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## CIVIL LIBERTY

### —RULE OF LAW IN DANGER

"The community must work in civil liberties with as much energy as on more local and bitter issues." This was the conclusion of Benedict Birnberg who addressed the last of the National Secular Society public meetings on "Threats to Freedom" held in London on 29 May. Mr. Birnberg, a solicitor, is vice-chairman of the National Council for Civil Liberties. He began by saying that last winter the atmosphere for civil liberties in Britain was the worst it had been for a very long time. Perhaps this was demonstrated most forcibly by the recent sight of the military with tanks undertaking civilian police duties at London Airport. Other areas where the situation was far from satisfactory included the mass of circumstantial evidence on the activities of the C.I.A. in this country, the harassment of industrial pickets, the persecution of illegal immigrants through the retrospective interpretation given the Immigration Act, the rejection of Chilean refugees, and the attempted passage of the Cinematograph and Indecent Displays Bill. The description of 1973 in the N.C.C.L. annual report as a year civil libertarians could well have been without was most apposite, since, said Mr. Birnberg, the Heath régime was almost totally antipathetic to civil liberties.

#### Considerable improvement

Since the general election in February, things had improved considerably. In fact, the speaker believed the present Labour government seemed to be doing better than the government of 1964-70 in this field. Already they had granted an amnesty to illegal immigrants, offered political asylum to Chilean students and others (bringing Britain into line with other west European countries), proposed the repeal of the divisive Industrial Relations Act, refused to re-introduce the Cinematograph and Indecent Displays Bill, set up a Royal Commission on the Press, and made a statement that it was their long-term policy to reduce the prison population. It was to be hoped that these policies would eventually alter the climate of opinion in the law-enforcement agencies, several leaders of which had made statements highly prejudicial to civil liberties during the previous year.

This, said Mr. Birnberg, was a period of intense revolutionary change throughout the world. It was also having its effects here. Changes had to occur here, arising from the legitimate grievances of those disadvantaged by class, generation, underprivilege, and the situation in Ireland. The reaction of the authorities to this situation was crucial to civil liberty in this country. The threats were many. One was the over-reaction of the forces of law and order. These should be amenable to control as they were not a monolithic establishment and were not engaged in some sort of conspiracy. However, the secret police were a particular threat: the secret agencies were concerting their activities, and proliferating under the guise of Irish and anti-revolutionary activities. The use of extended detention, strong-arm interrogation, and the employments of informers and *agents provocateurs* were on the increase. It had been seriously suggested by some that the army should be employed in industrial disputes on the model

of Greece and Chile. There was also incontrovertible evidence of the activities in this country of foreign intelligence agencies, such as the South African and Iranian. It was strange how the government tolerated these, but not those of the Soviet bloc.

#### Judicial illiberalism

A further threat came from judicial illiberalism masquerading as the upholding of law and order. Lord Hailsham, the former Lord Chancellor, for instance, seemed to identify the rule of law with paternal capitalism. There were repeated calls to curtail the right of pickets and of non-violent demonstrators, to limit the right to trial by jury, to increase the power of the police, and to restrict the rights of suspects. Typical of this was the report on evidence of the Criminal Law Revision Committee. However, said Mr. Birnberg, the fact of a rising crime rate did not presuppose the need for a change in the criminal procedure.

It remained, as the National Council for Civil Liberties had said at the time, a matter of individual rights. If the proposals of this report had been adopted they would have threatened the accused's right of silence, and the Judges' Rules governing police treatment of suspects. The Bar Council had criticized the report severely: the caution, they said, would become more of an inducement; the ability of the courts to supervise police activities would be jeopardized; you would end up with a mixture of the accusatorial and inquisitorial systems of criminal justice without the safeguards of either; the admission as evidence of previous convictions would ensure intolerable prejudice. Although these proposals had been shelved, they could at any time become practical politics. One argument that their supporters relied upon was the myth of a high acquittal rate. Although about one-seventh of trials on indictment

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resulted in acquittal, you could not overlook the fact that the vast majority of cases were tried in the summary courts, where there was a very high proportion of guilty pleas. It is always only a short step to a police state. Totalitarian régimes all first tackle lawyers and the rule of law.

A further cause for concern was the use made of the prison system. Each year over twenty thousand prisoners were remanded to prison while waiting trial, who were subsequently acquitted or given non-custodial sentences. In all, the courts send some fifty thousand to prison each year, a fair proportion of whom were inadequate or suffering from psychological disorders. Conditions in prison were totally lacking in humanitarianism. On release the prisoner was given the barest of support. There was also unfairness in the excessive discretion given to prison officers in matters of parole, solitary confinement, loss of privileges and early release.

Mr. Birnberg concluded by pointing out certain reforms that were needed in the administration of justice. Firstly there was need for an independent complaints procedure for the police, with a judicial chairman and independent staff. Secondly, the recent cases of persons convicted on the evidence of mistaken identification indicated the need to review of whole criminal trial process. The Court of Appeal, for instance, views its rôle in far too narrow and technical way. Again, in an adversary system of justice there was an imperative need for the defendant to have adequate assistance to be on equal terms with the prosecution who were operating on "home ground". The present provision was totally inadequate. The law was very complicated even in apparently simple cases. Too many unrepresented defendants were being given custodial sentences. Help must be positively offered. There was a need for a duty solicitor scheme. The legal profession should devote more effort to defence work. Recent criticism of neighbourhood law centres by members of the profession were completely misplaced, as these provided a service that a commercial profession was unable or unwilling to provide.

"There is always a threat to liberty, however good our mandarins. This is especially true in times of stress. One must exert constant vigilance by participating in groups and being prepared to question authority when abuses occur."

# NEWS

## THREATS TO IMMIGRANTS AND EXILES

This formed the subject of a recent National Secular Society public meeting in London. The first speaker was Fritz Efav, Secretary of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He discussed the class aspects of draft resistance and the effect of the reaction of the ground troops that eventually forced the U.S. government to withdraw from the war. There was a lasting effect in the emergence of the G.I. movement and the fact that returning exiles had had the experience of being second class citizens. Mr. Efav saw Watergate as in many ways an exorcism of involvement in the Vietnamese war. He also recounted the pressure that was brought to bear on draft dodgers' families, and the activities of the Defence Intelligence Agency (the military equivalent to the C.I.A.) that monitored the activities of servicemen who dared to assert their rights.

Mr. R. A. Hashini, a counsellor with the U.K. Immigrant Advisory Service, outlined the most unsavoury aspects of the working of the Immigration Act: the witch-hunt for illegal immigrants, that was so damaging to race relations, the existence of so many British passport holders who do not have the right to enter the country, even as visitors, the difficulty of reuniting families when there was, for instance, a two-year delay in processing applications in Bangladesh. Immigrants faced a great problem of adjustment, and it was up to the majority to make an effort in this respect or immigrants would suffer deprivation. The U.K.I.A.S. was working to get the law administered as liberally as possible.

The final speaker was Dave Clarke, Assistant Editor of *Race Today*. He pointed out that Commonwealth immigration had been encouraged to meet the demands of the British economy. Changes in economic circumstances led to the passage of a series of Immigration Acts culminating in the racist Act of 1971. The situation now was that there were eight million whites who had absolute right of access to the country, while blacks did not. The retrospective nature of the Act made the harassment of immigrants inevitable. Passports were demanded from blacks in innumerable circumstances to prove their legality. There were demands for immigrants to have identity cards. The system of vouchers amounted to a system of contract cheap labour. With a down-turn in the economy there would be a demand for the repatriation of "dissidents". The situation had arisen in which black youths were no longer willing to "go under" as they had been up until the mid-1960s. The official system of community relations was no more than a system of social control, being used as a means of channelling out conflicts. In industry the unions pay lip service at a high level to racial equality, but in many sections racist attitudes are very entrenched. Fortunately, it was breaking down in many areas when workers of all races recognize that they have the same struggles.

## DIVORCE ITALIAN STYLE

The result of the Italian referendum on the divorce law seems to suggest that in Italy ordinary Catholics put social necessity above long-standing loyalty to the Church, when the latter involves adherence to dogmatic obscurantism. With an 85 per cent turn-out, the Italian people decided by 59 per cent to 41 to retain their three-year-old divorce law.

# NEWS AND NOTES

The Pope expressed "pain and astonishment" at the result; he also "missed the dutiful solidarity of not a few members of the ecclesiastical community". Many priests were suspended, as was a Benedictine abbot, for maintaining that the Church should not impose its norms on the rest of society. This all goes to show, what many of us knew all along, that the freedom of conscience promised by the Vatican Council is utterly bogus.

The result of the referendum also has considerable political significance. The Christian Democrat Party was heavily committed against the divorce law, and its dominant position in Italian politics could well be threatened by the result. With any luck this will greatly diminish the influence of the Vatican in Italian politics.

## RELIGIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS

A FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD SCHOOLGIRL writes:  
 Superstitions and religions are still part of our lives today and however silly they may seem to a non-believer, they cannot just be abolished, without fear of a revolt by the offended parties. All that can be done is to accept them, or peaceably reject them. There is no point in fighting over religions, because it is against most religions to fight anyway, and therefore the offenders are breaking their laws.

After all religions and superstitions are used to brainwash people. For example, take the Greek myths: the Greeks were told the stories right from birth, they could not reason anything else out for themselves and there were no schools, where they could learn any other theories, so to them that was the sole truth and law. Since then these stories have become just fiction stories and are not recognized as any type of religion. It is really the same with our religions today, only we have many opportunities to broaden our minds and therefore disprove the older stories that have become our religions. And if we are more capable of thinking for ourselves than the Greeks, why do religions still exist and are supported? Because Churches still keep brainwashing people into believing something which could not possibly be true and people use religion as a thing to lean on. People want to believe they are cleansed of all sins by praying, when, if they stopped to think, it is just not possible, as science has shown us. Maybe in a hundred or so years people will turn round and realize the stupidity of a lot of things about our religion, so that religion as we know it would gradually die out.

As for haunted houses and poltergeists, I am not sure about these. After all what determines whether a house is haunted or not? Broken windows, no one around, or simply some form of intense vibration, maybe, caused by a low aircraft or heavy lorry? Creaks and groans—the woodwork expanding and contracting? Feeling, say, the bed moving—some kind of dizzy spell? In fact, just about everything that has been used to label houses "haunted" can and has been explained by science, if the occupants want to listen. But like most people, when something like this happens, they panic, say it is haunted and refuse to be convinced any other way.

As for poltergeists, these sound more convincing, if the definition of them can be left simply as a form of energy. I believe this is really something which takes place in the

mind. It has so much energy that it produces visions of moving things and so "confuses" the eyes that they become blurred and the person unconsciously smashes and disturbs the things. When the mind has "used up" its excess energy it relapses into a normal state and the person thinks he has seen a poltergeist.

Therefore, in my opinion, there is nothing supernatural about many things: it just depends on what the person wants to believe. I think that people who do realize what really happens tend to keep their opinions silent, so as "not to upset anybody". But is this alone proof that they are still not completely sure in their minds?

## HUMANISM IN WORTHING

Miss I. M. Davies, Honorary Secretary of Worthing Humanist Group, has resigned, but she will continue as the group's Literature Secretary. During the last ten years Miss Davies has given splendid service to the group and to the humanist cause in the Worthing area. Under her guidance the Worthing Humanist Group has arranged many meetings, built up a library for members and supports the work of the national organizations. It was one of the first local groups to affiliate to the National Secular Society.

Mrs. Cleo Barlow, of 50 Ferring Lane, Ferring, Worthing, is the new Honorary Secretary of Worthing Humanist Group.

## OBITUARIES

### Mr. Sidney Robert Deards

We regret to announce the sudden death of Mr. Sidney Robert Deards. Mr. Deards, who was only 57, was a lecturer at the Cranfield College of Technology. He was a staunch freethinker and a member of the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association. A colleague paid the final tribute at Bedford Crematorium.

### Mr. Duncan Campbell Johnson

Mr. Duncan Campbell Johnson who died recently was an indefatigable voluntary worker and a keen supporter of the freethought movement. He was an active member of the Guild of Friends of St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, and chairman at the time of his death.

Mr. Johnson's other interests included the work of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, the League Against Cruel Sports and the National Secular Society. He was aged 66 and his plans for an active retirement were frustrated by a deterioration in his health. A secular funeral ceremony was held at the Breakspere Crematorium, Ruislip.

## FREETHINKER FUND

We are grateful to those readers who contributed to the Freethinker Fund during May.

Our thanks to: J. Ancliffe (90p), Anonymous £1.25 and £1), F. Clowes (£1), A. Douglas (21p), H. E. Follett (£1), G. L. Ford (40p), H. Gaspardis (82p), R. J. Hale (40p), E. J. Hughes (£2), J. Jeffery (£1.90), H. Lyons-Davies (£1), R. M. MacKessack (45p), C. Marcus (£1.40), J. Monrad (£1), P. Seager (£1), C. Wilshaw (90p). Total for May: £16.63.

Our apologies to Messrs. R. Clements and D. Harper for omissions from the April Freethinker Fund. Their contributions were respectively £2 and £5.

# KARL MARX: HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT

JUDEX

David McLellan has made a significant contribution to the vast literature on Marx and Marxism although his book—which runs to some 498 pages—should be read carefully and critically. No indication is given<sup>1</sup> that some seventeen lines of Marx's text have been omitted from the middle of a thirteen-line quotation from *The Holy Family*. The omitted section is cited both by A. J. Gregor<sup>2</sup> and by Professor Lobkowitz<sup>3</sup> to illustrate a problem around which some of the most heated controversies concerning the Marxist theory of history have raged. "In its economic movement," says Marx, "private property is driven towards its own dissolution but only through a development which does not depend on it, of which it is unconscious, which takes place against its will, and which is brought about by the very nature of things." If, as Marx says in *The Poverty of Philosophy*,<sup>4</sup> men are not free to choose their productive forces and social relations, which, in turn, determine their very consciousness—if "the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist"—man is launched upon an historical career which seems to develop with an intrinsic logic of its own. Development, in Marx's words, is "inexorable", "inevitable", "necessary", "immanent". This is the consequence of an addition to Hegelianism and seeing history in terms of a "logic" inherent in "the very nature of things". Whilst Marx rejected the transcendental logic of Hegel, in many of his writings he seems to have remained convinced that history possessed a Hegelian form and to have made man the bearer of attributes Hegel had ascribed to the Absolute.

## Thinking and being

In the *Paris Manuscripts* (1844) and the *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845) Marx rejected as one-sided both idealism and materialism, presenting his own position—which in the former he called "naturalism" or "humanism"—as a synthesis of the two.<sup>5</sup> Thinking and being were a unity, joined together in human practice. But, as Lobkowitz argues, Stirner's challenge to Left Hegelian thought (in *The Ego and Its Own*, 1844) forced Marx to translate his ethical socialism and the revolutionary rôle of the proletariat into terms of historical necessity independent of philosophical speculations and ideals, and in *The German Ideology* (1846) historical materialism received its "first concise statement".<sup>6</sup> The fact is, says W. T. Jones,<sup>7</sup> that Marx alternated between two quite different epistemological positions. As Mayo<sup>8</sup> and John Rex<sup>9</sup> have also shown, one of the basic ambiguities of Marxism is its oscillation between historical necessity and a call for purposeful revolutionary action. Dr. McLellan remarks<sup>10</sup> that towards the end of his life Marx moved nearer to the positivism then so fashionable, and comments on this and on Soviet dialectical materialism that it was "obviously very different from the 'unity of theory and practice' as exemplified in, for instance, the *Theses on Feuerbach*." At times, Marx made room for the active rôle of mind in the process of knowing and allowed for the reciprocity of mind and matter. But often, in order to provide a base for "the social movement as a process of natural history, governed by laws . . . independent of human will, consciousness and intelligence," and for a

history of civilization in which "the conscious element plays a part so subordinate" (Afterword to the Second German Edition of *Capital*, Volume One) Marx tended to drop his activism. He was apt to relapse into something nearer the simpler view of Engels and Lenin (as in the latter's *What the Friends of the People Are*, 1894) that mind is a mere reflection of dialectical matter.

## Religious parallels

On p. 28 Dr. McLellan refers to a radical change in Marx's views, "probably the most important intellectual step of Marx's whole life". Marx—who, I may add, fell ill at this time (1837)—resolved his "spiritual crisis" by a sudden and profound conversion to the philosophy of Hegel. "For however much he was to criticize Hegel, accuse him of idealism, and try to stand his dialectic 'on its feet', Marx was the first to admit that his method stemmed directly from his Master of the 1830's." As Marx himself says (in Easton and Guddat's translation): "Setting out from idealism . . . I hit upon seeking the Idea in the real itself." McLellan states<sup>12</sup> that "Marx first began to work out his views on philosophy and society" as a member of a Hegelian movement of religious criticism which swiftly became "secularised into one of political opposition". Yet he is critical<sup>13</sup> of those who point to the parallel between Marxism and the Judaeo-Christian history of salvation. It is perhaps significant that his extensive bibliography does not include any of the writings of Professor John Anderson,<sup>14</sup> Professor R. J. Bernstein,<sup>15</sup> or the Communist Professor Colletti.<sup>16</sup> Dr. McLellan admits<sup>17</sup> that it is impossible for him in so short a space "to give an adequate account of the ideas of so complex a thinker" as Hegel and he refers in a footnote to J. N. Findlay's *Hegel* (1958) but does not point out that Findlay says that Hegel "used the notions of Christianity in the very texture of his arguments". Colletti also sees Hegel as essentially a Christian philosopher and claims that "dialectical materialism was from first to last merely a mechanical transcription of Hegel's philosophy". Engels certainly said that "Communism was such a necessary consequence of New Hegelian philosophy" and Professor Anderson concludes that "Scientific Socialism reveals itself as Hegelian metaphysics, with the substitution of Society for the Idea" . . . a doctrine which "is of an essentially theological, or as Eastman says, an animistic character". Blumenberg refers to Marx's view of "the messianic rôle of the proletariat" and Professor Bernstein states<sup>15</sup> that "The more one penetrates to the quintessence of Marx's thought, the more one can see the presence of themes (in a secularized form) that have preoccupied religious thinkers throughout the ages—the severity of human alienation, the apocalyptic sense of the imminence of the coming revolution, and the messianic aspiration that infuses much of Marx's thinking." Finally, we have Marx's own comments on his dialogue *Cleanthes*—omitted by Dr. McLellan<sup>17</sup>—in which Marx says, "I set out for the main task, a philosophic-dialectical discussion of the godhead manifested as a concept *per se*, as religion, as nature, and as history."

## Rôle of the proletariat

McLellan contends<sup>18</sup> that Marx's new emphasis, in his *Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, on the rôle of the proletariat—"a sphere which possesses

a universal character . . . and can only redeem itself through the total redemption of humanity"—was drawn from a study of the French Revolution. This view is not shared by Avineri,<sup>19</sup> who says that "Marx's idea of the proletariat is . . . a further development of a theme that was central to Hegel's political theory"; "a latter-day version of the Hegelian 'universal class'", and that Marx's "later economic and historical studies only give substance to ideas already arrived at through philosophical discourse". Easton and Guddat are of the opinion that Marx's introduction of the proletariat into his writings was "the outcome of many factors . . . particularly his preoccupation with Hegel's political philosophy".

Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* are dealt with on pages 140-1 but there is no reference to Marx's assertion in the sixth thesis that "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations". In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* Marx likewise declared that "The individual is the social being" . . . "Man's individual and species life are not different" . . . "Death seems to be a harsh victory . . . But the determinate individual is only a determinate species being." Dr. McLellan quotes<sup>20</sup> Marx's dictum that "Man is the world of men, the state, society". He also gives<sup>21</sup> a passage from an article in the *Rheinische Zeitung* in which Marx refers to the state as a "great organism in which . . . each citizen by obeying the laws of the state, only obeys the natural laws of his own reason, human reason". I have commented previously on this and the line of development which runs from Hegel to Marx and Lenin, and to Gentile the "Philosopher of Fascism" in *The Freethinker* (30 September 1972). McLellan claims that Marx's emphasis on the "social aspects" of man's being does not destroy man's individuality and that Marx's (1843) conception could be summed up as "a humanist form of government in which free socialized man was the one and only subject of the political process in which the state as such would have disappeared."<sup>22</sup> He seems to overlook some of the implications of the transformation of the individual into a "species being". As A. J. Gregor has shown in a series of impressive books,<sup>23</sup> Marx resolved the contradiction between civil society and the political state by ultimately identifying the two, and the identification of the individual with a "totality" (society or the state) which is understood to constitute the human "essence", effectively empties the concept of freedom of any meaning and is fundamental to the social and political philosophy of fascism.

### Essence of the dialectic

In his essay "On the Jewish Question"—which, with other writings, expresses his contempt for Jews and Judaism—Marx said that "Only when the actual, individual man has taken back into himself the abstract citizen and . . . has become a species-being, only when he has recognized and organized his own powers as social powers . . . is human emancipation complete."<sup>24</sup> This may be compared with a passage in the writings of the Polish aristocrat Von Cieszkowski, a "Young Hegelian" from whom, McLellan says,<sup>25</sup> Marx derived his notion of "praxis"—the "essence of the dialectic" as John Lewis has called it. In future society, says Cieszkowski (cited by Avineri), "man will be brought back from his abstraction and will again become a social individuum *par excellence*. The naked Self will leave its generality and determine itself as a concrete person abounding in a wealth of social relations". Cieszkowski's philosophy of "praxis" shows

the influence of Fichte, and it was Fichte and Hegel from whom the idea that the individual can find freedom by identifying his will with that of the state, was derived, and who supplied the basis of totalitarianism and Nazism. According to Marx, the "total redemption of humanity" would lead to a "true communality" which "makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind". But as John Maguire (whose book on *Marx's Paris Writings* (1972) McLellan describes as "a well-informed and thorough commentary") observes: "while Marx is not himself a totalitarian, his assurance about the human achievement of the ideal society leaves the door open to the introduction of absolute ideas about the relation of a person to his community . . . there are a number of inter-related considerations which both point to a deficiency in Marx's philosophy and add plausibility to the charge of totalitarianism."

### NOTES

- 1 MCLELLAN, DAVID (1973). *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*, p. 134.
- 2 GREGOR, A. J. (1965). *A Survey of Marxism*.
- 3 LOBKOVICZ, N. (1969). *Karl Marx and Max Stirner*. In *Demythologizing Marx*.
- 4 MCLELLAN, pp. 161, 164.
- 5 MCLELLAN, p. 126.
- 6 MCLELLAN, p. 144.
- 7 JONES, W. T. *A History of Western Philosophy*. Vol. 4.
- 8 MAYO, H. B. (1968). *Introduction to Marxist Theory*.
- 9 REX, JOHN (1973). *Discussing Sociology*.
- 10 MCLELLAN, p. 423.
- 11 MCLELLAN, p. 28.
- 12 MCLELLAN, pp. 31-2.
- 13 MCLELLAN, pp. 89, 96-7.
- 14 ANDERSON, JOHN (1963). *Marxist Philosophy and Marxist Ethics*. In his *Studies in Empirical Philosophy*.
- 15 BERSTEIN, R. J. (1972). *Praxis and Action*.
- 16 COLLETTI, L. (1972). *From Rousseau to Lenin*. (1973) *Marxism and Hegel*.
- 17 MCLELLAN, p. 29.
- 18 MCLELLAN, pp. 96-7.
- 19 AVINERI, S. (1973). *Marx's Socialism*.
- 20 MCLELLAN, p. 88.
- 21 MCLELLAN, p. 51.
- 22 MCLELLAN, pp. 71, 75, 120.
- 23 See *The Freethinker* 12 Aug. 1972 and MCLELLAN'S bibliography.
- 24 MCLELLAN, p. 84.
- 25 MCLELLAN, p. 41.
- 26 MCLELLAN, pp. 147-8.

(To be continued)

### David Friedrich Strauss

It is regretted that there was an error in the printing of G. A. Wells's review of *David Friedrich Strauss and His Theology* by Horton Harris (*The Freethinker*, May). The penultimate sentence of the first paragraph on page 76 should read:

Since, then, he concedes that there was a historical Jesus who was followed by a group of disciples, and since he cannot explain the resurrection appearances from the Old Testament, he has to suppose that they derived from some actual experiences these disciples had after Jesus's death.

### THE JESUS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

by G. A. Wells

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# A BURNING INSCAPE

JEAN STRAKER

*All things, oh priests, are on fire. . . . The eye is on fire; forms are on fire; eye-consciousness is on fire; impressions received by the eye are on fire.*  
Buddha, "The Fire Sermon".

The words "Fire in the Middle", which Sheila Anne Smith has used as a caption for one of her paintings as well as the title for her Exhibition, describes that inner burning which is both the nature of life and the danger to life. The controlled combustion of energy makes for human viability. The runaway uncontrolled discharge of such energy makes for both personal and social breakdown. "The conflagration of the city with all its tumult of concomitant distress is one of the most dreadful spectacles that can befall human eyes", said Dr. Samuel Johnson of the Great Fire of London. On such scale, raging fire in the middle of a city destroys the whole social organization. Raging fire within the person can inflame the mind and destroy the human organism. The analogy is apt, although, of course I am using the word "fire" ambiguously: both in physical and figurative senses. I hope that I will be able to bring these two senses together, to relate the thought processes of the mind to the energy basis that generates those thoughts. This is not only a social but also a biological matter.

## Toil and trouble

As the witches in Macbeth stir the brew of human madness they cry: "Double Double toil and trouble, Fire burn and Cauldron bubble!" With the use of pictures to define her own "madness" Sheila ferments a brew of her own fantasies and brings into a personal microcosm some of the physical and psychological perils of our times.

Whether these fantasies reveal the immaturity of childhood, the fears of adolescence, the sexual repressions of the apparently mature adult and/or an electro-chemical imbalance in the body, is not only a personal problem of vital importance but also a question that must be asked by a Society seeking to grapple with the individual and social implications and uncertainties of mental disturbance. To Sheila, the message became clear; it was "Paint, paint, paint yourself well".

Does one control an inner burning by painting it out? Does this type of therapy offer something more than a time filling occupation? Does the fire analogy give a hint of a relationship between the physical forces in the inner and outer worlds.

## Social cohesion

I think that most would agree that mass civilization owes much to the control of fire as it does to the invention of language, if not to a combination of these two devices, used in ways which made for social cohesion and well-being: the contained fire in the middle of the hall was the centre of domestic life—and until television took over the hearth was the heart of the home. Both words and fire when used without control, or with mis-control, can be as destructive of the individual and of society as any apocalyptic forces, war, tempest, plague.

I see in Sheila's paintings a message to each of us about the society in which we live, whereby we may be able to note, if not yet to understand, something of the nature of the violence which arises in those who for one reason or

another, constitutional, environmental or both, are unable to contain their subjective fires within the bounds of reason and health. "Am I to conclude", Sheila asks of one of her paintings, "that the fire in the middle is a sexual fire? Or is it strength and command of oneself? Or is it all these things?" Another of her paintings consists solely of two words: "Help me." Is in this cry for help, Sheila simply asking for the opportunity to help herself? Is the opportunity she seeks nothing more than a socially acceptable framework for the time and space for meditative free-thinking, to contemplate her own sexuality, to muse on the fantasies of her mind? But it does seem that there is a social dilemma here for there is little opportunity in many areas of our society for such necessary human activity, or inactivity, free expression is for some neither allowed for in upbringing nor encouraged by custom. To fill one's life with rôle-playing parts, to schedule every moment with programmed activity, to repeat the questions and answers of dogma, to make body and mind always subject to external authority, such as state, religion, morality, snobbery, fashion or drugs, would appear to deny a climate for the maturation of that creative growth which is essential both for one's individual fulfilment as well as for the critical understanding of that authority and its relationship to one's own authority.

The balance between freedom and discipline is difficult to find—but that is not to say that it should not be sought. Indeed it is vital to find it. That societies by their design involve suppression of individuality would imply that by diminishing the development of personal authority they pre-determine their own neuroses and programme their own decay; but we have to live within them as individuals to the best of our ability. Is it possible to adjust ourselves to the moral environment so that our own emotions are not put under unbearable stress? Can we by some means find for ourselves socially acceptable opportunities for self-discovery so that one's own imagination may be freely explored without offence to oneself or to others. Can we make individuality, unconventionality, eccentricity and freethinking more respectable?

## Law and repression

This involves questions of social law, individual liberty, tolerance, compassion and the manufacture of guilt. Is it right that the criminal law should be constantly involved to repress the publication of information regarding human sexuality? That teachers should be threatened with dismissal or even prosecution for trying to inform is not to control the fire within but to extinguish it. And, if that innate—and latent—sexuality is extinguished what is left but an empty frame?—a body devoid of the creative resources which make for the enjoyment of maturity?

Sheila comments on a painting of a sunflower which she calls 'warmth': "I gradually became aware that the neuroses which had been with me like a shadow for twenty-five years could quite seriously have a sexual background." She uses blue for love and orange for her sexuality; these are complementary colours. Their purple combination she calls sinister "Is the cloaking of myself in the dangerous purple a step towards accepting that there are dangers?" she asks.

Do these colour signals, which she calls personal symbols reveal an insight into a sub-structure of bio-physical

order within the brain? A colour is a precise physical statement defined by its wavelength. An emotional response to a colour relates mind to body. Is this relationship instinctive or intuitive, inherited or learnt, or both? Are Sheila's physical and mathematical definitions of thought personal or universal? Can learning so dominate primitive responses as to inhibit the growth of man's innate intelligence? These philosophical questions beg an answer if man's unique wholeness of mind and body is to survive. If I am proposing a theoretical novelty in linking science with art in the suggestions of inter-disciplinary research, I can only claim that the theory is both testable and refutable and accordingly respectable—that is worth looking at, and is not without precedent.

### Externalization of fantasy

I am putting forward the proposition that we have in this experience of hers some evidence that a social acceptance of the externalization of personal fantasy through the auspices of art therapy in her case, can be as beneficial to society as a whole, indeed mankind as a whole, as it is to the individuals who compose societies and mankind. But it is not enough to say that we have institutional means of dealing with mental disturbance, and that Sheila has been helped by the art therapy she has received, if we fail to recognize the predisposing conditions for that disturbance—and expose the inherited attitudes, laws and vested interests which perpetuate the continuance of these conditions. To make disciplined independence respectable may be a better educational programme than the enforcement of blind obedience.

We are all conditioned from childhood to recognize and identify the external realities by name and are able to achieve, within some degree of agreement, consensus opinions by this means on the appearance of the objective world, often with scant knowledge of the difference between the appearance and the reality of objective phenomena; but we are not at all encouraged to recognize and accept the subjective phenomena, the inner burnings, the "in-scapes" which flow from the meditations and contemplations of emotion, idle thoughts and daydreams. Many civilizations have experienced quite strong authoritarian pressures against flights of fantasy not sanctioned by religious and civil laws, or social mores; change and novelty have been outlawed. In such cultures individuals have found that personal authority for their own minds has been questioned, tested, undermined, censored and suppressed, although this is not a matter which has lacked individual and social protest.

### Resolution of conflict

In sending messages from one part of herself to another part, Sheila is trying to resolve her conflict with morality to an internal dialogue—to be reduced by the rules of her own debate to this objective proposition: "Surely the most important task of each one of us is to know as much as possible about ourselves as we can." This proposition poses the critical question: Is "To know thyself" a medical problem—or a social one—or a legal one—or a matter of education—or all, or simply a personal problem and therefore none, of these things? If lack of knowledge of one's own sexuality is a social characteristic of our society, it is possible that pictures and words expressed and taken together in the way Sheila has presented them may help us to understand something of the physical (sexual) basis of emotional confusion, violence and anxiety. I admit that

there is greater openness now in the discussion of personal sexuality among the more intellectual and informed, but for the majority ignorance and repression is widespread.

That Sheila has been able to externalize her emotions through art is what Aristotle describes in referring to catharsis in his *Poetic Arts* as a purification of the mind. What once was catharsis is now a therapy—a cure for illness. But should such artistic experience be so narrowly defined? It involves all the senses, the organic whole of mind and body. It cannot be the monopoly of this or that profession, for it is the very focus of all human culture and growth. My hobby-horse has always been that art is a personal commonplace to be practised by all, not a thing to be put on a pedestal and revered by kneeling worshippers, but something you kick on and off, like bedroom slippers. Art is a better subjective amusement than an objective entertainment. Its beauty lies less in the eyes of the beholder than in the doing of the doer. But discipline is necessary. One's own creativity must be so expressed that neither social instability nor personal imbalance is advanced. One does not destroy the culture that makes it possible for one to survive. But one can so influence and modify that culture to better it, to cut out the bad parts and encourage the beneficial ones.

It would seem to me that we have in many ways gone too far in the codification of art with the result that amateurism is either discouraged or is encouraged to ape professionalism. To provide for the expression of individual feeling by each one of us would imply the establishment of non-vocational classes—but that is the wrong word—in private and public institutions and on every university campus. To illuminate the muse from the fire within is to re-create ourselves.

### Re-thinking

I would agree that these thoughts partly artistic, partly I hope scientific, partly possibly philosophical, mainly referential do not offer a clear-cut approach toward a narrow target; rather am I proposing a radical re-thinking of moral attitudes and I hope that I may have thrown out from my experience and involvement some ideas and suggestions for further thought, which may, in time, perhaps propose programmes of research and action towards the cultivation of mores which may make society better. If we can, by eliminating some of the possible social causes of mental disturbance, reduce the number of hospital beds, now running at about fifty per cent, occupied by mental health patients, this effort will have been worthwhile.

If we find in Sheila's pictures symbols of things she may have seen in infancy and childhood, associated at random such as the three-headed snake or the black sun, we may be able to learn from these images that within ourselves similar incongruities form the bases of prejudices, aggressions and anxieties which influence our adult attitudes and behaviour, and at the same time grow to be neither disturbed nor offended by the idiosyncracies and differences of others. It may be reasonable to say that Sheila's pictures are as immature in concept as the pictures produced by the progressive primary school child; but what we have from her is a spoken commentary which reveals insight into the inferences of a mind that is trying to develop a capacity for balance, self-control and self-analysis, after adolescence and later years, when as actress, wife, mother and country-house owner she strove to conform to what

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# JOSEPH McCABE — "APOSTLE OF RATIONALISM" MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

In July 1896, the rationalist monthly, the *Literary Guide*, announced a new recruit to the movement in the shape of an ex-Franciscan monk named Joseph McCabe. "Mr. McCabe is a recruit of intellectual promise", declared the *Literary Guide*, and freethinkers cannot deny that McCabe more than lived up to that promise. Over the next half-century he established himself as a leading figure in twentieth century freethought, and, in hundreds of books and pamphlets, he argued the rationalist case more fully and, perhaps, more persuasively than any other freethought writer.

McCabe was born, of Anglo-Irish descent, in Lancashire in 1867. His boyhood was unremarkable, though he showed at an early age the intelligence and capacity for hard work which were to characterize him in later life. At the age of fifteen he began to prepare for the Roman Catholic priesthood. He was ordained at the age of twenty-three but he had already been troubled by presentiments of the scepticism and agnosticism which were to claim him fully in 1896 when, at the age of twenty-eight he threw aside his monastic habit and finally quit the church and all religion.

## Vigorous propagandist

Within a few years of leaving the church McCabe had, through his lecturing and writing, made a considerable reputation for himself, and by 1905 the *Literary Guide* recognised that he was "one of the leading apostles of present-day Rationalism". McCabe threw himself into this propaganda work with a vigour unmatched by any of his colleagues: on a typical lecture tour of Scotland in 1908 he delivered twenty-eight lectures in thirty-one days and, between lectures, carried on with the writing of his current book. In later life, McCabe, looking back on this frantic pace, commented dryly: "Friends urged that I was shortening my life. They are all dead."

In 1910 McCabe made his first overseas lecture tour when he visited Australia and New Zealand. Characteristically he spent the sea voyage writing a book, his *Empresses of Rome*, though he did take time off from this to give talks in the ship's saloon, on astronomy and evolution. Over the next twenty years McCabe was to make many more such overseas tours, including three trips to the United States.

During the first quarter of this century McCabe wrote over sixty books, including biographies of Peter Abélard, Saint Augustine, G. J. Holyoake, Cardinal Richilieu and Goethe, as well as a score or more books on evolution and other scientific questions and a monumental *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*.

## Public debates

During all this lecturing and writing McCabe still found time to represent the Rationalist Press Association in large public debates in London—of which probably his best known was against Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Despite the skill and ability with which he represented the R.P.A., his behind-the-scenes relations with the Association were becoming increasingly strained. Rightly or wrongly McCabe felt that he was too poorly paid for his work and this, together with what McCabe regarded as high-handed and

petty interference, sowed the seeds of what was to develop into a major row.

In 1925 McCabe set sail for another American lecture tour but his departure also marked his separation from his wife, Beatrice. McCabe and his wife had been married for twenty-five years, and whatever the reasons for the break-up of their marriage McCabe obviously began his list of American lectures in anything but a cheerful mood. His frustrations and resentments towards the R.P.A. were brought to boiling point when an article which he had despatched to the *Literary Guide* was cut on the ground of its alleged offensiveness to rationalists. Particular exception was taken by the editor to a passage in which McCabe had declared: "For the last twenty years not more than one tenth of my income has come from the pockets of Rationalists, and I humbly submit that they have had value for their money."

Whilst in the States McCabe went to visit the rationalist publisher E. Haldeman-Julius. McCabe was enormously impressed by Haldeman-Julius and the two men sat up late into the night discussing plans for a series of books on religious controversy. McCabe left America with a commission to write fifty *Little Blue Books* and a conviction that at last he had met a publisher prepared to give him the scope and freedom that he needed.

Back in England McCabe found himself a new home, employed a housekeeper and wrote those booklets at the rate of one a week. The Rationalist Press Association tentatively approached him with a request for a book and a lecture tour but, bolstered by his contract with Haldeman-Julius and by the news that the first booklets in the series were selling well, McCabe declined their offer.

## Final straw

Shortly after this his relations with the R.P.A. reached crisis point. The final straw for McCabe was when the R.P.A. presented him with a bill for over a hundred pounds which they claimed was owing for a consignment of books sent out to the organizer of the American tour for sale during McCabe's lectures. The organizer had not paid up for these and the R.P.A. alleged that McCabe had agreed to make himself responsible for the debt. McCabe indignantly denied this and in a letter to the Directors of the Association he wrote angrily: "I have seen the R.P.A. shrink under your direction from a fine educational force to a petty mutual admiration and mutual profit society at which the Churches smile. Now you who have accomplished this—some of you old personal opponents of mine, most of you parvenus in Rationalism—turn upon a man who has, literally, grown grey in the service of the movement, but not lived on it, and suggest that he is presuming on his services to cheat it with impunity."

This row eventually led to a stormy Extraordinary General Meeting of the Association, which ended with the carrying of a resolution expressing "unabated confidence in the Board of Directors" and calling on McCabe to "resume membership of the Association".

The result of this humiliation was that McCabe, never a gregarious man, retreated further into his work. This however was no sacrifice for him. McCabe loved hard



work and there can be no doubt that the majority of the books commissioned by Haldeman-Julius were just the sort McCabe loved to write. Over the next twenty-five years he wrote hundreds of books for Haldeman-Julius, of which some of the most notable are his fifty *Little Blue Books* on religious controversy, his *Key to Culture* (an ambitious attempt to summarize modern knowledge in forty volumes), and a twelve-volume history of the Catholic Church. In the 1930s McCabe began to write again for the R.P.A., and he produced some fine books for them, such as *The Social Record of Christianity*, *The Splendour of Moorish Spain* and *A History of the Popes*.

McCabe was nearly sixty when he began to write for Haldeman-Julius, yet the books he produced over the next twenty or so years include some of his best work. In his late seventies he still had the mental and physical energy to compile two encyclopaedias and he continued to write to within weeks of his death in January 1955.

His last years, after the death of Haldeman-Julius had cut off his principal source of income, were lean ones, but he continued to maintain his wife, just as he had done ever since their separation. Despite the immense labours of his life he did not die a wealthy man.

He remained steadfastly atheist to the end. Indeed in his last months he joined the National Secular Society and his last work was on an article for *The Freethinker*. It is not true, as is sometimes claimed, that before he died he severed his connection with the R.P.A.

In the last of his articles to be published before his death McCabe wrote:

Do not talk to me of the action of a God in such a universe. Do not talk to me about immortal souls and heavens. Do not talk to me about that jumble of ancient stories which is called Christianity. We shall gain enormously when we rule out the whole of this preposterous nonsense from the administration of our planet.

## WHAT IS THE MISSION OF MANKIND?

S. VELINSKY

In the letter to the Editor of *The Freethinker* (February 1974) I. S. Low makes a significant statement: "It is no use relying on a philosophy that is based on conditions in the first half of the nineteenth century. We need a new ideal to inspire us and end the frustrating muddles that encumber the world."

This is not the only voice calling for a new outlook into man's future on this Earth. I have found many among my university students who either complained of a lack of a suitable personal philosophy and felt a kind of emptiness in the field of cultural values, or directly asked for new guidelines as frames of reference for their decision making. Such emptiness may result even in unbalanced personality, as I have met such cases in my psycho-clinical practice. This experience led us toward preparing a book on personality problems: *Personality's Superstructure—The Cosmic Order and our Mental Health* (Interpress, London, 1963), the core of which is outlined in the following lines.

### The mythological stage

Man started to raise the question about why he was here already in his early age of mythological thinking when he reached that stage of his development which enabled him to think in a symbolic way. We speak about man's mythological age, since man used to answer his questions by means of imaginary agents, similar to him, in an anthropomorphic projection. We may today wonder how could he accept such stories, as found in the Homeric narratives, about arbitrary and irresponsible behaviour of his transcendental beings which he was worshipping as holy authorities of his moral life. Still more we wonder that there are many people still today who hold such beliefs. These mental constructs were and still are endowed with such a power that even a critically minded man like Socrates, could ask his disciples to offer on behalf of his soul a rooster to Asclepius, god of healing, just a few minutes before his death.

All nature powers, mightier than man, were personified as gods, such as Zeus, Poseidon, Acolus, Vulcanus, and being transferred from generation to generation, they were

looked upon as eternal. By this concept of eternity man tried to overcome his temporariness, while attributing also to his soul an everlasting existence, due to his dreams in which dead people appeared to him in their living form. In accordance with these subjective experiences, man imagined the goal of his life not in this but in the other world which was believed to be permanent for ever. In spite of all whimsical fantasies of the early mythological thinkers, we must give them the credit for their endeavour toward overcoming man's transitoriness and thus approaching some kind of absoluteness, or, at least, of its subjective appearance.

Although we cannot deny to the ancient and the medieval man quite a lot of practical experiences, we must admit that all his knowledge, even that which was due to his direct observations, was deduced from only superficial perceptions such as Aristotle's: heavier objects fall faster. Such surface perceptions correspond to daily experience but do not go to the depth of particular happenings, to their causes, hidden to man's unarmed eyes. The mythological constructs appeared to man as proved by his subjective visions and hallucinations which he accepted by their face value without any doubt.

When philosophers started, in the twelfth century B.C., to criticize mythologies, they became aware of the fact that simply observed phenomena might have a hidden cause which was behind this physical world and they called that other world "metaphysical". Philosophers were looking also at this other world as at the genuinely real world (such as Plato's noumena) existing eternally besides this transitory world (Plato's phenomena). Such "other world" was placed easily by man's ignorance under the earth, or above the earth in the sky.

### The scientific age

All such imaginary transcendental existencies had the validity of man's wishful thinking. Nobody could prove their existence, nobody could prove their non-existence either. They satisfied man's archetypal anthropomorphic inclinations. Thus, the overwhelming majority of men did not raise any objection to seeing man's mission in the other world.

When critical science started to make its way into human cognition, man began to doubt about the validity of outside observations and developed experimental methods to prove each item added to human knowledge. The Copernican heliocentric system, proved mathematically by Kepler and optically by the Galilean telescope, has shaken the belief in heavens. The idealic structure of a cosy geocentric quiet world was dispelled by Giordano Bruno's infinity and eternity of the Universe.

Now man started to feel lonely in the endless expanses of the Universe the qualities of which he started to discover step by step in a reliable way, proved by their practical applications from Torricelli's vacuum to the present astronautic expeditions. Science made man realize that his lot is entirely in his hands and that besides this Universe there is no other world, so that man's mission must be completely fulfilled in this world only.

Although many a man may feel uneasy in this endless space in which even an assiduous search cannot discover any trace of another human being, science offers a consolation in guiding him to the discovery of his specific position in the Universe, due to his endowment with consciousness, highly potentialized by his symbolic thinking, which located man on the top of all living being known today. This position does not mean, however, that man has the privilege to enjoy only the pleasures of the "king of living beings". It means also some specific duties, imposed on man.

#### Bearer of consciousness

Our present space explorations show to us that life is a rare phenomenon in our solar family and that its higher form of the realm of vertebrates is limited only to the Earth. Then man, as the bearer of consciousness so highly developed, being a small fraction of all living beings, is still scarcer in the Universe. Since the nearest star, where satellites might be supposed, is the Alpha Centauri which is three and a half light years distant from us we must admit that our type of consciousness is an extremely rare, if not the unique, phenomenon in the whole Universe. Even if among billions of stars of all galaxies a planet similar to our Earth might be found with beings similar to us, distances are so great that communications would be hardly possible. Thus, man's lot depends entirely upon him.

Under such circumstances, man's hopes are limited to his capacity of pursuing cognition in a wider range, more deeply, more reliably, and more tending toward man's future. These hopes prove to be realistic by the course of human knowledge since Bacon and Galileo. Human consciousness, potentialized by its symbolic form of thinking, is able to penetrate beyond the limits of a mere sensorial perception, as subatomic research shows. If we would call the observable nature the "physis", then we can now penetrate behind it into the "metaphysis", without getting into the transcendent. With all knowledge we remain within the limits of nature; no known object exceeds the boundaries of the Universe. Today we know so much about visions, voices and magics that we must not be afraid of any transcendental power, but only of powers or agents, existing within the Universe, which sooner or later might be brought to our cognition when suitable detectors are devised.

Man's privileged position in nature, owing to his mental capacities, imposes on man the duty to know more and

more in all directions and to assume the responsibility for man's future steps in the development of mankind as a part of the Cosmic Order with which it must be kept in as close a harmony as possible. Up to now, the formation of life has been done by nature's "blind forces". To them is now added the human consciousness as a "seeing power" able to foresee the future. Human consciousness, this rare cosmic phenomenon, becomes now the tool of the mission of man on this Earth.

#### Ensuring man's future

Since consciousness is completely linked to a highly developed nervous system, the basic task of man's mission in the Universe is to take care for the preservation of life. Although this was going on in nature spontaneously by the automatic attraction to the agreeable and by repulsion to annoying stimuli of living beings, it is today clear to us that life was not produced by nature to be caressed by it as its favourite masterpiece. Life developed rather by a fight against hostile powers that wait in ambush at many instances in the Universe. Chemical components of cells, food, water, heat, various radiations, all must be available in an optimum proportion to make life run smoothly. Any shift from that balance means disturbance or even threat to life, as our going into space proves by findings there agents hostile to life which here are checked by the atmosphere, ionosphere and magnetic field of the Earth.

We must, willy nilly, admit that life is threatened in the Universe by many agents about which we have today already an extended literature. The myth of the end of the world is not fully excluded even by the modern science as a local galactic event, due to the exhaustion of energy of our sun. However distant it might be, the first steps toward preserving life from annihilation have been already accomplished by scientific endeavour and technical success of entering space and by interstellar flights. Obviously quite a lot of research remains to be done and equally technical improvements are indispensable before man is able to move in space with security and efficiency. Many betterments are needed in man's physical and mental equipment as well as in his social relations and in handling problems of immaterial values to enable the whole of mankind to co-operate in the risky adventures of space migrations. Such gigantic projects would require equally gigantic number of co-workers perfectly harmonized toward the common goal of ultimate importance to mankind.

#### A BURNING INSCAPE

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appeared to her to be a socially acceptable pattern of behaviour. If the rôle-playing is ceasing and she now is determined to be only herself, this must be a personal achievement to be envied by us all. "Surely," she says, "something which can help us to achieve some degree of maturity should not be ignored." To this end her fire within, regulated and controlled, now appears to be burning with a blue flame.

Fire in the Middle: An Exhibition of Painting out of Mental Disturbance, by Sheila Anne Smith; produced by Ulrike Meinhof in association with the Ashurstwood Abbey Academy for Arts. University of Sussex, 13 May to 21 June 1974.

# ABORIGINAL "WELFARE" IN AUSTRALIA

ALAN RICKARD

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the present Australian federal government will do nothing more than its predecessors towards the advancement of the Aboriginal people—which is virtually nothing at all. Admittedly the financial allocations are greater, but by far the major part goes in the administrative costs of the rapidly growing bureaucracy and very little finds its way to areas of need.

A number of happenings over the past few weeks show that the "Labour" government intends only to manipulate the whole question to its own political advantage, whilst assisting a few individuals in order to obscure the real position. Some people are convinced by these tactics and, as everywhere, black men and women can be found who will express the white man's views, without much understanding and very much to the detriment of their own people. But there are many more who are not likely to remain naïve very much longer, whilst anti-government violence from a few is a growing probability.

There have been a number of recent public statements from politicians and others in regard to Aboriginal "drinking problems". It is true that many Aboriginal people drink too heavily, but their problems with alcohol are certainly no greater than those of a large section of the white population. It is simply racist hypocrisy for whites to condemn black drinking, when the white man introduced this social problem, and many others, in the first place. He expects Aboriginal people to adopt a European way of life, but condemns them and refuses to accept them when they do.

## Destruction of culture

White "civilization" has been largely responsible for the destruction of Aboriginal life and culture, which was (and is, where it still exists) rationally organized, by no means simple, and actually superior to the white man's ways in many respects, particularly in the matter of mutual support and co-operation. Their myths and legends, which, unlike the white man's, are neither dogmatic nor repressive, are quite beautiful at times and one can accept them as such, without actually believing them to be true.

There has been considerable police harassment of Aborigines in the Redfern area of Sydney, particularly after 10 p.m. bar closing time, when the people gather on the pavement to talk. Any white crowd doing this becomes something to avoid, because in such a situation whites usually manage to generate violence. The Aboriginal people are seldom like this; passers-by can move through the crowd without harassment. The police activity, to say the least, is unfair and more than somewhat misplaced.

However a liking for alcohol amongst some Aborigines is a minor matter compared to something else a minority have picked up from perverse whites in recent times. Several chance conversations the writer has had recently with black people, who were "high" from smoking marijuana, showed that some were more afraid of police victimization if the heroin needle marks were seen on their arms. When it was said that marijuana is bad enough, but heroin taking soon becomes lethal, one man replied "Who cares?—life's not that great".

These people may be only a few individuals, but the society that doesn't care about individuals is not worth very much. They are just some of the victims of an acquisitive community, which is becoming increasingly cruel to those who lack of aggression is their most attractive characteristic and at the same time the reason why they are trampled by the aggressiveness of others.

Once down, it is very hard to help them, without resources, though someone has to try. Generally government authorities and church organizations only add to the victimization they suffer from society.

# REVIEWS

## BOOKS

**THE GRAIN OF WHEAT: An Autobiography**  
by Frank Pakenham, Earl of Longford. Collins. £4.

What is it that makes Lord Longford's third volume of autobiography so . . . insufferable? It's a wretched word to have to use—and really, all one's instincts, in the case of a book that's been received with such noisy jocularity, are to treat it with the greatest seriousness possible, eschewing all strong reactions. But it's the tone—it's the tone! Perceptively, in a review, Oliver Pritchett identified it as the very voice of George and Weedon Grossmith's Mr. Pooter. There's that note of round and solemn self-satisfaction. Somewhere Lord Longford quotes himself (a great self-quoter, like Mr. P!) as saying that "in my conviction . . . pornography has increased, was increasing and ought to be diminished." "With those words", he comments, "I can fairly claim to have grasped and stated the essential problem from the opening moments." Well, plainly, that qualifies as self-congratulation. But the habit of self-approval is constantly yoked to, as it were, a murmur of self-deprecation. Lord Longford tots up his achievements as Cabinet minister, penal reformer, ubiquitous committee man, author, publisher, moral crusader, and allows a really quite large sum to emerge, whilst at the same time disclaiming all real significance. Well, never quite disclaiming. There is, rather, the modest doubt that somehow has the weight of a claim. Altogether, an extraordinary double-tone—and it's heard at the very heart of his discussion of the work of his egregious Committee on Pornography.

Indeed, I'd say that it's the voice of that Committee. Lord Longford attributes the fun that was made of its activities to the machinations of what he calls "the artistic lobby". But the fun arose naturally out of the spectacle of such solemn self-importance, directed towards such a scene, and expressing itself in terms of such humble vanity. An earlier Christian than Lord Longford, John Donne, who took some measure of the enormous ambiguous power of human sensuality, talked of the need to recruit and rightly employ the senses, "else a great Prince in prison lies". Ensuring that the Prince is set free

within us to better ends rather than worse is among the most apallingly difficult, and intricate, of human tasks. It's not to be achieved by any amount of self-righteous moral clamour. There's immense human risk, not to be done away with: and I suppose the general movement to which the term "permissiveness" is applied can be said to rest on a spreading inclination to think that the risk arising from open exploration of man's whole nature is preferable to the risk of shutting things down again, driving the Prince back to prison, with hypocrisy and moral authoritarianism as the gaolers. A question Lord Longford seems never to ask, and that was certainly not asked by his Committee, is the question about the right any one of us has to set limits to moral exploration, or to the engagement of human sensuality. Of course, of course, we do argue about limits, fix and unfix them: we are never likely to be free of that: but the important thing is that we should approach the activity with diffidence, with caution, bringing with us every subtle restraint on self-importance or the temptation to elevate our own dispositions into universal ones: with a real humility (which must rest on some understanding of the frightful complexity of being human), with a sense of humour and, equally important, a sense of the absurd. The Longford Committee was notable for its quite monumental humourlessness. And for a classic insight into that failure of all comic sense, read Lord Longford's account in this book of his mishaps in the Danish sex clubs. That account may seem to have some accent of comedy. There was a crisis when Lord Longford himself was in danger of being shockingly caressed, under the eye of many cameras. "At one moment," he writes, "I was sitting there like a stage professor in a house of ill-fame. The next my seat was empty. I had struck for home."

It sounds appreciatively comic, but it isn't. First, the image—of precipitately fleeing professor—is not Lord Longford's own. He takes it from "one of the many newspapers that depicted the scene". It is appreciative, one must say (must certainly say, against the background of all his gratified references to newspaper profiles, television appearances and other sorts of publicity), of the attention Lord Longford himself was receiving. Second, he clearly has no idea of the intrinsic comedy of the scene. He doesn't see that Malvolio laying himself open to the worst the wicked can do, and whisking out of the door in the much-publicized nick of time—when he himself is essentially the cause of the publicity . . . he doesn't see how this must smother whatever serious ends the visit might have had under laughter springing from more human lobbies than the artistic one. He appears simply not to see that you cannot root any useful inquiry in such comic and self-regarding puritanism, to which a special dimension is added by the central character's attempt to strike his own note of comic appreciation.

"I had been given strength," is his summary of the affair, "to confront evil and to repudiate it before the eyes of all." Which brings us back to where we began, with tone. That's simply a terribly funny remark, imagining itself to be a morally heroic one. But even when there is so much kindness and real valour, as there clearly is in Lord Longford, one's enjoyment of the comedy may be very brief. Many of us may be reminded, by the tone, of a puritanical darkness from which are deeply glad to have emerged.

EDWARD BLISHEN

## SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL by Olive Banks and Douglas Findlayson. Methuen, £1.75.

This is a piece of thorough and careful sociological research, which unsurprisingly reaches no startling conclusions, indeed, as is the wont of academic research, is tentative about offering any conclusions at all, rather arguing for the need for more research (more grants and more questionnaires for these busy bees). It claims to be original in recognizing a need for an interdisciplinary approach between psychologists and sociologists in educational research: this seems unquestionably desirable particularly in attempts to examine the relationship between social structure and the development of personality. Though it would be hard to realize it from this book, there are indeed exciting developments at present taking place in studying personality in the social context it lies within.

The book is limited by its own definitions—of the area of research and of the meaning of success. The book looks at three schools: a traditional grammar school, a technical grammar school and a comprehensive school; it then concentrates on boys of average or above average ability involved in academic examination courses, particularly looking at those who under- or over-achieve in relation to what would have been predicted by the eleven-plus exam. The writers explicitly see "success" in terms of academic success in G.C.E. results and it is a truism that this is a very limited approach, albeit with the advantage of being quantifiable in a way that integration or happiness are not.

The research tends to confirm established facts, such as the disadvantage of being working class in terms of likely academic success and the advantages of parental concern, care and interest in the child's education. (It should be noted that this is all couched in tables and statistics which are not all easy for the uninitiated to follow.) Where this book did seem to me to be moving towards interesting new areas was in its discussion of interactions and demonstration of the need for a dynamic model in research. For instance, though not clearly spelled out, it could be that a constant adjusting process takes place between a child's attainment and his parents' aspirations: as a child does well his parents come to expect him to do well, which reinforces the likelihood of him, in fact, doing well. This may also be true of teachers, since children often have a disturbing tendency to fulfil our expectations of them: teachers who categorize a child as unlikely to succeed cannot be surprised when he obligingly complies. It is necessary to think much more in terms of interaction and a dynamic process in all such research.

It would be interesting to look at the development of these children over a much longer period of time: many successful schoolchildren flounder in a different context and apparently unsuccessful pupils sometimes flourish later in life. In fact, it is a measure of the tradition-bound conventionality of the book that it encourages the reader to think so categorically in terms of success and failure—perhaps in Kipling's words we should "treat those two imposters just the same". Though I am sure it will be regarded as a useful piece of research, I suspect that, in view of the pressures to entirely re-think educational concepts that will have to come from the approaching collapse of our educational system in urban areas, it will seem quite irrelevant ten years hence.

JIM HERRICK

# CINEMA

**ZARDOZ** directed by John Boorman.  
Cinecenta, Leicester Square.

This futuristic allegory written and directed by the director of *Deliverance* and *Leo the Last* is a great disappointment. I found it impossible to take seriously, as a sort of Gulliver's Travels; and as a parody of *Dr. Who*, James Bond and *2001*, it just isn't funny. It is a boring, rubbishy film.

The music (Beethoven) is ravishing, and so is the scenery (the mountains of Wicklow, Ireland). What a waste.

VERA LUSTIG

# THEATRE

**NEXT OF KIN** by John Hopkins. The National Theatre.  
**THE GREAT SOCIETY** by Beverly Cross. The Mermaid Theatre.

**ST. JOAN OF THE STOCKYARDS** by Bertolt Brecht.  
The Half Moon Theatre (Alic Street).

Much is written and argued about the family these days by sociologists and psychiatrists. Television has been focusing its endless glare on a particular family in Reading for weeks. But nowhere have I seen the stresses and strains, the pains and games, so accurately depicted and felt than in John Hopkin's new play at the National, *Next of Kin*. A typical family meets on a Sunday afternoon, ostensibly for the benefit of the widowed mother, who supposedly needs to see the family. It is early seen that the mother's own wishes are the last consideration, when she suggests they have tea in the garden and her eldest daughter, Kathleen, assures her that she doesn't really want to picnic outside. This presumption that one knows better than the other is continually seen, an unconscious attempt to deny each other's independent autonomy. The quarrels which follow such petty disagreements are endemic and we see this group locked in strife, needing and loathing each other. The children (convincing, unpretentious child-acting) are being taught to play the game, being told for example that they don't want to watch television when they patently do.

Brian Lloyd, in whose house it all takes place, becomes a scapegoat and sacrifice for the group's tensions and pretensions. He and his wife, Susan (in a fine edgily developed performance by Gemma Jones) are clearly dreading the occasion at the beginning. He is humiliated into feeling that he has failed financially and hence in their eyes status-wise, by offers of money from his brother-in-law; he has for years been the recipient of endless gossip about marital troubles from his predatory sistor and clearly balks at the thought of more to come. Then in a speech, the importance of which is only apparent in retrospect, he speaks of a numbness in his fingers and the need for silence. Shortly afterwards he walks out and is not seen again. It is a strength of the play that his exit remains a mystery, for as John Hopkins suggests in the programme some actions are mysterious. His departure displays the family strife at its fullest. They speculate about another woman or "even worse"(!) a breakdown, but it is their own needs that dominate: one sister's need to break from her husband, the other's obsession with controlling the

mother out of existence, the brother and brother-in-law's collusion to profit from the sale of the mother's house, the wife's fighting against a sense of loss and towards a feeling of freedom. The nuances of this behaviour are exhibited in Harold Pinter's impeccable direction. If the play sounds a little bleak in summary, I urge you to go for yourself to see how amusing, touching, lively and profoundly disturbing is this new play.

Another new play, at the Mermaid Theatre, *The Great Society* by Beverly Cross seems to me to have little to recommend it. It is an examination of the Peasants' Revolt seen in flashbacks from the viewpoint of an imprisoned Richard II about to be murdered by Exton. The play seems to have opted for an area of experience which I can feel only exists as stage history. All the historical points are duly made as though in a history lesson based on the Jackdaw folder, illustrations from which are so liberally enlarged around the foyer, but the play never comes alive. There is no sense of crisis since the characters constantly stop to debate the situation as though on a late night TV programme and when the language aspires above the functional it is ad. copy—"girls' hands soft against my unblemished skin". There was the glimmer of an idea about the betrayal of trust between Richard and Wat Tyler, rendered inherently improbable by Richard's youth. I was constantly reminded, in contrast, of the vitality and energy and pointedness of a dramatization of the same episode, *Wat Tyler or Wat you Will* by Steve Gooch at the Half Moon Theatre some months ago.

The Half Moon Theatre, a converted synagogue, in Alic Street, Aldgate, is justly establishing for itself a reputation for the vital and hard-hitting style of its productions. They are currently playing Brecht's *St. Joan of the Stockyards*, a play which clearly, if a little heavy-handedly, displays the iniquities and idiocies of capitalism at its most absurd in Chicago during the period of the Great Depression. I was struck by the vigour and clarity of the production, causing one to question the neglect of Brecht's early plays (almost all of them, if you come to think of it). It should be well worth watching for future Half Moon productions.

JIM HERRICK

Note: *Life Class*, reviewed in the last issue, has now transferred to the Duke of York's.

**THE BEWITCHED** by Peter Barnes.  
Royal Shakespeare Company, Aldwych Theatre.

**THE TEMPEST** by William Shakespeare.  
National Theatre Company, The Old Vic.

*The Bewitched* is a new play by the author of *The Ruling Class*. It is set at the court of King Carlos II of Spain (late seventeenth century), and deals with the Inquisition, the Church's efforts to wrest power from the sovereign, Spain's wars and attempts at conciliation with alien powers, and, of course, with the problems created by the King's inability to produce an heir.

The play is no tedious staged history lesson, nor is it a pointed allegorical comment on our times. If anything, Barnes has moved too far in the other direction, towards extravagant Ken Russell campery. The dialogue is pseudo-archaic in style, with unlikable characters slinging rumbustious, picturesque abuse at each other. The "thou's" and "wi's" sounded to me like a schoolboy playwright's attempt to reconstruct historical modes of speech.

The play is full of facetious little anachronisms, reminiscent of Russell's *The Devils*; the Queen's pet parrot squawks "Come fly with me!"; there is a French farce bedroom scene, and plenty of music hall repartee. All of which was very diverting, but I was left with the uncomfortable feeling that Peter Barnes couldn't decide what style to plump for, and also that there was a sort of embarrassment, a fear of committing himself, behind a lot of the buffoonery.

Despite all its stylistic nerviness—or perhaps because of it—the play has a vehemence, a dramatic cogency, that makes itself felt more in retrospect than in the cocooned scepticism of the interval crush-bar. Peter Barnes, and the director, Terry Hands, are merciless and uncompromising in their juxtaposition of the inflated image of royalty with the grotesque and unappetizing person of the King himself. Carlos was the imbecilic result of continuous inbreeding in the Hapsburg family. He was a grossly deformed epileptic, who suffered from a serious speech impediment, suppurating sores, rickets and weak bowels. He was pathetically devoted to his harridan mother, and, while being incapable of satisfying his wife, got his sexual thrills by watching bull-fights and the torture of unbelievers. (Not for nothing is hunting dubbed "The Sport of Kings"). Not that ghoulishness and sadism are a royal prerogative; far from it. One scene shows the court washerwoman avidly sniffing out the royal understain, and in another, scurrying officials measure the King's erection, as he gets roused at an *auto da fé*, or public burning and torture of those convicted for un-Catholic behaviour. The phallus in question is a huge, golden telescopic phenomenon which appears and grows with majestic slowness. It's a fitting symbol in a play which exposes our need for prejudice and blind faith, for sacred cows as well as scapegoats.

Farran, whose Christmas decorations for Pirandello's *Henry IV* I disliked so intensely, has done an excellent job for *The Bewitched*. His massive wicker figures representing the King and Queen, and the great organ pipes at the rear of the stage have a festering magnificence which is absolutely right for the play.

To the actors: good performances by all, and a *tour de force* from Alan Howard as Carlos. By some wizardry, he has made himself resemble the portrait and descriptions of the King; with the jutting Hapsburg jaw, the adenoidal whine, the weak-bladdered walk, all of which he sustains up to the end of the long play. At the close of his life when he is confronted by some of his starving subjects, Carlos makes a speech similar in gist to King Lear's "Poor naked wretches". Howard speaks with a quiet dignity and conviction, where a lesser actor might have indulged in fruity declamation.

In this flamboyantly bad play, Alan Howard gives an unassumingly great performance—a performance which makes the production worth seeing.

Peter Hall has taken over from Sir Laurence Olivier as Artistic Director of the National Theatre, and *The Tempest* is his first production in that capacity. It is a play which depends for its impact on the use of startling visual effects, rather than on the ring of memorable speeches; the poetry and deep insight of Shakespeare's great tragedies and his stories are less in evidence here.

John Gielgud plays Prospero as a dignified but very engaging magician, and Denis Quilley portrays the monster Caliban superbly, with a kind of rapturous vigour. Michael

Feast's marble-white Ariel is as graceful and wicked as a boy god; and I liked the warmth and urgency of Jenny Agutter's Miranda.

Most impressive of all are John Bury's dank, fossil-like sets, vast but economical in design. All in all, it's a spectacular production but because it is really rather uninspired, not spectacularly good.

VERA LUSTIG

## LETTERS

### Freedom and truth

Freedom has to do with truth, and it is apparent that *The Freethinker* could do with a little of that commodity.

At no time did I "advocate compulsory religious education" neither have I ever stated that there was "complete evidence that the increase in V.D. was entirely due to books". A most absurd statement.

MARY WHITEHOUSE.

JOHN TREVELYAN writes:

In the past ten years or so Mary Whitehouse must have spoken at hundreds, possibly thousands, of meetings, and it could not be expected that she would remember everything that she had said on these occasions. She did in fact make the statement that I attributed to her at a meeting of the Publishers' Association (or it might have been the Young Publishers' Association) held many years ago on a hot summer afternoon at the National Book League. I remember it mainly because of a witty question put by someone in the audience who said, "I have never met anyone who had got V.D. from a book; have you?". I am sure that many years ago I made comments about censorship that I would now regard as absurd and would disown: indeed I have had such comments quoted from time to time, to my embarrassment.

At the meeting in April, which is reported in your May issue, I paid a tribute to Mary Whitehouse's sincerity, and made the point that, while some years ago she tended to make some extravagant statements (like the one I quoted), she was now a much more formidable opponent of the anti-censorship campaign and should be taken seriously. This was not included in your report of the meeting, and to this extent I think she is owed an apology.

*I am only too willing to apologize if my report of the N.S.S. meeting on threats to literary and artistic freedom misrepresented what was said by the speakers or the position of Mrs. Whitehouse. (I am afraid The Freethinker does not run to an editor with shorthand. Doubtless, if I were a woman, society would have seen to it that I were more proficient in secretarial skills.) I hope John Trevelyan's remarks above amplifies the reference made in the report to Mrs. Whitehouse's remarks on books and V.D.*

*Perhaps I can say something on the reference to her advocacy of compulsory Christian religious education. As everyone is aware, religious education is at present compulsory in that it is the one subject specified to be part of the curriculum by law. In The Guardian (18 February) she was reported to have asked the three party leaders before the general election, "Will you resist any attempts to remove religious instruction from schools and ensure that it is founded on the Christian Faith?" As a result Martin Loney (Guardian, 23 February) wrote asking for clarification of the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association's views on (among other things) "the rights of children of other faiths, Jewish or Hindu for example, to receive appropriate religious instruction". In her reply (Guardian, 2 March) Mrs. Whitehouse did not answer this point.—Ed.*

### How to re-write history

In his May letter, under the guise of a "recapitulation", Pat Sloan presents a version of events which amounts to wholesale misrepresentation and makes comment unavoidable.

Let me first deal with Mr. Sloan's remarks about Joan Robinson. Professor Robinson and John Eatwell wrote: "With these adjustments, the Marxian apparatus provides an invaluable instrument for analysing capitalist production, distribution and accumulation, and it provides the basis for a powerful critique of neo-classical theory. Without readjustment, however, it is a plentiful source of confusion."

I pointed out that Mr. Sloan had quoted part of the first sentence but had deliberately suppressed the second sentence. It is not a question, as Sloan states, of "a stupid quibble about adjustment or readjustment".

Mr. Sloan's statement that I accused him of "parroting the holy texts" in his *Marx and the Orthodox Economists* is also false. As anyone can see, I made no such assertion. The reference in the second paragraph of my letter of December 1973, to parroting the sacred texts of Marxism was made in an entirely different context. I commented on Sloan's *Marx and the Orthodox Economists* only in the fourth paragraph of my letter. The various points I raised there are not investigated in Sloan's chapter on "What Marx did not do" and his reference to it is a worthless evasion.

To keep this letter as short as possible, I do not propose to comment on Mr. Sloan's own lucubrations on prices and "values". I shall be dealing, in another place, with the views of Marx and current literature on this subject. I will simply remark here that, whereas Sloan asserts that I repeat "all the old dogmatic Marxist attempts to equate price with value", in fact I specifically referred in my April letter to "the admitted divergencies of prices from values" and cited a number of recent discussions of Marx's theory of value, including the latest (1973) publication on this theme by the internationally known Communist economist, Maurice Dobb.

Because I have written about Marxism from a freethinking standpoint, Mr. Sloan sees fit to question my attitude to Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco, and to Greek, Chilean, Irish, and American affairs. Unlike Mr. Sloan, I have not devoted energy to propaganda on behalf of one of the most vicious forms of totalitarianism the world has ever seen (see the reference to Mr. Sloan on p. 512 of *The Great Terror* by Robert Conquest, 1969). Freethinkers and humanists deserve something better, in my opinion, than the arrogant, ill-informed, and fraudulent neo-Stalinist dogmas which have been put before them in one form or another.

The Russian people have probably suffered more in the twentieth century than any other people in the world. In addition to the toll of two world wars, they have lost, as a result of internal political and economic "class"-extermination alone, some sixty-six million people. That is the calculation of a Russian professor of statistics, I. A. Kurganov. Such are the dimensions of Russian state violence.

In this country, when many of us were actively engaged in the struggle against Fascism, the Communist Party—in line with the Communist International and Soviet Russia—was making one complete somersault in policy after another, in what the Labour Party described as the communist "Record of Hypocrisy and Treachery to the Workers of Europe." And today, it is the Communist Steve Parry, of the National Union of Students, and others of his ilk, who advocate a pernicious and reactionary doctrine of violent suppression of free speech. JUDEX.

### Need for balanced thought

I have never understood why being pro-abortion and anti-Soviet—or obsessed with such matters—made one a freethinker. Thinking itself, as distinct from believing, being painful, is decidedly unpopular. Freethinking is perhaps impossible. The cult of freethought is an aspiration, based on the premise that truth has been traditionally suppressed, and that it is essential to learning and wisdom.

The obstacles to freethought are many; not least being the ominous fact that objectivity and logic are frustrated by cerebral processes. The brain is not a mechanical recorder, instrument or calculator pre-set to produce a correct "answer". Emotion precludes logic—fear being predominant. Reason is subordinate to indoctrination, prejudice and self-interest. Thus freethought is minimal.

To become even a novice-freethinker requires a degree of selfless concern and humility which excludes almost the whole of the bourgeois academics who monopolize publicity. They are pseudo-intellectual dilettantes exploiting the pretensions of a corrupt class-ridden society. It also excludes the immature, for they need time to learn and to admit how they were deceived by their indoctrinators. It must also exclude (regrettably) even those who aspire to integrity, but who cannot see the wood for the trees. For instance, you chastize the Leftish students for denying free-speech to reactionaries on the campus; ignoring the fact that such persons have long enjoyed near-monopoly elsewhere. Free-speech should not be equated to the right to lie and cheat. It should be the cause to which honest men are devoted, in the interests of truth; it cannot be served by an abstract concept which invites liars to do their worst. The time for that is when the balance has been corrected, and dishonesties exposed. When honest men have enjoyed the rights to free expression previously denied to them.

As for sex: the pre-occupation with "porn", or eroticism, serves to indicate the prevailing depths of contemporary ignorance. For these are but the experienced aspects of sex, the sensually observed, which give little comprehension of what sex achieves as an evolutionary influence; an amoral judge and executioner, working in relentless fashion, in the interests of Nature's scheme for survival. Many an altruist has known the scorn of women—but what ruthless tyrant was ever denied his harem? There is indeed much need of freethought, denied elsewhere, and *The Freethinker* has inadequate space for it. Don't waste it on Judex.

WALTER CONNOLLY.

### Omnibus

Referring to Geoffrey Webster's letter (May): why the "Existential Referendum" when "any person who finds existence insupportable can always have recourse to self-termination"? (Incidentally, the question "Do you wish to continue to exist or not?" is surely globally translatable—although perhaps problematical for those who believe that they will continue to exist after their death.) The decision of "individual couples not to have children—on compassionate grounds" does, of course, prevent any kind of experience for those children; the decision *not* to have a child is of course made without the child's consent. Perhaps many a child would consent (retrospectively) to the experience of life—especially, given "loving-kindness", and other helpful things; after all, there are surely degrees and kinds of suffering.

Concerning I. S. Low's advocacy of "world government", it might perhaps help readers (whether "for" or "against") to have something a bit more specific on the shape/form of the "government" Mr. Low has in mind ("world" is not enough).

On the Sloan-Judex exchanges, the former's "solo squash" shots would indeed be rather boring without the rebounds from the latter's critical "cement wall".

Regarding Mr. Editor's observations on that "Diabolical conundrum", perhaps the Devil is still working out which is the greater of two evils? CHARLES BYASS.

### Biblical scholarship

Miss Smoker finds me lacking in respect towards my elders and betters. My article on John the Baptist in fact contains no slur on Mr. Condon's credentials (of which I know nothing). It is difficult to know what can be understood by credentials in this context, and in discussion of historical questions one is concerned with a man's arguments, not with his professional status.

The purpose of my final paragraph was not, as Miss Smoker supposes, stylistic. I was aiming to draw attention to the way in which rationalists sometimes discredit their case by resort to argument which theologians can at once see to be beside the point. G. A. WELLS.

BARBARA SMOKER replies:

Not "elders and betters"—*equals*. However, the main thing is that Professor Wells did not intend his quotation from Trocmé ("contortions allegedly based on a study of comparative religions") as an implied slur on R. J. Condon's researches. I am glad to have been instrumental in clearing up this misunderstanding.

### Hum and ha

At the Polytechnic where I work there has recently been a series of lectures on Christianity. I went to one, at which a clergyman gave a lecture on the views held by modern Christian thinkers on the Old Testament. After the lecture, during question time, a woman bluntly asked the speaker whether Christian clergymen believed there had been a divine revelation to man. You should have heard the reverend gentleman hum and ha.

I am rather tickled to note that in the May issue of *The Freethinker* both Mr. Pat Sloan and myself talk about "Firstly", "Secondly" etc. Is this a case of E.S.P.? I. S. Low.

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National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL (telephone: 01-272 1266). Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL.

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

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. *Summer Centre*, 17-24 August at Hunstanton, Norfolk. Small, quiet town, variety of beaches for all ages. Golf. Country Club Hotel on cliff. Licensed. Will take dogs. Full board (unch packed if required) £26.50, includes V.A.T. and gratuity. Reduction for juniors. Two double rooms left. Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surry SM1 4PD. Telephone: 01-642 8796.

London Secular Group (outdoor meetings). *Thursdays*, 12.30—2 p.m. at Tower Hill; *Sundays*, 3—7 p.m. at Marble Arch. (*The Freethinker* and other literature on sale.)

Falmouth Humanist Group (affiliated to the National Secular Society) welcomes visitors to Cornwall. Particulars of meetings, etc., from the Secretary, 30 Melville Road, Falmouth, Cornwall. Telephone: Falmouth 313863.

## EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday 7 July, 5.30 p.m.: PATRICIA KNIGHT, "Religion in Schools".

London Young Humanists, 2 Vine Place, Ealing Common, London W5: Wednesday 26 June, 8 p.m.: Literary Circle, "George Orwell". 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8; Sunday 7 July, 7.30 p.m.: KEITH CHALKLEY, "E.T.A.—The Rebel Basque Movement".

National Secular Society, The Cole Room, Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1. Sunday 30 June, 2.30 p.m.: Annual General Meeting (members only).

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. *Sunday Morning Meetings*, 11 a.m.: 23 June: HECTOR HAWTON, "Crisis in Catholicism"; 30 June: Dr. COLIN HAMER, "Ethical Feeling"; 7 July: DEREK WRIGHT, "Reflections of a Disbeliever in Search of Enlightenment"; 14 July: Dr. GEORGE WAGNER, "Community—Action or Reaction?". *Forum*: Sunday 23 June, 3 p.m.: RON BAILEY, "The Public's Right to Know".

### DAVID TRIBE'S

### QUESTIONS OF CENSORSHIP

(George Allen & Unwin)

*This book is interesting and readable, and can be recommended to anyone who is interested in freedom.—Liverpool Daily Post.*

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