as their unpaid servants at every supportive level from pew polisher to parish council minutes secretary and teamaker, ministers of religion, already redundant, would have been seen to be redundant long before now."

"It is the women, I am sorry to say, who have kept the churches going; though their selfless support has yet to be rewarded in any of the major sects of any of the major religions with a place in the hierarchy or a voice in the chancels of power."

The N.S.S. President's speech was greeted with warm applause, but it will doubtless not be long before the clergy and other religious apologists regale us with what purports to be God's opinion of Miss Smoker.

Encroachment of church schools

Moving a resolution calling for the conversion of church schools into county schools, Mrs. Patricia Knight said that comprehensive schemes were providing the churches with an opportunity to make advantageous agreements with Local Education Authorities as the price for supporting these schemes.

Mrs. Knight gave as an example the I.L.E.A. proposals for the reorganisation of secondary education in North and West London, which, she said, would actually increase the number of places at church schools, and the only two secondary schools in the area to increase in size would be Roman Catholic ones. These proposals, and other aspects of the I.L.E.A. scheme, were being fought by the West London Schools Campaign.

Nor was the I.L.E.A. unique, the speaker, added. "In a similar educational reorganisation in Bedfordshire in

1972, the Church of England acquired middle and upper-schools. Staffordshire Education Committee is at present proposing to hand over a county primary school to the Church of England as a middle school for the 9 to 13 age group."

Patricia Knight concluded by saying that it was important for campaigns against the encroachment of church schools to emphasise that such schools were quite incompatible with comprehensive education. "Church schools are academically and socially selective," she said, "and not only segregate children according to religion, but also cream off the brighter pupils."

The meeting also passed a number of other resolutions calling for a revision of the charity laws; for legalised abortion on request; for the abolition of prescription charges on contraceptives; and for the legalisation of voluntary euthanasia "with reasonable safeguards such as those proposed by the Voluntary Euthanasia Society". The A.G.M. also welcomed the Houghton Committee's recommendation that religion should no longer play a part in consent being given to the adoption of a child.

Blood-sports and royalty

An appropriate reminder of the centenary of the founding in 1873 of the National Republican League by Charles Bradlaugh and G. W. Foote (both N.S.S. Presidents) was a motion (also passed) that, "in view of the support given to foxhunting during recent months by Princess Anne, this Meeting calls for the legal abolition of either blood-sports or the Monarchy".

Further details of resolutions passed at the A.G.M. will be given in next month's *Freethinker*.

Barbara Smoker was re-elected as President of the N.S.S., and the meeting re-elected Mr. William Shannon and Mr. S. D. Kuebart as Vice-Presidents, Mr. G. N. Deodhekar was re-elected as Hon. Treasurer.

THE FREETHINKER

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NEWS

THE RISING COST OF MARRIAGE

We wish Lieutenant Mark Phillips and his royal fiancée every happiness in their future life together; indeed, we wish the same for every couple, young or old, embarking on the high seas of matrimony. However, we are not altogether satisfied that the couple's wedded bliss needs to be sustained by an increased annual hand-out of £20,000 to Princess Anne from the Civil List. The Establishment is more than generous to its own, but such largesse seems a little inappropriate when one hears, for instance, of young students who feel obliged, as a result of low grants and anachronistic taxation laws in respect of married women, to live 'in sin' (as the quaint expression was in the dim and distant days before the Permissive Society).

THE TURBAN SAGA

Adherents to the Sikh religion, which enjoins the wearing of turbans by men at all times, feel understandably aggrieved that they are not allowed exemption from the new law which makes the wearing of crash helmets compulsory for motorcyclists. The government's intransigence on this issue contrasts unfavourably with its attitude during the last war, when it was only too grateful to have every able-bodied Sikh risk life and limb in its defence. There was no problem then about allowing Sikhs exemption from wearing steel helmets on the battlefield.

Were Anglican bishops or Catholic cardinals required by their beliefs to wear mitres and birettas when riding motorbikes, we suspect that our legislators would waste little time in providing them with the necessary dispensation to do so. Today's Sikhs have come face to face with the hallowed British tradition of petty governmental stupidity, but we have no doubt that they will eventually overcome this obstacle, as divers other minorities have in the past.

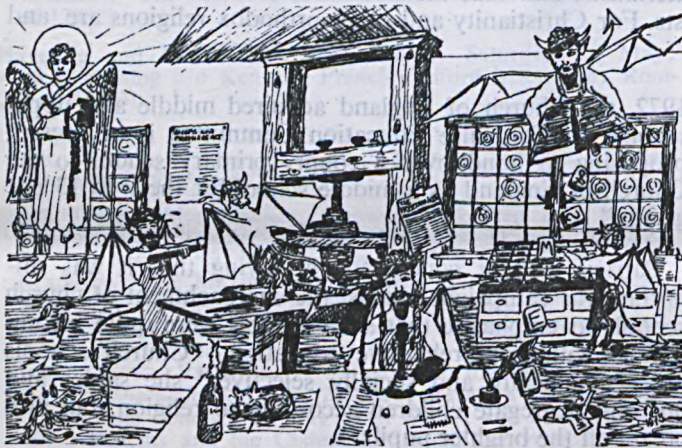
OUR LORDLY VICES

To say that we have disdained the services of St. John's Wood society prostitutes at £50 a time is, perhaps, to make a virtue out of financial necessity. Our slender means, however, do permit occasional recourse to a modest, but eminently genteel and respectable establishment in that charming suburb, run by two strict maiden ladies who possess a certain *je ne sais quoi* in the exercise of the birch, and whose clientele is exclusively ex-public school. The proprietresses are most ably managing an old family firm: indeed, their great-grandmother provided the same service for our hero, the poet Swinburne, back in the nineteenth century. Now, as then, "it's the rich that gets the pleasure, and the poor that gets the pain".

WHITHER THE AMERINDIANS ?

The formation of an international organisation to aid the indigenous peoples of the New World is called for by Hugh O'Shaughnessy in the latest Minority Rights Group report, *What Future for the Amerindians of South America?*

The author, a well-known journalist and writer about South America, rejects both the old imperialist view that 'primitive' peoples should be absorbed and transformed into ordinary citizens of their respective states (resulting in



GOD IN DECLINE

Despite the Jesus movement, the efforts of well-heeled evangelists, and the millions squandered annually in promoting religion, it continues to decline. A recent Gallup Poll undertaken for the *Sunday Telegraph* showed that since 1968 belief in God had fallen from 77 to 74 per cent, and belief in the Devil from 21 to 18 per cent. (A nice point this: is the Devil supposed to approve or disapprove of this decline in his credibility?)

In the lofty halls of the Vatican, Pope Paul has conceded that God is "no longer fashionable", and so is desperately instituting a 'Holy Year' in 1975 to do something about it. "Our vision of reality," His Holiness concedes, "is dazzled by the splendour and interest of science. There is no longer that calmness of spirit enabling us to confront our experience with more stable and higher principles."—Or, in simple language, the blinkers are slipping!

"White schools run by the Churches in South Africa are paying their African employees well below poverty line rates, and in some cases no more than £10 a month."

—Peter Hildrew in *The Guardian* (4 June).

ISSUES AND NOTES

the destruction of their languages and traditions); and is equally opposed to extreme conservationists, "anxious to maintain such tribal peoples in their pristine state like so many flies in amber". Mr. O'Shaughnessy maintains that while the Indians should be protected from the wholesale destruction of their way of life, they ought also to be allowed to benefit from the positive aspects of Latin American culture in such fields as medicine and agriculture, and should be prepared for some degree of contact with modern society. "The indigenous peoples," he points out, "have a knowledge of and relationship with nature from which we ourselves in modern Western societies could learn. (Conrad Gorinsky, for example, has pointed to the value of their knowledge of medicinal plants.) Their disappearance would be *our* loss."

Of particular interest to *Freethinker* readers is the Declaration of Barbados for the Liberation of the Indians (1971), which is published as an appendix to this report. It had this to say on the subject of Christian missions:

The missionary presence has always implied the imposition of criteria and patterns of thought and behaviour alien to the colonised Indian societies. A religious pretext has too often justified the economic and human exploitation of the aboriginal population . . . We conclude that the suspension of all missionary activity is the most appropriate policy for the good of Indian society and for the moral integrity of the churches involved.

Both the Declaration, and Hugh O'Shaughnessy's report as a whole, are a horrifying indictment of 'civilised' greed, arrogance, cruelty, blindness and bigotry. They deserve a very wide readership.

Copies of *What Future for the Amerindians of South America? may be obtained (price 45p plus 6p postage) from the Minority Rights Group, 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG*

AUSTRALIAN ABORTION BILL FAILS

Triumph for clericalism

If anyone is still wondering why this paper and the rationalist movement continue to attack organised religion in the twentieth century, the defeat of a liberal abortion law reform bill in the Australian Federal Parliament on 10 May will provide one of the answers.

BENJAMIN R. BENSLEY writes from *Wahroonga, New South Wales*:

All parties gave their members a free vote on this private member's bill, which was introduced by two Labour backbenchers. Outside Parliamentary circles, chief support came from the Women's Electoral Lobby, the Abortion Law Reform Association (a spin-off from various humanist groups) and Women's Liberation, whilst the predictable opposition came from the Catholic Church, reinforced by some of the more reactionary Protestant clergy.

Many of the younger humanist supporters, some of whom appeared to have a touching faith in the liberalising influence of the ecumenical movement, were astounded at the ferocity, the lack of rational debate, and the downright charlatanism of the Catholic opponents of the bill. Convents produced lengthy petitions, allegedly organised and signed spontaneously by girls aged 10 to 16, despite protests that it was wholly unethical to present electoral petitions from non-voters.

Full-page advertisements appeared in the daily press, all based unashamedly on emotional appeals. One advertisement showed a photograph of a football team, with one player represented by a blank white space—"His mother believed in abortion on request." (It was pointed out elsewhere that a similar photograph could just as fairly be shown with a group of mental defectives, prison inmates or thalidomide babies.)

The bill sought to give women in the Australian Capital Territory (Canberra) only, the right to abortion on demand up to the twelfth week of pregnancy. It would also have allowed abortions up to the 23rd week on the advice of two doctors.

However, the bill's opponents consistently misrepresented the proposals by showing illustrations and sketches of well-developed fetuses, usually in the upright position in the womb, invariably sucking a thumb, and sometimes even sporting pigtailed! It was left to Cardinal Knox, however, to make the completest ass of himself by declaring that he was prepared to disobey the abortion law and take the consequences. Asked by amazed journalists that as he was neither a woman nor a doctor, how he proposed to do this, he replied: "I will cross that bridge when I come to it."

The bill of course carried a conscientious objection clause fully exempting any doctor or nurse who did not wish to participate in a pregnancy termination. It was defeated by 98 votes to 23—all Labour. The Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Whitlam, and nine other cabinet ministers voted for the legislation. Four of those in favour were doctors, including the Minister for Health and the Minister for Environment and Conservation. There is no doubt that many M.P.s with no real involvement either way 'played it safe' by voting against the bill. Anti-abortion demonstrators outside the House made full use of overstated placards: "Diamond Valley Wants No Abortion", "Henty Cares", "Batman Opposes Abortion" and others, all obviously aimed at intimidating the members for those electorates.

Despite the setback of the bill's defeat, supporters of abortion law reform have not given up. They point out that recent independent surveys show that up to 85 per cent of people in Australian cities favour some form of reform. It is simply a matter of Parliament catching up with the views of the majority of the people.

The International Defence and Aid Fund has just published a 26-page report on The Rhodesia-Zambia Border Closure, Jan.-Feb. 1973.

Copies may be obtained (price 10p plus 4p postage) from 104/5 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AP.

WITCH-HUNTING IN INDIA

According to Saeed Naqvi, in the (London) *Sunday Times* of 3 June, some 32 people in the Indian state of Bihar have recently been "clubbed, stoned or burnt to death" by angry mobs who feared they were planning to kidnap children for the purposes of witchcraft, black magic, "soul stealing" and ritual murder.

Mr. Naqvi also cites a report of three people being beaten to death in the neighbouring state of West Bengal on suspicion of being vampires!

Such is the legacy of supernaturalism.

WINWOOD READE ON RELIGION

Readers of *The Freethinker* will doubtless remember that last year marked the hundredth anniversary of Winwood Reade's famous work, *The Martyrdom of Man* (1872). In conjunction with the Macmillan Company of India the Indian Secular Society has now published the chapter on religion, together with an introduction by Abraham Solomon, in book form, under the title *Religion in History*. We hope that this fine-looking edition will stimulate further interest both in Reade and also in the secular movement in India and elsewhere.

Copies of Religion in History by Winwood Reade may be obtained (price Rs. 12 plus postage) from the Indian Secular Society, 4 Joothica, Naushir Bharucha Road, Bombay 7. A limited number of copies are also available (price 60p plus 10p postage) from G. W. Footé & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL. (The Pemberton edition of The Martyrdom of Man is also still in print—see back page of this issue).

HUMBUG IS ALIVE AND WELL

In its early days this paper used to publish with considerable relish details of scandals involving clerical notables and other pillars of the Establishment. Particular targets were the Church of England, the Methodists and the Salvation Army. Nowadays, we tend to soft-peddle this approach as the majority of the cases one reads about seem to be more in the nature of personal tragedies than anything else. Nevertheless, even diehard nasty negative old-fashioned rationalists such as we are still sometimes surprised at the way in which doublethink, if not downright humbug, continues to operate in some religious circles. Two recent examples will suffice.

The Johannesburg *Sunday Times* of 8 April gave details of a case in which a South African businessman (with a distinguished record in voluntary social work) was fined 400 Rand for aiding and abetting the prostitution of a 16-year-old girl, and was fined a further R600 "for committing sodomy with two schoolboys and selling liquor without a licence". (We are not told how the second fine was apportioned.) When interviewed by Tim O'Hagan for the *Sunday Times* the businessman virtually admitted the facts of the case, but complained bitterly that he had subsequently been told by the dominee of his local Dutch Reform Church not to take communion any more. "I have been relegated to the back benches of the church," he added. "All I can do now is sit and watch the services I attend every Sunday. On top of that the church choir has banned me from singing with them on Sundays . . ."

Up to a point one can make some sense of such an attitude in the context of a socially conservative country like South Africa, yet here in trendy, 'permissive' Britain a case was quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* of 25 April last where a postman was fined and given a suspended prison sentence for stealing money from the mails "because he was hard up". Yet the same man, of his own free will, gave a tithe of ten per cent of his income to the Mormon Church, to which he belonged! "The Bible says you should give a tenth of your money voluntarily to the church," he explained; to which the chairman of the local magistrates replied, "The Bible also says a lot of things about taking other people's property."

Now we do not claim on this basis that all churchgoers are insincere hypocrites, any more than that all freethinkers are milk-white lambs; but we would advise the Don Quixotes of blinkered light and 'moral' rearmament to consider a little more carefully before blaming all the ills of modern society on television, contraception, 'permissiveness' and (in particular) the decline in religious belief.

FREETHINKER FUND

The Freethinker is unlikely ever to provide a fortune for those engaged in its printing, publication and production. Despite rising costs of materials and other difficulties the paper is sold at a very low price, in order to provide the widest possible literary 'platform' for the secular movement, and to give its readers best value for their money. For this reason we do appeal to those who can afford more than the minimum subscription please to remember the Freethinker Fund occasionally. At a time when many specialist and unorthodox journals are having to close down for financial reasons, *The Freethinker* is still alive and kicking, and in sight of its hundredth birthday. That it has lasted this long is due in a large measure to the generosity of past generations of loyal readers and contributors.

Our thanks to those who contributed to the Freethinker Fund in May: anonymous, £1 and £5; H. A. Alexander, 50p; Isaac Barr, 25p; J. H. Budd, £3; W. H. Dobson, 25p; M. S. Grimsditch, 50p; P. W. Hinchliff, £1; John D. Hockin, £1; J. Jeffery, £2; R. L. Kent, £1.50; Lorayne Lenz, £1.10; I. S. Low, £1; H. Lyons-Davies, £1; P. J. McCormick, 20p; Mrs. L. R. Middleton, £3; D. Molyneux, £1; C. J. Morey, £1.50; Mrs. Madalyn Murray O'Hair, £1.40; M. R. Scott, 75p. Total: £26.95.

OBITUARIES

Philip Jeffery

Mr. J. JEFFERY writes:

Philip Jeffery was born in 1904, the tenth of a family of eleven in a Durham mining village. Not surprisingly, he left school when 14, but he grew up in an atmosphere of political and religious dissent. His father, Alderman John Jeffery, was a leading figure in those more stormy political days, and his atheism was known to create political problems. Philip grew up reading *The Freethinker* and the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam; and the works of Jack London, Mark Twain and Bernard Shaw were also among his favourites. He also had a great love of music, oil painting, bridge and cricket.

Philip never shared his father's taste for public debate on political and religious matters, being content to discuss privately with his friends the many subjects which interested him. His son, and later his granddaughter became subscribers to *The Freethinker* and this was a real source of pleasure to him.

The funeral address was given by Mr. Michael Dodd, a close friend. Mr. Jeffery is survived by his wife, son and three granddaughters.

Winifred Swan

We regret to announce the death of Mrs. Winifred Swan of Seaham, Co. Durham, after a long illness. She was 67.

WILLIAM McILROY writes:

Mrs. Swan, like her husband, had been associated with the freethought movement for over forty years. She was a member of the National Secular Society and a *Freethinker* reader. Mr. and Mrs. Swan attended many World Union of Freethinkers functions.

The funeral was at Sunderland Crematorium.

VERDI, RELIGION AND "AIDA"

I. S. LOW

In the middle scene of the opera *Aida* Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) reveals his dislike of the clergy. The Egyptian army has defeated the Ethiopians and parades its prisoners before Pharaoh. The people, pitying the unhappy men, ask Pharaoh to have mercy; so does the Egyptian general. Only the priests remain hard-hearted. This brings up two points: Verdi's ideas about religion and *Aida*.

About the first: Verdi seems to have been an agnostic. George Martin, in his book *Verdi: His Music, Life and Times* says, "In his personal as well as his musical life [Verdi] was, to an extraordinary degree, self-taught and self-disciplined. He did not confess to a priest and he did not go to Mass." Martin is commenting on the fact that Verdi had written an opera *Alzire* based on a work by Voltaire—a gentleman whom pious Christian composers kept off!

A lady called Strepponi, who was Verdi's mistress and later his wife, was appalled by the composer's attitude to religion. "This rascal claims, with a calm obstinacy that infuriates me, not to be an outright atheist but a very doubtful believer." Martin says Verdi refused to accompany her to church.

Although Verdi wrote an opera *La Forza del Destino* in which the tormented heroine appeals to the Abbot of a monastery to help her win peace, Martin suggests that "... there is nothing specifically Christian about it; the agonised Leonora could just as well be a pagan girl rushing into a group of Druid priests." Also Martin points out that Verdi's best artistic creation in this opera is the comic monk Fra Melitone.

Clearly for Verdi, at least in this period, the reality of the Church was not in the vision in *I Lombardi*, the heavenly voices in *Giovanna d'Arco* [but] the monk cloaking his common humanity in the ill-fitting garb of a man of God.

Verdi, of course, wrote a famous *Requiem* which is a specifically Christian, indeed Catholic, form of music. But, as Martin points out, it breaks all the rules laid down by Pope Pius X in the *Motu Proprio* of 22 November 1903.

No religious basis

In his youth Verdi once applied for a post as "Maestro di Musica" at the town of Bussetto; there was a fuss and the local clerical party tended to oppose Verdi. George Martin says:

[Verdi] believed strongly in the Christian ethic but as this was also inevitably the professed ethic of Italian secular life his code and actions in terms of it seem not to have had any religious basis. His life and associations, the influence of Provesi [an early teacher of Verdi], the fracas at Bussetto over his appointment, inclined him to be 'out of sorts' with organised religion.

Now the other point—*Aida*. This opera is one of the great artistic achievements of mankind. When you first hear it the bright vigorous music excites you; later, when perhaps the effect of this wears off, you discover deeper and subtler qualities which still hold your appreciation.

The story deals with a conflict between love and patriotism. *Aida* is an Ethiopian princess captured by the Egyptians. She and Rhadames, an officer in the Egyptian army, love each other. But Princess Amneris, daughter of Pharaoh, loves Rhadames too. Rhadames gets command of the army that has to suppress the rebellious Ethiopians. He hopes he will be allowed to marry *Aida* as a reward

for victory, but when he wins Pharaoh bestows the hand of Amneris on him! Later, *Aida*, influenced by her father Amonasro, persuades Rhadames to give away a vital military secret. Amneris finds out about this and, in jealousy, betrays Rhadames to the priests. Those vindictive gentlemen condemn him to be buried alive. Overwhelmed now with guilt and repentance, Amneris pleads for his life in vain. However, *Aida* manages to get into the tomb with him and they die singing a love duet while Amneris is prostrated with grief.

Some people think the Triumph scene in the middle is vulgar. But I think the Grand March, the Triumphal Chorus and the rest of it have a dramatic function. They emphasise the unhappiness of *Aida*; while she is in tortures everyone else is on top of the world. Perhaps Verdi should have thought more about Rhadames who is really in the most tragic and dramatic position in this scene; he is the hero of the hour, his king praises him, the people cheer him—and the thing he longs for is denied him.

"Infamous creatures"

A most interesting point is Verdi's treatment of Princess Amneris. From a synopsis of the plot you would think she was the villainess. Yet the music Verdi composed for her shows that he thought she deserved sympathy as much as *Aida*. (In fact I think he liked her better than the Ethiopian girl!) And it is interesting to note Amneris's words, when she has tried to persuade the priests to pardon Rhadames: "Oh the infamous creatures! They can never have enough bloodshed. And they call themselves ministers of heaven!"

Aida was composed at the request of the Khedive of Egypt to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal. But the request reached Verdi too late for this, and the Cairo première took place on 24 December 1871. The libretto was by Camille du Locle, based on a story by a French Egyptologist August Mariette, and translated into Italian by Antonio Ghislanzoni. The Khedive was so impressed by the chorus "Glory to Egypt" that he wanted it as the Egyptian national anthem!

Verdi played an important part in the change-over from the old-fashioned form of Italian opera—with recitatives, arias, duets and so on—to a form in which the music is much more continuous—almost like real life. *Rigoletto* was his first great success in this line. There are indeed arias and a very famous quartette, but as Charles Osborne says, "with so flexible an approach that, as with Wagner, it is not always easy to tell where one number ends and the next begins." Verdi reveals his humanity by realising that an elderly hunchback can have feelings. He also shows his talent for concentrating all the sorrow of life into his music and making it beautiful.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SECULAR HUMANISM

by KIT MOUAT

45p plus 3p postage

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698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT ON VIETNAM

ALAN RICKARD

Alan Rickard is General Secretary of the Atheist Society of Australia and Editor of the Atheist Journal (Haymarket, N.S.W.).

It has been said that United States involvement in the war in Vietnam was largely an attempt to force Roman Catholicism on the principally Buddhist Vietnamese. The actions of the American Cardinal Spellman and his part in the installation of the Diem régime in Saigon are pointed to as evidence. Whilst there can be little doubt that this was one factor in the situation, there were many others.

A major aspect was the quite paranoid fear of communism engendered in the minds of American and Australian people in order to bolster right-wing reaction at home and cover its manipulations overseas. The 'domino theory' and the 'communist monolith' myth were part of this, though these attitudes surely seem absurd in retrospect, in view of major divisions amongst communist countries.

The Australian paranoia can also be traced partly to an almost infantile feeling that "big brother" from Washington would automatically rush to the defence of Australia in the event of war, providing he was sufficiently pandered to beforehand.

Racism also played a part. That those on the other side were 'non-white' was used to dull the conscience of government supporters in both the U.S.A. and Australia and there can be no doubt that vestiges of an ugly master-race ideology re-appeared here. There was racist indoctrination of Australian troops, though here and there individuals resisted these methods.

Economic factors

However, the hysteria covered something more sinister. Over a period a number of economic factors became apparent. Eisenhower unintentionally gave the first insight when he was reported as saying that the U.S.A. was dependent on tin, tungsten and rubber supplies from Indo-China and that it would "go hard" with the United States if these sources were cut off.

Then it became known that there was considerable American investment in South Vietnam, as in Thailand, and later, from another source, we learned that there was fear of future trade competition from a potentially heavily industrialised North Vietnam.

Worse still, there was massive, seemingly permanent unemployment in the United States and the American economy had become geared to a permanent war basis, whilst huge numbers of people were employed in industries connected in one way or another with armaments manufacture. Tremendous profits were being reaped by American big business from these sources, but all were dependent on the extension of war in one way or another.

The then right-wing Australian government was having difficulty in maintaining an opening for the export of Australian goods to the U.S.A., and this was another factor that enabled Washington to 'call the tune' to the Canberra government. Australian support was necessary to give a semblance of legitimacy to the American intervention in Vietnam.

In order to maintain this situation the United States deliberately manoeuvred to break United Nations agreements on Vietnam, particularly to prevent the holding of free elections, as it feared the result. When elections were eventually held, Saigon agents used a combination of intimidation and force to suppress the opposition vote (including that of the non-communist opposition) in the five-eighths of South Vietnam where a ballot was actually permitted. International laws on weaponry and on prisoners of war were continually broken, with frightful results. The world has heard much of My Lai, but there were many My Lais.

Results of intervention

What would have been a short, inevitable civil war, probably to be won by the North and in which a few thousand lives might have been lost, became a conflict which inflamed the conscience of the entire world, including huge numbers of people in the U.S.A. and Australia.

The eventual outcome will be, beyond doubt, exactly what it would have been had outside intervention never occurred, but a terrible price has been paid for paranoia, the ambitions of the hierarchy of the American military machine and the unscrupulous hunger for profits on the part of American and Australian big business interests. It is surely a terrible indictment of a social system that its economy is built on such vast human suffering! Over two million dead, Vietnamese, Americans, Australians and others, huge numbers maimed and disfigured by bombs, including the hideousness of napalm, basically for the sake of protecting the profits of the ruling clique in Saigon and of incredibly callous people beyond the seas.

The war is not yet over. In spite of propaganda to the contrary, it is still being manipulated by the same elements inside and outside of Vietnam, for the same reasons, quite apart from what is happening elsewhere in Indo-China.

In the context of Vietnam, the writer is ashamed to be an Australian and the shame remains despite the different policies of the new government in Canberra. This attitude gradually leads to the realisation that nationality is actually irrelevant and that only humanity matters.



CHRIST, HEGEL, MARX AND LENIN

JUDEX

Numerous writers have commented on the parallels between Marxism and religion. "It is a pity," declared Dr. Joseph Needham,¹ "that Spengler's aphorism that Christian theology is the grandmother of Bolshevism is not more widely known." Marx himself said that "the criticism of religion is the presupposition of all criticism", and "the criticism of theology" is transformed "into the criticism of politics".²

In a youthful examination essay on "The Union of the Faithful with Christ", Marx concluded that through love of Christ "we turn our hearts at the same time towards our brothers, who are inwardly bound to us and for whom He gave Himself up as a sacrifice".³ Marx subsequently became increasingly critical of Christianity although his daughter Eleanor said that "he had a dislike of secularism".⁴ The quasi-religious influence of Marx's writings is, however, suggested by the fact that *Das Kapital* was declared to be "the Bible of the Working Class", whilst in Soviet literature the *Communist Manifesto* is called "the song of songs of Marxism".⁵

Alienation and negation

The publication in the second quarter of the twentieth century of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* aroused interest in the idea of alienation which Marx found in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.⁶ The origins of this concept are, however, much earlier and the term occurs, for example, in the Bible in Ephesians 4:18 where Paul, speaking of the Gentiles, says "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God . . .".⁷ In the Marxist scheme of human development the point of departure is primitive communist society which, after a "fall from its simple moral grandeur",⁸ gives way to class societies in which man is alienated and his personality negated. But capitalist society is itself then transcended by modern communism, which is "the negation of the negation" and the overcoming of all alienation, and thus "the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e. human) being".⁹

Marx took over the law of the negation of the negation from Hegel. But as E. A. Olssen¹⁰ has pointed out Hegel himself described the accounts of the death and resurrection of Christ as the supreme religious instance of the dialectical law of the negation of the negation, in which the death of Jesus negated his life, but the resurrection in turn negated his death. "Christ", says Hegel,¹² "has risen. Negation is consequently surmounted, and the negation of the negation is thus a moment of the divine nature." Olssen sees Hegel's political theory and dialectic method as being derived from the Christian story of the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of Christ. And since Marx adopted Hegel's method it follows, says Olssen, that "the same Christological narratives provide the structural backbone" and a pattern of 'departure', 'transformation', and 'return', to Marx's writings. As Dr. Kamenka¹² observes, "Many critics have drawn attention to features of the Marxian view of history that raise the suspicion that it is an Hegelian theodicy, portraying mankind as evolving towards an ultimate messianic kingdom".

It was in the reading of Hegel that Lenin immersed himself during the distress and isolation of the first World War. As a result of his 'conversion' he wrote:

This philosophical idealism openly, 'seriously' leading to God, is more honest than modern agnosticism with its hypocrisy and cowardice . . . It is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!¹³

Lenin was thus the only one in the world in half a century who had understood the Master's message. What he understood by the "unity of theory and practice" was shown by the substitution for the proletarian masses of a small élite of professional revolutionaries supposedly possessed of superior theoretical insight. By its insistence upon a revolutionary minority for the seizure of power and the forcible re-organisation of society, Leninism was by its very nature incapable of establishing a classless society. Marxism-Leninism became the opium of the people. Its outcome was a "new class structure, bureaucratic rule, and the suppression of free thought."¹⁴

NOTES

- ¹ In *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, 1937: p. 440.
- ² See D. McLELLAN, 1971. *The Thought of Karl Marx*: pp. 21-22.
- ³ R. PAYNE, 1968. *Marx*: p. 41. See also L. D. EASTON and K. H. GUDDAT, 1967. *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*: p. 18.
- ⁴ L. S. FEUER, 1969. *Marx and the Intellectuals*: p. 49.
- ⁵ B. D. WOLFE, 1967. *Marxism: 100 Years in the Life of a Doctrine*: p. xiii.
- ⁶ J. O'NEILL, 1972. *Sociology as a Skin Trade*: p. 113.
- ⁷ R. SCHACHT, 1971. *Alienation*: p. 7.
- ⁸ K. MARX and F. ENGELS, 1962 edn. *Selected Works*, vol. 2: p. 255.
- ⁹ K. MARX, 1959. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*: pp. 100, 102, 103, 114.
- ¹⁰ "Marx and the Resurrection." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1968: pp. 131-140.
- ¹¹ *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1895 (reprinted 1962), vol. 3: p. 196.
- ¹² E. KAMENKA, 1969. *Marxism and Ethics*: p. 25.
- ¹³ V. I. LENIN, 1963 edn. *Collected Works*, vol. 38: pp. 303, 180.
- ¹⁴ L. S. FEUER (ed.), 1969. *Marx and Engels: basic writings*: Introduction, p. 17.

NINETY YEARS AGO

DEAR AVELING,—As the rules printed on this meagre sheet do not respect the privacies of affection, I write to you instead of Mrs. Foote . . .

I have lost about a stone in weight since my first night in Newgate, and about half of it here. Until a few days ago I suffered from painful diarrhoea. That has given place to low appetite and dyspepsia . . . What plagues me most is the miserable lassitude proceeding from the enforced disuse of my faculties . . . Yet my brain is as vital as ever, for it swarms with ideas, and my heart is stout. I am only going through a long, dark, dirty tunnel under the mountain of bigotry. Far ahead I see a faint gleam as of a silver star; and I know that at last I shall reach the end of this loathsome passage, emerge into the light and air of open day, live my old free strenuous life again, and once more join my comrades in fighting for the Cause.

The treatment I suffer as a common criminal is not calculated to convert Freethinkers. But if it were, there would be a more powerful dissuasive. I hear a sermon every week . . .

Yours ever,
G. W. FOOTE.

Her Majesty's Prison, Holloway,
May 24th, 1883.

—From *The Freethinker*, 10 June 1883.

CENSORSHIP AND SOCIETY

RICHARD HANDYSIDE

Richard Handyside runs a small publishing business (Stage 1) in London, and was prosecuted for issuing the British edition of The Little Red Schoolbook. This article is an abridged version of the speech he gave as guest of honour at the National Secular Society's annual dinner in March 1973.

It seems to me that the battle against censorship is all too often fought on the wrong front, at the wrong level, in the wrong way, and consequently fails to bring us nearer to what I would call true freedom of expression.

To start off with a nice vague generalisation: censorship in our society operates on many different levels, in many different ways, some overt, some concealed—but its final aim always remains the same, to prevent any serious attempt to rock the highly profitable appletart manned by the tiny minority who hold effective power in our society.

Probably the best publicised form of censorship (and I shall return later to the significance of this publicity) is direct literary censorship, operated through the Obscene Publications Acts or the Post Office Acts. Aimed like a bent blunderbuss at the vaguest of areas, so-called pornography, this and previous legislation has been used against a wide range of publications: *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, *Oz*, *The Little Red Schoolbook*, these and other less known books and magazines have been prosecuted on the same basis as a mountain of openly erotic literature which has no literary or artistic pretensions. What strikes one looking at the list is the totally arbitrary nature of the selection of targets for prosecution; and details of the cases show the equally arbitrary way in which the police enforce the legislation.

Political censorship

There is another level of direct censorship, still based on legislation, local and national, in which the political element often emerges much more explicitly than in the big literary cases. Here we have the ludicrous spectacle of vote-hungry local councillors banning films that their constituents can see freely in neighbouring parishes. These same local councillors cloak in official secrecy their own mismanagement and that of their council officers, and deny to their constituents the information needed to exercise any effective control over vital decisions on expenditure, redevelopment and planning. There is a whole multitude of laws and regulations that are regularly misused to prevent public scrutiny of local and national government: these abuses almost invariably flout the expressed intentions of the original legislators.

At the directly political level, almost every day sees little-publicised cases of the police using charges such as obstruction, loitering and causing a public nuisance to harass and discourage sellers of political papers and magazines—almost invariably left-wing literature. On an even more serious level, there is the heavy apparatus of the Official Secrets Act, the D-notice procedure, the Treason Felony Act and the Special Powers legislation in Northern Ireland. It is common knowledge, and a matter of considerable (although so far largely ineffectual) public concern that the Official Secrets Act is widely abused to cover the blunders of individual politicians and civil servants and to protect the interests of the party in power, rather than for genuine reasons of national security. Most abuses of the Official Secrets Act are, by their very nature, never revealed, and the same applies to the D-notice procedure: when details do slip out, as in the recent revelations of the

name of the head of M.I.6, widely publicity is inevitably given to the ludicrous trivia that had masqueraded as vital national secrets. Much less publicity was given to the case of a man originally charged in Kent under the Treason Felony Act and eventually imprisoned for distributing a pamphlet urging British soldiers to recognise the true nature of their presence in Northern Ireland and to refuse to fight there. Even less publicity, indeed virtually none, was given to two men imprisoned in Northern Ireland under the Special Powers legislation for possession of literature supporting the aims of an illegal organisation—the I.R.A.

With occasional exceptions, there seems to be a broadly inverse correlation between the seriousness and overtly political nature of cases of censorship and the publicity they receive. Prosecutions such as that of *Last Exit, Oz* and the *Schoolbook* are fought in the full blaze of publicity, and support for the defendants pours in from the liberal community. I am deeply grateful for the generous assistance I personally received in the *Schoolbook* case—indeed without it I would not still be an independent publisher—but I am perturbed that this sort of support is only forthcoming in this sort of case.

Self-censorship

Clearly there is an element of self-protection involved: the journalists who write about the cases, the TV men who do the interviews, the teachers, doctors and other professionals who come forward as defence witnesses—by and large are the small minority of the population who actually read books, and if the misguided authorities can get away with banning X's book, they will be stopping us reading Y's and Z's as well before we know where we are. Publishers can be sent to jail—indeed one recently was—but by and large defending literature, even erotic literature, against censorship is a fairly safe activity.

What is more, the small group of well-off people who own or effectively control the major newspapers, magazines and other media are not seriously put out if some of their liberal or radical employees use their columns or their cameras to champion such causes. It is a very different matter, however, if their class-interests are directly threatened. It is quite okay for strikers, squatters or militant blacks to be labelled irresponsible, anti-social, even criminal wreckers; but when it comes to an embarrassing programme about the well-placed connections of Mr. Poulson the axe is brought down very sharply—covered, of course, by professed concern about 'balance' and 'trial by television'. To take another example, over five hundred building workers are killed on sites every year, the massive headlines are devoted to groups like the Angry Brigade, with their carefully non-lethal bombs, not to the building contractors who put quick profits before human lives.

Here we should also bear in mind the indirect suppression which tends to follow direct censorship: journalists and broadcasters inevitably choose some subjects for investigation to the detriment of others in any case, and this selective reporting becomes even further distorted into self-censorship when it becomes clear that reports on certain subjects stand no chance of getting past the editor or the programme selectors. What emerges clearly is that the more directly a publication, a speech, an action or a movement threatens the interests of those in control of our society, the more seriously its suppression is attempted, and the less this suppression is publicised. Yes, of course, there are dedicated individuals and organisations,

hopelessly overworked and underfinanced, beavering away in an attempt to correct the worst abuses in society. There are ritual breast-beatings in the Sunday papers and academic investigations into the homelessness and joblessness behind the crime in the ghettos. But the problems seem to get worse, not better. Few of the concerned liberals seem willing to even recognise, let alone actually tackle the underlying system that inevitably perpetuates these abuses and injustices. It is not just a question of cowardice or impotence faced with the magnitude of the task—although both play a rôle to a greater or lesser extent. In the last analysis it is an expression of class interest, either perceived or real. For the middle classes, homelessness, unemployment, police harassment, racial discrimination, inadequate education, industrial diseases and accidents, all these are largely problems of conscience rather than issues that affect them directly. Their direct concerns tend to be things like the environment, sexual freedom, drug laws and literary censorship. I am not suggesting that the poor, the ordinary working man and woman are not affected by these issues, but simply that they have other and more immediate problems, concerns more vital to their actual day-to-day survival.

Freedom of expression—for whom?

Much ink is dedicated to demanding freedom of expression for writers and artists, but this demand is based on a distinctly élitist and limited conception of freedom. Freedom is surely indivisible, and can have no meaning if it is allowed to some but effectively denied to others. Most ordinary people in this country lack even the most elementary conditions for effective self-expression: inadequate education leaves them inarticulate, without the gifts of the gab and the pen usually necessary for access to the influen-

tial media; unlike big companies, they cannot afford to buy advertising space; unlike liberal pressure groups they are not able to ring round friends and contacts to get stories into the papers or on to the box; and a long working day in a factory leaves little time or energy for writing letters to the editor. For people in this situation, legal freedom of expression (limited as we know this to be) is basically irrelevant. Even for the articulate few among the underprivileged, the legal limits on free expression inevitably loom much larger, since the feelings and demands of the underprivileged clearly represent a more direct threat to the privileged few.

In conclusion, then, it seems to me that we should be fighting not against censorship but against the whole social system that makes freedom of expression effectively the privilege of a minority. I am not suggesting that those who defend freedom of expression have anything but the best of intentions, but I do feel that a clear and honest self-examination of their motivations might be salutary. There is nothing reprehensible in defending the interests of one's own class as long as this defence is honestly recognised for what it is. It does seem, though, that freedom of expression cannot be separated from freedom from exploitation and oppression, or to put it another way, that technical, legal freedom of expression has little meaning in a society where the social and economic system effectively deprives the majority of people of the means of expression.

To make a radical change in society inevitably involves facing the prospect of losing our own relatively privileged class position. But until our society is radically changed, until the real barriers to self-expression are completely broken down, true freedom of expression is likely to remain a dead letter, and the fight against censorship will remain an interesting but largely irrelevant diversion.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

TEN THOUSAND SAINTS: A Study in Irish and European Origins by Hubert Butler. Kilkenny: Wellbrook Press, £3 (plus 15p postage).

It has been said that the chief glory of the Irish race is that it has produced in unique abundance the highest type of which humanity is capable, the saint. At one time it would have been suicidal for an Irish author to belittle the national character by denying the historical existence of his country's myriad saints. But in the comparatively liberal outlook now prevailing in Ireland a book such as *Ten Thousand Saints* can be favourably reviewed, as it has been in the Irish Press, with merely the reservation that such doubts are not the same thing as questioning the Virgin Birth.

Twenty-five years ago Hubert Butler began to puzzle about the Irish saints, remarkable both for their huge numbers and their eccentricities. Who were these strange creatures, and whence did they come? The answer, it now appears, is that the Irish inherited their saints from their pre-Celtic past, in which they figured as mythical "ancestors" of the numerous tribes who wandered over Europe and eventually reached and settled in what was for them the limit of the inhabitable world. To a large extent the tribes may be identified from the saints' names, and Mr.

Butler notes many instances where areas known to have been settled by particular tribes later became the cult centres of their Christianised representatives. Thus for example St. Mac Cairthenn is venerated in Clogher, County Tyrone, and in Fir Cairthinn, Loch Foyle, and the Uí Maic Cairthinn tribe was settled in both places. Other linkages are suggested with a fair degree of probability. Ireland's female patron saint Bridget, for instance, could have been derived from the fire-goddess Brigit of Kildare, herself an "ancestress" of the Thracian Briges or Phrygians.

The saints' mythical "lives" were based on punning allusions to the names of the tribes. Thus St. Ercnat, an ancestor of the Uí Erca, was an embroideress, from *ercadh* meaning embroidery, while St. Cuach of the Uí Cuaich was a cook, from *cuach* a bowl. These are simple examples; one can only wonder at the obscure tribal puns which must have shaped the story told of SS. Fursa and Maignen, who agreed to exchange their diseases in token of friendship. St. Fursa gave his headache and his piles, and received in return from St. Maignen the beast that was devouring him internally, and which had to be pacified each morning with three bits of bacon. The Lives of the Irish saints abound with oddities of this kind.

Mr. Butler presents his thesis with wit and erudition. There is, as he says, more work to be done before it can be regarded as established, but there can be little doubt that he is on the right lines. A similar study of the early British saints might tell us much about the way in which our country was first settled.

R. J. CONDON

CENSORSHIP IN BRITAIN by Paul O'Higgins. Nelson, £3.

In a period of authoritarian backlash, increasing erosion of civil liberties, the Festival of Light and the Longford Report on Pornography, this book is a timely reminder of the enormous volume of censorship which already exists in this country. Paul O'Higgins, a barrister and prominent National Council for Civil Liberties member, has concisely documented every possible example of censorship, overt and covert, legal and extra-legal. He covers the whole spectrum, from the Obscenity Laws to the Official Secrets Act, from the British Museum's collection of suppressed books to telephone tapping, and from seditious libel to D-Notices.

He emphasises that one of the main functions of censorship is to protect the dominant groups in society by defending their ideology from criticism: "... Restrictions can find their justification only in the rôle they have to play in protecting the existing social and political *status quo*, and in shielding it from serious and effective criticism." The aim of such censorship is to make the existing social structure appear natural and inevitable and any change unthinkable. In a most important section of the book Paul O'Higgins analyses and disproves the widely held belief that we have a "free Press". Voluntary censorship is practised by conservative editors and proprietors, and the bulk of the popular press ignores or treats in a hostile manner minority or agitational groups, such as strikers, squatters and the unemployed. Such attitudes are reinforced by D-Notices from the Government advising the press that it would not be in the "public interest" to publicise certain information.

Less well-known examples of censorship are discussed, for instance the clause in the Aliens Act, incorporated in the 1971 Immigration Act, which makes it an offence for an alien/immigrant to "cause industrial unrest," unless he has been employed in that industry for more than two years.

The absurdities of the Obscenity and Indecency Laws are summarised; major problems are the right of the Prosecution to have cases tried not by jury but by magistrates, who represent the prejudices of the conformist, anti-intellectual middle class and frequently disregard the evidence of literary and other experts (as a Counsel in an obscenity trial in 1968 said, "The magistrates will know a dirty book when they see it"). And the right of the police to confiscate books prior to any charge being brought can have, and is probably intended to have, disastrous consequences for the livelihood of the small bookseller.

Where film censorship is concerned local councils have wide powers to decide what films the public may or may not see. This local veto still applies even when films have already been granted certificates. The arbitrary nature of this type of censorship is illustrated by the treatment of the film version of *Fanny Hill* in 1965 which was refused any certificate by the Board of Film Censors. Several local authorities refused to show it at all, many gave it an "X" Certificate, some an "A" Certificate, and five gave it a "U" Certificate!

Theatres have had rather more freedom since the 1968 Theatres Act abolished the prior censorship of plays by the Lord Chamberlain, but they must still ensure that plays do not contravene the Obscenity, Indecency or Defamation Laws. Instances of the Lord Chamberlain's censorship included the banning of the *The Mikado* in 1907 on the

ground that it might offend the Japanese Crown Prince who was visiting Britain at the time!

Christianity is an integral part of ruling class ideology and little criticism of religion or discussion of secularist views is permitted in the media. The pretence is kept up that Britain is a Christian country. As the B.B.C. has disarmingly admitted, "a special position is accorded to Christian religious broadcasting." Examples abound of censorship of anything which might be remotely offensive to Christians; in the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, the word "Jesus", used as an expletive, was deleted—"Cheeses" was substituted.

It is of concern to secularists in particular that the Blasphemy Law is still on the Statute Book. The definition is wide: "denying the truth of Christianity, the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer or the existence of God." Fortunately, in practice blasphemy is only likely to be an offence if it provokes a breach of the peace, and the last successful prosecution was in 1940. Nevertheless the existence of the Law acts as a deterrent to the publication of controversial views, and provides an excuse for the non-discussion of anti-religious opinions in the media.

There is also the Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act which prohibits indecent behaviour in church. This was the Act used to prosecute a group of left-wingers who in 1967 vocally protested in a Brighton Church against Harold Wilson reading the lesson. Two of them were sent to prison and others fined.

The Lord Chief Justice expressed the opinion that it made all the difference that the words were uttered in a sacred place; while they might have been acceptable elsewhere, they became criminal when uttered in a church.

This book provides a mine of easily accessible and readable information for opponents of censorship; it is also essential reading for anyone who subscribes to the over-worked illusion that Britain is "a free country". Rather than diminishing, censorship may be increasing (a new offence, Conspiracy to Corrupt Public Morals, was created in 1961 and was used in the *Oz* prosecution). The range of censorship is formidable, and Paul O'Higgins emphasises that if all the existing laws were fully enforced there would be little freedom left for any expression of opinion.

PATRICIA KNIGHT

THE GROWTH OF PHILOSOPHICAL RADICALISM
by Elie Halévy (translated by Mary Morris).
Faber & Faber, £2.

Halévy's other classic, *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, is much easier to read than this book. Still, if you happened to go a bomb on Jeremy Bentham and the Utilitarians, then I would certainly recommend this work for the proverbial desert island; for other readers, John Plamenatz's fine preface will be a great help.

I have always had a sneaking affection for Bentham, who despite his innate shyness and modesty was one of the most controversial figures of the nineteenth century. His work sometimes led him up a philosophical blind alley of absurdity, most notably in his "hedonistic calculus" in which he tried to quantify units of pleasure and pain, their intensity, duration and so on, in working out whether an action was good or evil. Yet despite this, Bentham had some solid achievements to his credit. His group, the philosophical radicals, formed the spearhead of social reform in the aftermath of the industrial revolution, and Bentham himself made a lasting contribution to moral philosophy.

In picking one's way through the dense texture of Halévy's book, it is easy to lose sight of his central arguments. Halévy comments that the ambition of Bentham and his followers was to establish the social sciences, including politics, law and social morality, on the model of the deductive sciences, such as geometry. That is, if one started with the basic laws of human nature, one could proceed rather like Euclid did with his axioms, and construct a whole body of knowledge: or, in this case, the social order. Bentham's first principle of human behaviour is that the individual acts so as to maximise his potential pleasure and minimise his pain. From this, it follows that a society so organised that its members are allowed and encouraged to maximise their own happiness will be a good society, one in which there is the least pain. Hence the famous principle of the Utilitarian movement, that the aim of social legislation should be to bring about the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

This doctrine was to have enormous influence on nineteenth-century English history. In the first place, Bentham and his disciples, as convinced rationalists and individualists, imported the reforming spirit of the French revolution to England. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the pressure for parliamentary reform was given ideological coherence by the democratic principles of the philosophical radicals. In virtually every field of social and political reform, from the humanising of English criminal law to Edwin Chadwick's poor law reforms and the drive to regulate hours and conditions of work, the influence of the radicals was paramount. Seldom has any group of thinkers made such an impact, in such a short space of time, on the everyday lives of the people as did Bentham and his followers in the nineteenth century.

This overriding emphasis on social reform was hardly surprising, given the philosophical basis of Bentham's ideas. For unlike David Hume, whose account of the social foundations of morality led him to a conservative position of support for the established order, the philosophical radicals did not take existing institutions on trust. Their criticism of Hume was that the social rules that govern morality may outlive their usefulness, eventually coming to serve the interests of privileged groups anxious to preserve the *status quo* rather than the general interest: an anticipation of Marx's theory of morality. The radicals sought some other principle by which to assess the utility of social institutions and customs, and found it in the doctrine of the greatest happiness. And it is undeniable that the application of this idea was a great force for good in Victorian England.

Halévy considers that Benthamism was "an economic psychology put into the imperative". From the idea of economic man setting out to maximise his own wealth was borrowed the idea of utilitarian man seeking to maximise his own happiness. Classical economists taught that the welfare of society was in turn maximised, so long as individuals were permitted a free hand in pursuing their enlightened self-interest. A similar concept of adding up individual welfares to arrive at a whole is very characteristic of the philosophical radicals. But apart from the practical problem of quantifying, adding and subtracting welfares, there is a major weakness in Bentham's notion of the way in which the individual comes to accept the primacy of social rules and practices. For Bentham, as a good rationalist, thought that man would willingly obey the precepts of morality so long as this promoted the maximisation of the general welfare. Only by thus guaranteeing the happiness of all could the individual seek to increase his own happiness.

This vision of labour for the general good, whilst it may have underpinned the social and political reforms of the radicals, could not, however, be derived from the second major principle of Bentham and James Mill, which was that every man is the best judge of what is, or is not, in his own interest. Accordingly, it is far from easy, on Bentham's account of human nature, to see why anyone should wish to work for the general happiness, since what matters to the individual is not any such abstraction but rather getting the best terms he can in his dealings with others. The reforming spirit of the Benthamites did not derive from their hypothetical best interests, but from some other moral principle: a conclusion which foreshadows the criticism that a modern philosopher might make of Utilitarianism as a moral theory, that it defeats its own purpose in trying to make the greatest happiness of the greatest number the criterion for a moral act. For the concept of "moral" cannot be redefined in this way without stripping it of its ethical content. Yet in their explanation of the social basis of morality, and in their carefully elaborated plans for social reform, the philosophical radicals headed by Mill and Bentham have made a massive contribution to English history and philosophy. And there are not all that many thinkers of whom the same could be said.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

POP GOES JESUS by Micheal Jacob. Mowbray, 50p.

This survey of the Jesus movement is not entirely sympathetic, nor however is it in any sense objective. It seeks to describe the bizarre conglomeration of groups that coalesce with difficulty into a movement whose cohesion is dubious and whose significance is questionable. There is plenty of evidence that the movement is both raucous and insidious, yet no insight is given into the psychopathology of conversion; the movement's various sub-groups spread their tentacles wide, yet no careful examination of the distinctive traits of the diverse groups emerges.

Much of the language of the self-styled Jesus Freaks stems from the drug sub-culture: people "turn on" to Jesus, and "The system hassles us because we don't dig their life style. *We know we need a revolutionary solution.* That's really cool. Real cool." But the movement seems to be more obsessed with bandwaggon than revolution. There is a nauseating cosiness about Jesus communes and by a devious sleight of hand any revolutionary or even reformist zeal is converted into a hankering after a primitive simplicity that is both naive and turns its back on many of the real social problems of today. It is probably true that a number of youngsters have turned off drugs and on to God: it may be salutary that a physical dependence on harmful drugs has been overcome, but it is arguable whether a vague vision of a shining Christian light will do much to solve many problems. Few of the protagonists in this story of a contemporary trend can have stopped to ask themselves whether God is a panacea or a placebo. Instant conversion, like instant soup, may be convenient but it is doubtful whether it is as nourishing. The desire to get "some good vibes going" may be genuine, but the result is a cacophony of discordant rantings.

The Jesus movement appears to divide and spawn as rapidly as an amoeba. The initial impulse came from America where the minutest idea is blown big like a balloon; but the emphasis varies from pop and rock music to underground news-sheets and mass rallies. In Britain the flames have flickered less ferociously and the movement

seems altogether slighter, despite the efforts of such traveling gospel-mongers as Arthur Blessit. (His visit to Northern Ireland was supposed to be going to bring peace to that troubled community, but the effect of his efforts seems to suggest that he got his prayer-lines crossed.)

Of course, it's all pretty good for showbiz. *Jesus Christ Superstar* L.P.s sold millions in America; the British sales have not been quite so good, but the musical *Godspell* has bewitched audiences for a long run. If you juxtapose a garbled retelling of the parables with a few corny jokes do they become more palatable? And is one catchy tune enough for the audience to swallow?

The aspect of the movement which this book most impresses upon me is its sheer mindlessness. To be caught in a rally where emotional hysteria predominates may be forgiveable, but a failure so much as to examine the bait is extraordinary. There is doubtless a simple-minded sincerity about both trend leaders and bandwaggon followers, but I should like to read a book which thoroughly examined the manipulation behind the scene. I do not hold a conspiracy theory, but I do feel that behind it all is more than sweet naivety. The book has some giveaway points: the fact that Billy Graham (an 'oldy' to the young devotees who have swept his raiment from under his feet) contrives to combine evangelism and strong support for the Republican party; the cursory observations on the Festival of Light, Mary Whitehouse *et al.*, yet there is a total failure to observe the reactionary propaganda behind the public revelry; Cliff Richards' messianic warblings are mentioned but his profits are not even hinted at.

I should like to read a book which seriously examined the bizarre excrescences surrounding the Jesus movement, and which tried to come to grips with the apocalyptic shrieks and Pentecostal mutterings as a social phenomenon. But this book, written in a staccato, journalistic style is unlikely to answer this or any other need.

JIM HERRICK

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES by Alan G. R. Smith. Thames and Hudson, £1.25 (£2.25 cloth).

The scientific explosion that took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries poses many problems for the student of the history of science and its impact upon society. Not least of the questions raised is why should science suddenly start to flourish on the scale it did, having all but laid dormant in Western Europe during the long years of the Dark and Middle Ages?

The author examines various explanations as to why science burst forth, and clearly comes down in favour of one which finds its roots in the medieval period; however, his fairly lengthy exposition of this theory seemed rather to raise more questions than it answered and did not really shed any light on why science suddenly sprang to life. No student of the history of science would reject the idea that the roots of the scientific revolution were buried deep in the medieval period; however, why stop there? Dr. Smith fails to examine the Moslem contribution to science, yet many recent studies clearly demonstrate that Moslem science and philosophical ideas spread deep into the medieval world and were of particular influence in Italy. The medieval thinkers produced a number of ideas that were to stimulate later researchers, and Dr. Smith draws attention to some. However, this still does not provide us with the answer as to why science commenced to expand as it did.

It is very easy to force every historical problem into neatly docketed theories; thus to some the scientific revolution was simply explained in terms of a number of brilliant minds at a given point in time, others see the answer in strictly economic terms, while many Protestant authors have ascribed the revolution to the Protestant Reformation. One can think of objections to each, and this suggests that the real reason might be a combination of factors drawn from all these theories. One of the most important factors in the spread of information, and as a medium to stimulate others, was the invention of printing, and while this came earlier than the period covered by *Science and Society*, it was in the sixteenth century that printing became established throughout Western Europe, excluding Russia. The breakdown in the structure of society brought about by the Reformation also played a key rôle, and so did the expansion of commerce. In short, there were many factors involved and much more work will have to be done before we can be certain of many of the answers to the problems discussed by Dr. Smith.

The author suggests that in the sixteenth century the Catholic Church was more favourably disposed towards science than were the Protestant reformers, and cites as evidence Italy, which was then the European scientific centre. In this Dr. Smith is repeating what J. M. Robertson wrote many years ago; but what he does not examine is the degree of scepticism prevalent in Italy. Whatever might have been the strength of Catholicism among the masses, it is clear that among the educated classes and the higher ranks of the clergy doubt ran rampant. This probably explains the failure of the Church to condemn the ideas of Copernicus (the 500th anniversary of whose birth falls this year), until sixty years after his epic book, *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (1543), was published. Luther described Copernicus as "this fool", and his attitude probably reflects majority feeling among the reformers.

The dead hand of religion has always created an environment in which science stagnates, and it is significant that where we find scepticism we find science starting to flourish. Dr. Smith admits that the spread of scientific knowledge was accompanied by a spread of scepticism, and he quotes the atheist Pierre Bayle as horrifying both Catholic and Protestant churches with his claim that "an atheist who lives a virtuous life is not a creature of wonder . . . there is nothing more extraordinary about an atheist living a virtuous life, than about a Christian leading a wicked one." With the spread of science institutionalised religion went into decline, and instrumental in this was the work of a number of popularisers, one being the Frenchman, Bernard de Fontenelle, described by Dr. Smith as "the greatest populariser of the scientific discoveries of the time". Fontenelle, he further states, "was a sceptic, and in transmitting the ideas of the great scientists for general consumption, he gave them an anti-religious slant," which, Dr. Smith adds, "helped to strengthen the already existing impression that the Church, especially in France, was the enemy of scientific advance."

Dr. Smith concludes his book by suggesting that the impact of science upon society was to establish a clear-cut gap between the educated classes and the bulk of the population: the scientific revolution was "a disruptive force". I do not agree with this claim, and do not accept that the author demonstrates his thesis. That there was a division between what the bulk of the population believed and what the researches of the scientists showed is not in dispute, nor that there were economic differences "between the élites of the area [Europe] and ordinary men". This

division is still with us, but the new knowledge slowly circulated through all ranks in society to a point where the ruling classes felt their power challenged, as in the political revolutions of the eighteenth century, and so sought to close ranks; but this takes us on to times not covered by *Science and Society* and really shows that we cannot, as Dr. Smith does, close the story at the end of the seventeenth century.

I found *Science and Society* a stimulating work. It contains nothing that could be described as new, and I feel that the author could have improved his discussion by taking into consideration some of the works of J. M. Robertson and perhaps Joseph McCabe's pioneering work on the spread of Islamic ideas. The book is excellently illustrated and well indexed. It does not replace other works along similar lines but can be said to supplement them. Many of the problems the author sought to explain remain problems still, but he does provide much food for thought and suggests lines of inquiry that will repay examination.

R. W. MORRELL

JOURNALS

ENERGY AND CHARACTER: The Journal of Bioenergetic Research. Vol. 4, no. 1 (January 1973). Weymouth, Dorset: Abbotsbury Publications, 75p (£2 p.a.).

Energy and Character is "devoted to the study of emotional health as a biological energy process". Bioenergetic research originated with the psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich, who died of a heart attack in an American prison in November 1957, where he had been committed for contempt of court. Reich's theory that neurosis is linked up with bodily tension has had a considerable influence on liberal psychologists and educationalists, notably A. S. Neill, and last year a controversial film on Reich's work, *The Mystery of the Organism* was produced, which is sympathetically reviewed by Neill in this issue of *Energy and Character*. Most of the articles are highly technical, but one by the editor, David Boadella, entitled "Moralism, Pornography and Encounter", is of particular interest to freethinkers. Ostensibly, it is a review of the Longford Committee's Report and *The Case Against Pornography* (edited by David Holbrook), but it is, in effect, a statement of Boadella's own standpoint on this vexed question.

Briefly, Boadella is against both pornography and censorship. This deserves to be stressed, for it is all too often assumed (by Holbrook among others) that if one disapproves of censorship one must, *ipso facto*, be in favour of pornography. But, of course, this does not follow, and indeed, as Boadella forcefully points out, the Longford Report, with its repressive, negative approach, is a Godsend to the 'porn' merchants, and "a millstone around the neck of anyone who wants to bring clarity into the pornography debate".

The two extreme attitudes are probably most clearly represented today by Malcolm Muggeridge and Bernard Levin respectively. Muggeridge's hero is the apostle Paul, whose doctrine that sex is at best a necessary evil and that the pleasures of the body—unlike those of the spirit—are somehow inherently sinful, has caused so much misery throughout the centuries. But Levin, argues Boadella, is equally at fault in refusing to condemn unequivocally the commercial pornographers, and to admit that in its obsession with perverted sex ours is a profoundly sick society. Here, I think, he is unfair to Levin who is, in his way, as

stern a moralist as Mr. Boadella, but who naturally sees red when the apostles of the ludicrous Festival of Light, such as Mrs. Whitehouse or Lady Birdwood, try to stifle freedom of expression in the arts.

Boadella's basic criticism of pornography is that it is fundamentally anti-sexual and anti-erotic. In the grey, dreary world of the commercial pornographer, people never connect or communicate in a meaningful way. It is a world completely devoid of tenderness or humanity. As Masud Khan, one of the contributors of the Holbrook symposium pregnantly phrases it, pornography is a "stealer of dreams". Boadella denies that it can ever have a therapeutic function, since it represents "an attempt to warm up a cold body by exciting the head".

All this seems to me to be sound sense, though I think a case can be made out for the 'safety-valve' theory which was, indeed, argued convincingly by one of those from whom the Longford Commission took evidence. Nevertheless, I agree that pornography on the whole probably does more harm than good, and that if one can be elevated by reading inspiring literature (as one obviously can), it would seem logically to follow that one may also be degraded by steeping oneself in filth. But, as Boadella himself acknowledges, censorship is no answer to the problem and indeed aggravates it by making the banned book, film or play even more attractive. If people like David Holbrook would only learn this valuable lesson, they might be listened to with more attention and respect.

JOHN L. BROOM

QUESTION 6 edited by Hector Hawton. Pemberton, £1.25 (25p paperback).

The publication of this book is in itself an achievement, succeeding as it does the *Agnostic Review* and the *Rationalist Annual*. While many will regret that rationalist is no longer an acceptable term—perhaps because of its nineteenth-century connotations—it is nevertheless a book unswervingly rationalist in its approach, with reason underlying each contribution.

All of these essays are in their various ways argumentative. Ivan Butler, looking at "Commercial Cinema and Religious Criticism", shows the remarkable breach in these matters between Continental film makers like Buñuel and British and American directors. Similarly, Peter Faulkner, in "Humanism and the Novel", surveys the field but rarely breaks new ground.

H. Lionel Elvin offers a thoughtful antidote to the James Report recommendations on teacher training, which is implicitly contested by an equally stimulating piece by Cyril Bibby.

While this volume follows its five predecessors' concern to make humanism a relevant creed for the modern man, few can have provided so well that fusion between old and new as Ronald Fletcher. Seeking "A New Social System", he makes a convincing restatement of the relevance of Comte in contending that revolution demands construction not destruction. He prompts the reader to hope that a future volume may contain a debate between Mr. Fletcher and Professor Antony Flew. For while the latter thoroughly and expertly refutes B. F. Skinner's view of Man, as is the main object of his essay, he cannot withstand his requent impulse to contest liberal opinion and leftist thinking.

However, his dissection of Skinnerian absurdities makes one wonder how that author has for so long propounded his manifestly false views. They fail to take account of

human peculiarities, wills, impulses, feelings and purposes. Dr. Flew is refreshingly undogmatic in his approach.

Professor E. H. Hutten, in considering "What Does it Mean to be a Jew?", shows that the 'Jewish problem' exists today in subtle ways, despite much belief to the contrary. He suggests that religious conflict between God and the Devil is "the very prototype of a neurotic conflict on a gigantic scale", with anti-Semitism as the symptom.

The difficulty which Professor Hutten concerns himself with is that of the Jew forsaking his religion, while the non-Jew continues to regard him as a Jewish atheist or a Jewish agnostic. It is a problem which can only find its solution in the death of religion, which Professor Hutten believes can only come through greater maturity and knowledge.

H. J. Blackham and James Thrower offer evidence of their scholarship in historical essays which survey "European Rationalism" and "Abelard and European Rationalism" respectively.

This is a volume whose slimmness belies its weight of authority, interest and commonsense. For those who enjoy cutting their intellectual teeth it is highly recommended. Others less so inclined will nevertheless peruse profitably.

TERRY PHILPOT

PUBLICATIONS IN BRIEF

Books recently received include **The Communication Gap** by Laurence Evans (Charles Knight, £2.25); **Erik H. Erikson: the growth of his work** by Robert Coles (Souvenir Press, £3.50); **The Future of Marriage** by Jessie Bernard (Souvenir Press, £3); **When the Music Ended** by Marjorie D. Turner (Regency Press, £1.20); **An Objective Theory of Probability** by D. A. Gillies (Methuen, £3.50); and **Positive Atheism** by Gora (Vijayawada: Atheist Centre, Rs.5/U.S. \$2). G. F. Westcott's **Towards Intellectual Freedom** has been published in duplicated typescript form (Basic Ideology Research Unit, £10).

We have also received a number of pamphlets, such as **Ages and Stages** [Auguste Comte Memorial Trust Lecture no. 9] by Donald G. Macrae (University of London Athlone Press, 40p); **This Proof Pythagoras and other poems** by Hamilton Parry (Sussex: Samson Press, 50p); and various Fabian Society tracts, including **The United Nations in a New Era** by Evan Luard (tr. no. 415, 25p) and **Regional Development** by T. Fisk and K. Jones (tr. no. 417, 40p). Mothers in Action have recently published an 11-page pamphlet, **Single Mothers' Survival Notes** (15p*).

Three books of interest to freethinkers have been republished in paperback form: **Nucleoethics: ethics in modern society** by David Tribe (Paladin, 90p); **The Humanist Outlook** edited by A. J. Ayer (Pemberton/Barrie and Rockliff, 75p); and **Population versus Liberty** by Jack Parsons (Pemberton, £1.20).

*From 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

THEATRE

THE SEA by Edward Bond. Royal Court Theatre.

This play is something of an enigma, maybe because the 'explanations', such as they are, are packed into a muted epilogue. The play opens with a magnificent storm in which a boat overturns and a man is drowned; death is the hinge of the play, but the dark tone sharply changes

when we enter a draper's shop and see Louise Raffi, a domineering woman, ordering velvet curtains. The tone now becomes deft and comic and from here on the comic overtones of life are interwoven with the dark shadow of death.

The draper is mad and believes that alien beings are bent on destroying the village and that Willy Carson, the boy in the boat with the man who drowned, is a spy for them. As the play progresses he goes quite crazy, eventually stabbing the dead, drowned body and bemoaning that there is no blood, only water. This part is pitched to a fine frenzy by Ian Holm, scurrying around like a crazy terrier. The lighter side of life is the scene with amateur theatricals at the hall, but the tour de force of the play is the black comedy of the memorial service, where the drowned man's ashes are to be scattered over the cliffs. As a hymn is sung one of the women bursts into a hilarious, high soprano descant which gives offence to the others; she then proceeds loudly to search for her smelling salts while a prayer is being intoned. The mad draper arrives and is horrified to find the man he thought he killed is still alive. The ashes are dropped; a lady faints. If it all sounds a bit confusing—it was; but again the mood quickly changes and a moving soliloquy on old age and death comes from Louise Raffi. (The part was skilfully played by Coral Browne.)

The heart of the play seems to be in the quiet epilogue beside the hut of Evans, the drunken sage. He talks with Willy Carson who had been out on the boat. They speak of a universe peopled by living beings that kill, of universal suffering. And Evans says there will always be a rat hiding under a stone ready to bred and continue life. "I believe in that rat . . . In the end life laughs at death. There'll be no more tragedy." Life is not tragic but just continuous, like the sea. Edward Bond has been concerned with suffering from his first play, *Saved*, through to his version of *Lear*, and in this strange, haunting play he seems to be trying to come to terms with a universe full of pain.

JIM HERRICK

SCOTLAND: The Pitlochry Festival Theatre.

When the sad news came at the beginning of May that the latest Glasgow fire disaster was the city's famous experimental theatre, the Close, even Edinburgh theatre-goers felt bereaved, for the Glasgow Close had added to the richness and range of theatrical events offered to the people and visitors to central Scotland.

I decided, as a result, to head North one recent weekend, beyond even Stirling and Perth, both of which have thriving theatres, to Pitlochry, where mountains and lochs abound, and where, believe it or not, there is a delightful repertoire theatre with plays running non-stop from April till September. There are six plays performed in repertoire, and changed about each week, so that you can, if you choose, see all six plays in six days, or go on occasional weekends throughout the season and see the different plays that way.

My first sample was a lively, hilarious romp of Goldoni's *The Venetian Twins*, with the dual-rôle lead taken by Lionel Guyett, a former National Theatre Company member who changed rôles with amazing speed and agility, and was supported by a young, energetic cast. Other plays that can be seen are *Easter* by Strindberg, *Ten Little Niggers* by Agatha Christie, *Schellenbrack* by Tom McGrath, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee, and *The Secretary Bird* by D. Douglas Home.

The Pitlochry Festival Theatre perches on the town hillside, jammed between the grey stone houses of the townspeople; and the building has a relaxed festive atmosphere reminiscent of the days when, twenty-odd years ago, the plays were performed under the canvas of a big marquee. Pitlochry is small but very pleasant, surrounded by mountains and home of the Loch Faskally Hydro-electricity scheme, with its dam and massive turbines on view, and also the fish ladder, the man-made water ladder by which the salmon can make their way upstream past the dam to spawn. In what is already marvellous country for walking, fishing and exploring, the added bonus of a theatre in the hills makes the area most attractive to visit.

LINDSEY HARRIS

LETTERS

Early Christianity

Mr. Condon (letters, May) thinks that the Docetic view of Jesus (that "he was never more than what would nowadays be called a subjective vision") was probably the original one. But it is not evidenced before the Johannine epistles (which theologians date at A.D. 90-110). Neither Paul (writing about A.D. 60), nor the earlier Christians whose views he assimilated in his letters, nor the rival Christian teachers he attacks in them, show any knowledge of Docetism. Jerome's affirmation that it arose "while the blood of Christ was still fresh in Judaea" is late (ca. A.D. 380) and (pace Mr. Condon) tendentious; Jerome would convince his readers that the Docetes were stupid and perverse because they had the refutation of their opinions under their very eyes, had they chosen to open them.

G. A. WELLS.

Intelligence and I.Q. Tests

Despite his cool, calm-and-collected review (May) of *Genetics and Education* by Arthur R. Jensen, Philip Hinchliff presents readers with one or two hot implications. Mr. Hinchliff refers to the violent response to Professor Jensen's seminal article from Berkeley students and the American academic establishment; moreover, there seems to be a more or less similar situation in this country, for example, the response to Professor Eysenck's views.

Perhaps one of the paradoxes in all this is that the word 'intelligence' would seem to be having an unduly comprehensive meaning for some students and academics. Yet, can it not reasonably be argued that there is more to 'intelligence' than that which is tested in I.Q. tests? If there is a commonly accepted sense in which behaviour indicates 'level of intelligence', then does that not point to one of the significant limitations of I.Q. tests? Moreover, if levels of intelligence are indicated by such things as value-judgements, emotional states, and all those arts and skills untested (and untestable?) in I.Q. tests, then is not an I.Q. a very restricted indication indeed of intelligence level?

CHARLES BYASS.

Pornography and Violence

Madeleine Simms's review of my book, *The Pseudo-Revolution*, delighted me, and marks a milestone in the attitudes of liberal freethinking rational people to the creeping disease of pornography (that is, bad pornography: books like *The Vivisector*, by Patrick White, could be described as good pornography, because they illuminate the human quest for meaning in sexuality). Today's revelations about the connections between high vice, pornographic bookshops, and corruption will surely put an end to the absurd idolisation of depraved sex on the part of our 'progressives'?

But Mrs. Simms is wrong about Sweden and Greece, where acts of violence are concerned. I do not for a moment wish to pardon the abominable horrors of violence and torture in Greek prisons. But in terms of statistics, Denmark and Sweden, if one includes suicide, come very high indeed in the tables of acts of violence—and this is a fact. Moreover, the statistics for various forms of human misery—alcoholism, venereal disease, illegitimacy, rape, neurosis, and so on—show that Sweden is hardly to be classed as such a superior country, in terms of 'civilisation'. The alleged superiority of Swedish and Danish civilisation is something of a myth, and their sexual freedom has not led to anything like the elysium which we are sometimes led to believe. Sexual casualties among the young in these countries continue to mount.

DAVID HOLBROOK.

The Influence of the Roman Empire

I quite take Mr. Kuebart's point (letters, May) about the nasty side of Imperial Rome, but then every great civilisation has its warts. It remains true that the entire history of western Europe is bound up with those few square miles on the Tiber in Rome, whose empire was finally destroyed by the Huns and Vandals (and what revealing names these are), and in whose debt western civilisation will always be.

Now for Mr. Kuebart's history. Conflict between Germans and French runs right back to the days of the empire; and to the struggles between Charlemagne's successors, culminating in A.D. 962 when the German king, Otho, appropriated what was left of his empire; and certainly antedates the wars between Britain and France. I do not accept that the case of Britain is relevant to my argument, since historians agree that Britain was never "Romanised" to the same extent as continental Europe. The Roman occupation, for various reasons, left relatively little impression on this country.

Finally, Mr. Kuebart has not dealt with my main point, which was that Varus's defeat at the hands of the German tribes in A.D. 9 marked the definitive end of the Roman advance in Germany, put paid to the hopes of implanting a Latin culture, and produced a climate of mutual suspicion and fear which has lasted into the modern era.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF.

Freedom, Power and Decision-Making

History has proved that people who believe absurdities commit atrocities, especially regarding racialism and religion; and it is one of the most difficult problems of society to decide when to intervene with personal beliefs. Society intervenes by placing people in mental hospitals when their beliefs become dangerous to others and tries to brainwash them.

Unfortunately the majority can believe absurdities, such as the idea that burning heretics at the stake saved their souls and that witches existed; and also people in power, like Hitler, Stalin and Amin can hold wrong beliefs that lead to atrocities.

The trouble with insanity and euthanasia is who will make the decisions, as this area is very vulnerable and open to terrible misuse in the wrong hands. Our present freedom could disappear overnight.

ROBERT HALSTEAD.

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THE LION TAMER

Around the rails the circus crowds sit pale

And watch the beasts perform the tricks they loathe.

They hope the lion tamer may just fail,

But with my whip I will control them both.

For I have faced the adulating crowd,

And I have learned to ride the lions' rage;

My early quest for freedom has its shroud

In fame I've found within the circus cage.

For freedom followed I the painted lights

(While other youths daydreamed in tame unrest)

In tearful longing past a thousand sights,

—Within my trade, today I am the best

And watch the crowd behind its fearful mask,

And watch the painted lights that will seduce;

The lions' foolish master, I must ask

If there's still time to put my life to use.

THOMAS LAND©

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Humanist Counselling Service, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG; telephone 01-937 2341 (for confidential advice on your personal problems—whatever they are).

Humanist Holidays. 19 to 31 August: Summer Centre at Ilfracombe. One family bedroom still available for both weeks (good reductions for juniors) and a few doubles for second week only. Details from Secretary, Mrs. Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone: 01-642 8796).

EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove, Sunday, 1 July, 4.30 p.m.: tea-party and Annual General Meeting

Humanist Housing Association, Burnet House, 8 Burgess Hill, Finchley Road, London NW2. Sunday, 1 July, 3 p.m.: Annual Garden Party (including bring-and-buy-stall).

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday, 17 June, 7.30 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "What Humanism Means to Us Now."

Merseyside Humanist Group, 46 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. Wednesday, 20 June, 7.30 p.m.: CLARICE MARTINDALE, "Women's Role in Society."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. *Sunday Morning Meetings*, 11 a.m. 17 June: JOY MACASKILL, "Darwinism and Secularism in the Later Nineteenth Century"; 24 June: Professor ANTONY FLEW, "Crime or Sickness?"; 1 July: TREVOR SMITH, "Contemporary Citizenship"; 8 July: H. J. BLACKHAM, "The Case for Counselling"; *Sunday Forum*, 3 p.m. 24 June: DAN GILLAN, "The Middle East—the next explosion?"

Sutton Humanist Group, Friends' Meeting House, Cedar Road, Sutton, Thursday, 21 June, 7.30 p.m.: Professor PERCY BUTLER, "Man—the peculiar animal."

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group, 55 Orchard Road, Tewin. Sunday, 24 June, 1 p.m.: Garden Party (c/o Beatrice Haggis).

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