THE ETHICAL RECORD

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SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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Coming at Conway Hall

Sunday, May 2

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: ALAN REDWOOD** on **The Defence of Religion.** Cello and Piano: Peter Hunt and Fiona Cameron

6.00 pm—**Bridge and Scrabble** in the Club Room

Tuesday, May 4

7.00 pm—**Discussion** introduced by **Prof Robert Jones.** Subject: **Mind and Brain**

Sunday, May 9

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: PETER SELTMAN** on **Early 19th Century French Utopians—St Simon.** Bass solos: Cyril Dightmaker

3.00 pm—**Forum: The Dangers to Peace** with **Sheila Oakes**

6.00 pm—**Bridge and Scrabble**

Tuesday, May 11

7.00 pm—**Discussion** introduced by **Dr Chris Pallis.** Subject: **The Prolongation of Life and the Modern Concept of Death**

Sunday, May 16

11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: T. F. EVANS** on **Orwell and his Messages.** Contralto solos: Jean Robertson

3.00 pm—**Sunday Social.** Guest: Rose Bush

6.00 pm—**Bridge and Scrabble**

7.00 pm—**Benefit Concert:** London Society of Magicians, in aid of Mrs M. Greaves

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THE ETHICAL RECORD

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The views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the Society

EDITORIAL

Rules of Reason

EVERY DAY, it seems, yet another country become ungovernable, and whether this is desirable or otherwise depends on a personal point of view. But it is a dangerous situation, not only for the peace of the world, but for the very survival of civilisation as we know it.

Perhaps we are drawing toward the time when a radical re-thinking of world democracy is necessary, perhaps even with the ultimate aim of world government.

True, this would mean a major blow to nationalism, which is both honourable and highly dangerous, in one "package".

But it could shift the emphasis of world democracy and rule from money to true human values, and if anything is important these days, it is this.

To take a rational approach to life is to look at many things the world at large chooses to ignore. Religious matters, the plight of the elderly and handicapped, sexual problems and human relationships, to name but a few.

These days, it seems, only vote-catching gimmicks which centre around money are of any value to the major politicians the world over.

But one thing is sure. The world can no longer survive on the knife-edge on which it has been perched, with cold economic considerations on one side and proper human values on the other.

In short, the West must take more cognisance, no matter what the cost, of the starving peoples of the East, and the Eastern Powers must climb down from dogmatism and realise that there is a middle way which is, in a word, humanitarian.

Even in Britain we can see the decline of democracy, with sectional interests having disproportionate control over government affairs, and again, where economic considerations pressurise the provision of a health service and education.

The only possible answer for a future that has any semblance of human values, is one which strikes a balance between the Left and the Right, perhaps even the disappearance of Politics itself, and a return world-wide to a pattern of living based on human-ness and mutal caring.

That probably means world government, given time, though a better system would be world democracy.

Pie in the sky? Maybe so. But starts have to be made in every walk of life and, by their own example, people who care about the world and its contents could be making a start towards re-humanisation already.

To do otherwise would be pursuing hypocrisy.

Towards Self-management

BY

H. J. BLACKHAM

THE CONCEPT of "self-actualization", in vogue now with the influence of American humanistic psychology, like the concept of self-realization in ethical theory when philosophical idealism was in fashion, or the concept of self-determination in freewill controversy, is a mistaken idea. For it seems improbable that there is a formed self waiting to become actual, like the oak in the acorn. That would be pre-determination, not the freedom intended. On the other hand, "self-determination" would be inconceivable if it meant that all the determinants of behaviour originated in the self. What the self can do is to form ends, purposes, beliefs, ideals, which exert a restraining, initiating, organising, directing influence. There is an analogy with political government, rather than with the oak and the acorn. Government drafts laws, forms, policies, controls administration, but depends on other springs of action in the community, and encounters opposition, evasion, violation. Self-direction is cognitive and volitional, not a self-regulating system. We have consciously and actively to take charge, if we are to be in charge.

"There's a divinity that rough-hews our ends, shape them how we will", to misquote *Hamlet*. We are born to a certain lot in life and with a certain inheritance, and we learn to be human in the ways and on the models provided by the culture in which we are bred. All this is given, not chosen. Some live and die in this personality off the peg, so to speak. The old farm labourer in the film "Akenfield" does not recall ever making a decision, except to walk to Newmarket in the hope of another job and another life; just one thing led to another, in his drift down-stream. But there was all the time an undercurrent of his own thoughts and feelings as he looked on at his life. "I wonder who I would have been if I hadn't trudged back from Newmarket", he reflects; really what, not who, for he thinks of himself in terms of the job, the role, the routine. He has made no Declaration of Independence, taking over the government and dealing with his lot by acceptances, rejections, negotiations, attitudes.

Instinct and Influence

The raw material which we can deal with in such ways is of two kinds, the interests of our own which we begin to form early in life, and all that is given that is not our own which we can take over and make over. Mere rebellion, kicking over the traces, does not amount to personal autonomy, although it may be a necessary negative moment in coming to terms with what is given. Development of an independent interest of one's own is the positive meaning of autonomy. Such an interest is developed in coming to terms with oneself, one's society, the cosmos, for there is no other realistic basis. In the classical world, personal philosophies, like Stoicism or Epicureanism, helped the individual to find this orientation for himself. Self-rule, however, remains an aspiration and can never be a technical procedure which produces a predictable result, Rather, it is self-management, a skill which may prevail or fail. The aspiration itself may differ from maximum spontaneity to daily puritanical accounting and policing, as government may be *laissez-faire* or totalitarian.

Child study and developmental psychology have shown a process of normal development towards autonomy. Some six stages have been identified, from early obedience to ultimate self-rule by universal standards. However, it seems to be agreed that comparatively few attain the mature

autonomy of the final stage, perhaps not more than five per cent. There are many barriers. The society and culture may discourage it. Frustration of needs in earliest infancy, or over-indulgence, may retard or distort development. "Alienation", the many ways in which people find it impossible to come to terms with their environment and its requirements, may defeat the aspiration. Self-deception is extremely common, because self-awareness is highly exacting and never secure; and unless one does become aware of unconscious motivations, one can hardly pretend to be in control.

Our own society today does value personal independence. It is an assumption of political democracy, and the autonomy of the individual is respected in welfare policies. Teachers are expected now, and helped, to further and care for the personal development of their pupils, as well as teaching required knowledge and skills. Practicability of purpose, the substance of personal freedom, is probably more available in terms of choices to more people than ever before, in spite of present stringencies.

Is choice, however, really possible as an autonomous decision except to a person who has already achieved autonomy one of the rare mature beings, the possible five per cent? Strictly, the answer is probably no. But a deliberated decision which can be justified is in itself a step on the road to the achievement of autonomy. Learning to make such choices is one of the disciplines in personal development. Making a deliberated decision is a main way of making the self, for it has organising power, initiating experience, determining relevance, informing action, and forming a future—the opposite of drifting and reacting. Such behaviour is creative, fertilising and cultivating spontaneity. This kind of self rule is a world apart from the self-regimentation of the super-ego. It is more like what the humanistic psychologists mean by "self-actualization".

(*Summary of a lecture given on February* 8)

The Myth of the State

BY

PETER CADOGAN

IN THE conclusion of his book *The Myth of the State,* upon which what follows is based, the great philosopher Ernst Cassirer wrote:

> "What we have learned in the hard school of our modern political life is the fact that human culture is by no means the firmly established thing we once supposed it to be. The great thinkers, the scientists, the poets and artists who laid the foundations of our Western civilisation were often convinced that they had built for eternity. It seems however that we have to look upon the great master works of human culture in a much humbler way. They are not eternal nor unassailable. Our science, our poetry, our art, and our religion are only the upper layer of a much older stratum that reaches down to a great depth. We must always be prepared for violent concussions that may shake our cultural world and our social order to its very foundations."

What of the State? What of myth? What of the myth of the State?

In Britain we are commonly very vague about the meaning of the word "State". It tends to be equated with country or nation or that body of people who live under the same government. To a student of government however it has a much more precise meaning, it signifies the institutions of

government (financed by taxation and other forms of government fund-raising) and all the full-time executives engaged therein—the Royal Family, the members of both Houses of Parliament, senior civil servants, military officers, members of the judiciary, police forces and prison service, and the clergy of the Established Church. They are all engaged in the traditional functions of the State (i.e. war and peace, law and order, the social services (mostly of recent origin) and the spiritual condition or prevailing ethos of the people.

The State is civilisation's political face and of the same age—about 10,000 years. There was no State among hunter-gatherers or pastoralists and in early settled village life it was only rudimentary in the persons of the Elders. Then by the great rivers, rich agricultural settlements fell victim to pastoral raiders and the first towns began; and with them the State, the separation out of rulers, soldiers and priests whose specialised function in life was the practice of government. They were sustained by tribute and slavery and their sanctions were a mixture of security on the one hand and fear and the sword on the other.

Social Role of Myth

But how was this to be explained and justified? Therein begins the significance of myth. In our own experience we are closely familiar with the myths of the Bible (especially those of the Old Testament) and those of Greece and Rome. Every people, every culture has its complex of stories to explain its origins and its rituals whereby the myths are recalled and re-enacted. As Cassirer puts it: "Myth is an objectification of man's social experience, not of his individual experience." Through myth people explain themselves to themselves in a way that satisfies themselves. An extraordinary amalgam of fact and fantasy and form is used to bind people together in common beliefs and a common way of life. Birth, marriage, death, earth, air, fire, water, winter, summer, sickness, health, possession and belonging —all are explained. Myths serve "the desire of human nature to come to terms with reality, to live in an ordered universe and to overcome the chaotic state in which things and thoughts have not yet assumed a definite shape and structure".

People found themselves confronted by Government. For centuries the Greeks got by explaining it according to the myths told in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, stories of how it all began in relations between the Gods and the Heroes. By the fifth century BC, however, in the time of Socrates, educated men could no longer believe in the old legends and the spiritual centre of society was slipping. The Sophists, the professional teachers of Athens, taught that might is right and that the sword is the source of power. Faced with that challenge Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (aware of the ordered universe of physics, mathematics and biology) sought an ordering principle in society and the State—they found it in the Idea of the Good, the Idea of Justice and the Idea of the Legal State. And so the first modern concept of the State was invented as a new idea to replace the dying ones of the old legends.

> "In order to create the rational theory of the State, Plato had to lay the axe to the tree; he had to break the power of myth. He had to break the power of 'eternal yesterday'."

Although Plato and his friends launched a great idea that has never perished, they lost. The next century saw the empire of Alexander and the supremacy of the sword. The new philosophers of that time were the Stoics who fatalistically accepted the status quo and turned it to good account—from the very fact of empire they extracted new ideas of universal brotherhood and equality, another dimension for the new idea of the Legal State.

The Romans, here as elsewhere, refined their Greek inheritance without

making new discoveries. To the Roman Stoics "humanitas" was important. It was born of the world of Scipio and the Roman aristocracy; it signified a moral and an aesthetic ideal rather than concern with social problems. "He who lives in harmony with himself (said Scipio) lives in harmony with the universe." Seneca went as far as to attempt to show that harmony justifies slavery: "the body is indeed in the power of a master, but the mind is independent. . . ."

The Middle Ages put the clock back. The Church of St Peter and St Augustine taught that since the power of the Pope and King derives from God resistance is mortal sin. Human wisdom was put down in the name of divine grace, criticism became heresy and the State existed by Divine Right. But the Greek and Roman traditions of justice were also inherited, albeit eclipsed, until they started to emerge again in the eleventh century. Acquinas taught that the State originates in the family, the community, corporate life and the nature of the commonwealth and although reason may err it is still of consequence. Evil was being made relative.

It was left to Machiavelli to make the decisive break with the medieval past. Since the mid-seventeenth century Machiavelli has had a bad and unfair press in England. He needs to be restored to the esteem that Francis Bacon had for him: "We are much beholden to Machiavelli and other writers of that class who openly and unfeignedly declare or describe what men do, and not what they ought to do."

Machiavelli wrote not just for Italy but for the whole world and not just for his own time but for all time. He lived in two worlds. One was the dying medieval world of decayed chivalry, monasticism and clericalism, of mystical theology and superstition, of relics, pilgrimages, corruption and rigid hierarchies in Church and State. The other was the new Italy of the condottieri, the adventuring captains who founded or served the archetypal new families that were coming to govern Italy, the Visconti, the Sforzas, the Medici, the Gonzagas, the Borgias. These were the men who destroyed the theocracy of the Church and the old rigidities of State.

> "In Machiavelli's theory all the previous theocratic ideas and ideals are eradicated root and branch. Yet he never meant on the other hand to separate politics from religion. He was, on the contrary, convinced that religion is one of the necessary elements of man's social life. But in his system this element cannot claim any absolute, independent or dogmatic truth. Its worth and validity depend entirely on its influence on political life."

In *The Prince* Machiavelli looked at political problems as though they were a game of chess. He reported fraud, deception, treachery and felony as facts of life—for so they were. He was not concerned, as an observer, with praise or blame. When he chose to express his personal opinions (as in his *Discourses on Livy*) he appeared as a resolute republican: "Taking everything into consideration the people are wiser and more constant than a prince." In his view people had two choices. They could either lead a private, harmless and innocuous life OR they could enter the political arena, struggle for power and maintain it by the most ruthless and radical means. In general he had a low opinion of people and assumed that they were bad by nature. By way of correction and in practice he saw the best foundation of the State in good laws and effective arms.

Yet Machiavelli's implacable honesty led him to realise that at least half the political prospect was imponderable, irregular, and capricious. Foolish the man who did not take Fortune into account even though there may be no accounting for it!

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with Descartes and mathematics, modern science came into its own with its unbounded faith in observation and reason. If nature could yield her secrets to science why not

society? The Stoics were back, witness that great manifesto of faith in human nature—the American Declaration of Independence. And of the Enlightenment—in Hume, Gibbon, Montesquiue and Voltaire justice was enshrined again, but not for long. The age of elegance wilted before political and industrial revolutions and with Romanticism the search for new myths was on.

In 1840 Thomas Carlyle gave his fateful lectures "On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History". He was a conservative looking for a new principle with which to govern the apparently ungovernable forces let loose by the industrial revolution through the emergence of new middle and working classes who had no place in the received order of things.

> "Hero worship, heartfelt prostrate admiration, submission, burning, boundless, for the noblest godlike form of man—is not that the germ of Christianity itself?"

To be fair to Carlyle he was looking for heroes of sincerity and insight and not for sham heroes recognised by "valets". But he *was* proposing that the world be led by a few Elect and so was preaching a disguised and transformed Calvinism for which the ground was well prepared. Yet further, in mitigation, there was his devotion to Goethe's precept:

> "How can we come to know ourselves? Never by speculation, but by action. Try to do your duty and you will know at once what you are worth. But what is your duty. . . ? The demand of the day."

That, for Carlyle, was the hero's test.

Forms of Worship

For us, in the twentieth century, the myth of the State has been forged anew from elements of hero worship mixed with race or class worship. The result is power worship in and through the persons of Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, Tito, Mao, Castro, Brezhnev, Amin, Mrs Gandhi and the rest. Five-sixths of the people of the world today live under tyrannies of one kind or another where the rule of law, based on the idea of justice, does not obtain. The struggle that began in Athens is still on.

It was Hegel who first worked out the modern dispensation. "In point of fact (he wrote) the notion of the realisation of self-conscious reason finds its actual fulfilment in the life of the nation." And again:

> "the State is not only a part, a special province, but the essence, the very core of historical life."

To Hegel God emerges in history, not in nature. The social process is the reality of God and therefore the State is of the order of the Divine. To get this across he had to destroy the myth of the previous century, the Stoic myth of the social contract. The State does not make contracts with its people, it issues decrees. In England the Benthamites likewise assailed the social contract, but this time in the name of *laisser faire*, reason and the greatest happiness of the greatest number (and what *that* was the powers-that-be would decide).

What Hegel *meant* was one thing and what subsequent generations made out of what he *said* was another. Out of context nothing could be more appalling:

> "The State is the self-certain absolute mind which acknowledges no abstract rules of good and bad, shameful and mean, craft and deception. It is the course of God through the world that constitutes the State. Truth lies in power."

And Cassirer comments: "No other philosophical system has done so much for the preparation of fascism and imperialism as Hegel's doctrine of the State." Yet Hegel was not himself a totalitarian. He believed in organic not in monolithic unity, he would not have art, religion and philosophy

subject to the State and he believed that there had to be "an in-dwelling spirit" in a nation to make its constitution work. He wrote:

> "The one essential canon to make liberty deep and real is to give every business belonging to the general interests of the State a separate organisation wherever they are essentially distinct."

The age of reason is not yet. The history of the State is beset with contending myths starting with traditional legends, then based on great ideas of the good and of justice and brotherhood. Super-imposed are notions of grace and divine right that exclude human wisdom. There follows the cleansing fire of Machiavellian empiricism leading to the gentle plateau of social contract and rational thinking. The plunge into romantic hero-worship is next in line and this merges with State-worship and the adulation of race and class.

The outcome is that the new political masters of the twentieth century are not content with obedience and payment of taxes. They want their subjects body and soul so that, in the nature of things, dissent cannot arise. It is a measure of their insecurity that the power of the truth is not in any circumstances to be allowed to manifest itself.

More than any country in the Western world we English suffer from the power of the myth of the State. All the other European countries have been through the trauma of enemy occupation. And the Americans have had the Vietnam experience. Our myths are complex—they cover the sovereignty of Parliament, the office of Prime Minister, and the "non-political" character of the Armed Forces and Civil Service. There are the myths of the Welfare State, the industrial myth of collective bargaining, the financial myth of money as the measure of man (and its projection as the ethics of envy) and old familiar myths of class, the Public Schools, Oxford, Cambridge and the Inns of Court. A vast system of pretence strait-jackets our national life. We are hemmed in all round with taboos. The most powerful words in the English language remain: "It's not done."

The last word rests with Ernst Cassirer: "We must learn to discover and obey the laws of the social world before we can undertake to rule it."

(Summary of a lecture given on February 29)

FORUM

Our Heritage and Our Humanity

IVOR RUSSELL called our attention to the ideas of W. R. Lethaby of Barnstaple who taught architecture in London in the 1870-1890 period.

Most of the architectural profession today is in revolt against what the modern movement has created compared with what it set out to create. Part of the trouble is that guineas are a bigger attraction than ideas and few architects have either the time or inclination to study the *art* of architecture as such. Lethaby saw this coming and urged that to understand the new we have to study the old, whereas the "modern movement" set out to abolish the old and start with a clean slate.

All architecture is building, but not all building is architecture. Some of today's disasters began in the architecture of Chicago in the 1880s when commercialisation as an end in itself began to take over.

An architectural drawing is in two dimensions and the building it describes is taken out of context. This was corrected in the re-building of Coventry where models in three dimensions were used so that what they would really look like was apparent and they could be seen against the buildings that were to surround them.

A civil engineer has an easier brief. In building an edifice like the Forth Bridge he has only one objective to pursue and we commonly accept and admire the result. An architect, however, has several sets of objectives to work to. The architect has to satisfy us in matters of taste, while the engineer has to satisfy the requirements of a single, simple function.

The first buildings were stone tents and as they became more elaborate they were designed in and according to natural settings. Tintagel Castle is a classic example of this. Our old villages employed no architects or planners; local materials were used within the requirements of the local landscape and the result was marvellous. The more planning there is the worse the results appear to be. In New York every building is an island, unconnected and unrelated to the next.

Ivor Russell showed a remarkable collection of photographs he has taken all over the world to illustrate every point he made—from Persia, Greece, Italy, France and America illustrating architecture over the centuries from the beginning of civilization to the present day.

Architects had to be craftsmen or understand craftsmanship and then proceed beyond it to formalization. Thus the Acropolis of Athens was brilliant both as craftsmanship and artistic witness of a great ritual that took place every four years and to which people came from all quarters of Greece. The Elgin marbles, symbolising Greek life, have been an inspiration ever since. The Greeks respected nature and made the fullest use of it in buildings like their open-air theatres, using natural scenery as their backdrop.

Architecture, like so much else, lost its way in the Dark Ages and we were shown an arch in Poitiers whose design and decoration were contrived in a meaningless fashion. The great re-awakening came from Florence and Rome through Michaelangelo, Palladio and their contemporaries.

Courbusier's original sketch of tower blocks done in 1922 was the origin of the current form of the architectural disaster. A monster emerged from his paper. He called it "the new vision" and in its name all the past was to be swept away. It was, however, in tune with dogmatic and dictatorial times and the crude contexts of material values. Courbusier saw power in the new technology of reinforced concrete and structural steel. This new tool developed in Chicago was, he thought, a new power for mankind. Craftsmen would not be needed any more; detail was swept away in the sweeping demand for a new purity providing simple, clear-cut lines for all to understand. A whole generation was deceived into neglecting and ignoring the greatness of our architectural heritage and supposed "purity" ended up as sterility. The result was that today, in order to find our way forward, we also have to find our way back.

P.C.

(Summary of a Forum held in November 23)

Television and the Community

PAUL BONNER, the producer of the BBC series "Open Door", started by making the point that it is better for people to disagree out of knowledge than out of ignorance. A second point was that television is a revolutionary medium but the people who grew up with it from its initial stages form a kind of oligarchy. Many things which could be done in this medium weren't done. One could make a fair comparison with the beginnings of television and those of printing.

The "Open Door" programme was a form of "access" television. The beginnings of this kind of television were to be found in North America.

There the standard of commercial television was deplorably low and in revolt against these low standards, there were set up public service stations financed by subsidies from the Ford and Gulbenkian Foundations.

There were certain factors which encouraged the spread of this movement. One was government encouragement. There was also the spread of cable television and the development of private video groups.

Instant Excitement

Another important agency was the National Film Board of Canada which had been in the documentary field for a long time. They discovered by accident that very exciting films could be made by allowing people to use television as a direct medium. It was also found that there was an interaction between a camera crew and the people who were the subject of documentaries.

The old role of the subject of a documentary film as merely a passive agent was gone. There arose the belief that people shouldn't be manipulated by television; there was a need to broaden the actual range of the product.

At the BBC the idea of leaving editorial control in the hands of a group producing the film was put to the Board of Governors and agreed upon. There had to be certain restrictions on the actual content of the programmes; for example, no political propaganda and no appeals for money.

One limitation of British television at the moment was the preponderance of middle class Southerners in control. There was a real need for programmes on local problems. One outlet for such programmes was cable television where locally made video programmes could be put out. But at the moment money was a limiting factor in this field.

The opening point of the discussion was whether it was possible, or even desirable, for any group with a problem to produce its own programmes. Was it right that one medium should be the sole channel of communication? Were there not just as important means such as the printed word?

Paul Bonner replied that the visual factor was important in choosing subjects for television programmes; another important point was topicality. Public interest must also be maintained by the entertainment value of a programme series.

Another point raised was the awkward times that the "Open Door" programme was transmitted. In reply it was pointed out each programme was shown twice.

A former employee of cable television said that they weren't meant to be a success. They were started in 1970 in a very limited sort of way and were run very cheaply, but he had found that their problems were very similar to those of the national television channels.

Was it right that television should be dominated by the professional broadcaster? In reply it was said that the amateur had neither the knowledge, or indeed the interest, to run television. The position in this country was better than in many other countries where the state determined what you should see and hear. The BBC and IBA did have a real measure of autonomy. For example, there was no editorial interference in the making of "Open Door" programmes.

Paul Bonner pointed out that the BBC was basically a democratic organisation; ultimate responsibility with the Regional Councils and the Board of Governors. He agreed, however, that it was basically part of the Establishment and would hardly put out programmes which questioned fundamental things in our society.

In reply to a specific complaint about an article in the "Radio Times" about South Place, he said the BBC was a many sided organisation and not all sides of it were equally in step.

One person pointed to the closing down of cinemas and theatres as one

of the bad results of television. Mr Bonner believed that the advent of television had stimulated new forms of theatre. He agreed, however, that television consumed a great many old films without contributing anything in return to the cinema.

In reply to the criticism that a great deal of television time, especially in the early evening, was devoted to trivial matter, Paul Bonner replied that people could always vote with their switches and turn off. This had an important influence on programme planners.

A.W.K.

(Report of a Forum held on February 8)

The Hazards of Conformity

MARGARET CHISMAN took as her starting point two quotations from Huxley's "Essays of a Humanist".

"It is always possible to know and understand more, to feel and to sympathise more comprehensively, to achieve a fuller internal harmony. The right kind of individual development is thus one which leaves the way open permanently for fresh possibilities of growth—just as evolutionary progress was only achieved through trends of improvement which did not bar the way to further improvement."

"Truth is too large to be revealed in but one form, or one creed, or one way of life. We must accept the hard saying that out of diversity alone comes advance, and that any one human mind is too small to grasp more than a little truth, to live more than a little reality."

She proceeded to examine briefly several areas of life. Conformity in education could lead to indoctrination of children in accordance with the ideas of those in power. Schools ought not to be pressure chambers of conformity. A child should be taught to think creatively as well as logically.

In art, conformity could be dangerous, especially if treated, as in the USSR, as an indication of patriotism; an unofficial open air art show was bulldozed there last year. Art cannot be the slave of purpose.

Research, if limited by enforced conformity, could lead to distorted or erroneous results as with Lysenko. The military in charge of research, as in USA, tended to concentrate on its own vested interests, whilst social problems which could ease people's lives if tackled, were neglected.

Perhaps conformity in ideas presented the greatest threat. Whilst Governments put dissidents in prison camps or labelled them "psychotic" and gave them forcible treatment resembling torture, no progress could be made for the flowering of humankind in an atmosphere of freedom.

Conforming to a way of life could result in the "Coca Cola culture", "Organisation Man—and his wife", "keeping up with the Joneses" at best; at worst an unquestioning acceptance of high technology that is using up the earth's resources alarmingly. Attempting to make human nature conform —the bureaucratics' dream—may be approaching with the possibility of producing identical individuals by cloning. Data Banks could facilitate the bureaucratics' job by rubbing off all our "awkward corners" so we all fitted smoothly into our pigeon holes.

Perhaps, most of all, she felt strongly about attempts to impose conformity by limiting choice to approved varieties of seeds and plants, and to food. The EEC has attempted, without success, to ban English varieties of beer and bread in favour of Continental versions. The battle to oust our own Cox's Orange Pippin in favour of the Golden (so-called) Delicious apple has not yet been resolved. The bureaucrat and the food producer wanted

uniform plants and crops, heavily yielding to produce maximum profit. Quality and flavour were not important!

In this country non-conformity is tolerated—"the lovable eccentric Englishman", but let it become a real threat to the Establishment and we might find a different treatment. So we should claim the right to dissent, to exercise our non-conformity while we still have the chance.

Standardisation

BEN ROSTON talked about standardisation, the type of conformity which is both necessary and constructive. He pointed out that standards are not just a specialised technique for the expert but involve us all. They are fundamental to all nature, and evolution can be regarded as the process of standardising all living creatures to make them fit for their function (which is what industrial standards are about). In human activities organised life would be impossible and chaos would reign, had we not standardised everything around us, be it time, languages, rules of games we play, etc.

In recent times, the industrial revolution, and particularly the railways, brought together the markets and the production centres of the world and produced a new need—for an inter-company industrial standard. It became essential to cut down the unnecessary variety of similar products made by different people, or even by the same people at different times, and to make it possible to match equipment and parts of equipment wherever made.

To meet this need, the British Engineering Standards Association, the forerunner of the BSI, the British Standards Institution, was formed in 1901. World-wide, the BSI combined with other national standards organisations to form international bodies, so as to ensure uniformity of standards, since few products are truly national.

The way standards work constantly poses many questions. To what extent should variety be restricted by stabilising product design? Would this stop development and progress? Should one standardise early, with little experience, or late when one of many alternatives already in existence must be chosen? Because of these problems, standardisation is usually confined to safety, quality and interchangeability but excludes design details.

The BSI is run by committees, principally of producers and users, who have to work together to achieve satisfactory standards. Producers contribute technical expertise of products and users—their knowledge of applications. The two groups generally co-operate, because the producer wants to simplify and cheapen his product, while the user wants to get a better product and to benefit from lower costs. Apart from safety, health and consumer aspects covered by legislation, the work is essentially voluntary, and this breeds confidence and raises the quality of standards produced. In fact agreement is insisted upon, minorities cannot be outvoted by majorities, and compromise must be reached. This is achieved by assessing points of difference and analysing difficulties, so as to obtain a solution acceptable to all.

After standards are produced, they are modified as requirements change, so that they assist progress instead of enforcing blind conformity on industry, which would be as dangerous to it as it is to an individual or the community in the non-industrial environment.

STAN CHISMAN considered the philosophical implications of standardisation and this led to a number of clues towards solving the problem of the kinds of things which society should standardise and those which we should leave free. Nature accepts standardisation at the primitive level but ensures wide variety in complex entities. A lack of standardisation is frequently irritating in the mechanics of living. An original painting is valued but we accept similarities implicit in schools of art. His consideration of manners was not universally accepted by the meeting. There seems no point to undefendable

patterns of behaviour which we insist upon just because "it is the done thing". This is as true within the ruling class as it is within the working class. This denigration of manners is not however synonymous with failing to recognise the value of courtesy.

In the engineering world standards are frequently quoted with tolerances on any dimension and we could usefully extend this idea into other areas such as standardising on the concept of mating but permitting tolerance as to its form, standardising the meanings of words only sufficiently for the current discourse. It is interesting to speculate on what other areas we should be seeking the concept of tolerances on a general standardisation. Considerations of the appeal which standardisation has to different cultures leads to the conclusion that the extreme right worship rigidity and the extreme left prefer chaos.

He advocated the recognition that the development process inherently implies alternate cycles of chaos and standardisation. Society serves its members ill in that our attempts at ergonomics do not give us objects well enough matched to our individual needs. Examples which spring to mind include adequately adjustable seats in cars, women's clothes which are made to measure yet cheap, and foot-shaped shoes. These seem to stem naturally from our retail organisation which is aimed at fast selling and hence high turnover but is not aimed at offering a satisfactory service to the community. It seemed natural to him that consideration of for whom one standardises, leads rapidly to nationalised industries and galloping socialism by a perfectly logical process. It was perhaps surprising that none in the audience refuted this idea.

The subsequent discussion made it clear that since computers were moronic any policy decision should be attributed to the men behind them, the role of mavericks in society, gave heartfelt support for our Cox's Orange Pippin and, typically of SPES audiences, ranged over many topics which were connected but tenuously, if enthusiastically to the subject.

(Summary of a Forum held on November 9)

For the Record

BY

THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Solzhenitsyn and South Place

Not since the speeches and broadcasts of Churchill and Priestly in 1940 has the spoken word made an impact like Solzhenitsyn's. He has called us to ethical account and it is fitting that we should respond from *South Place*. At this stage I can offer only a personal reaction.

I think he has done us a great service. He has put a non-violent bomb under Britain and set it off. If we register the impact now we shall be the better able to to deal with actual physical crises later.

He made it very clear that his personal position stems from his appalling experiences in Soviet concentration camps. It is those experiences (and not his alleged patriarchal Christianity) that have moulded his philosophy. In neither of his broadcasts did he even mention his Christian beliefs although one gathers, from other sources, that he has them.

He assailed the continued imperial self-satisfaction of this country and the way in which, via alleged *detente*, it leads us to connive in the spread of that other imperialism—communist ideology. *Detente*, he says, is used by

his erstwhile masters to disarm critics and opponents. I can only say that my experience confirms his. As long as I live I shall never forget or forgive the unholy Anglo-Soviet alliance that put Biafra down. British Saracen armoured cars, machine guns, grenades and endless ammunition allied with Russian MIGs secured the establishment of what is today a leading contender for the title of the most corrupt country in the world—Nigeria. When recently Lagos reneged on Britain and drove the pound down through the two-dollar threshold it was poetic justice, no less. But why did Solzhenitsyn not mention the case of Biafra? Why did he injure his own case by claiming a Western "world position" in SE Asia? 'Tis pity he makes a good case then puts his foot in it!

It was good to listen to his withering attack on pragmatism, "between good and evil there is an irreconcilable contradiction. One cannot build one's life without regard for this distinction." He castigated us "in possessing freedom not to value it, not to be willing to make sacrifices for it". At *South Place* we have reason to know something about that! Perhaps someone will tell Solzhenitsyn . . . Freedom still counts in England but much more precariously than some of us thought. As he says, we are not "capable of assimilating it without having gone right to the end" ourselves. Mere knowledge and inheritance are no substitute for experience. Freedom only comes alive through its practice.

Nothing is more timely, in my opinion, than his attack on the abdication of the older and more experienced people. The 'seventies are ripe for the angry middle aged! The young have numbers and enthusiasm but they do not have, and cannot have, the answers. They have not been around long enough. We need a new alliance of age-groups with experience in the van.

I warmed especially to these words: "A people that no longer remembers, has lost its history and its soul." Pragmatism has largely destroyed our sense and knowledge of our own past and set us in uncharted seas. Without history and vision we are lost.

Moscow is out to Cubanise Europe (the expression comes from another Soviet dissenter) and cubanisation happens from within. There is no attack from without, but the take-over is no less effective. Trevor-Roper took the point: "The Soviet Union is a tyranny that is expanding and we are in a position of surrender. What we ought to do is to look at the moral foundation of our own society and to the extent to which they are undermined." Indeed!

The trouble, of course, is Big Brother. Whether he comes from the Left, the Right or the Centre matters little; the Big Brethren are natural allies against *people*. So long as we agree to be cyphers, obedient servants, loyal tax-payers and willing cannon-fodder it is all right—the planners can go ahead. What they build is a house of cards wherein a single blast of firm dissent will start a process that brings it all down. The alternative is to discover, define, invent and build a way of life that starts and finishes with the human dimension. That is our job. It means a new departure—an ethical economics, an ethical politics—hearing the unheard of. And doing it without any return to the Cold War. It calls for militant non-violence from the Atlantic to the Urals.

May Meetings

Alan Redwood, who opens on Sunday May 2, is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford (the only College in Britain that has no undergraduates!) and he is the author of a recent book "Reason, Ridicule and Religion" published by Thames and Hudson. It is a study of what happened to religion in the eighteenth century. We may be in for some new insights from the days when our Society was first founded.

After the success of his first lecture on Babeuf, Dr Peter Seltman will be

back on the 9th to talk about St Simon. In June it will be the turn of Fourier. There is a great deal to be said for a sustained and comprehensive study like this. On the 16th Appointed Lecturer Tom Evans will take on "Orwell and His Messages" (and Orwell beat Solzhenitsyn to it by 30 years! —lest we forget) so it could hardly be more topical. Harold Blackham breaks new ground on the 23rd with "Do Animals Have Rights?" Some people are currently making a good case for a complete revolution in our relations with the natural world—it is a very searching subject.

There will be no meeting over the week-end of the Spring Holiday.

The first Forum in May will deal with "Dangers to Peace" at which the speaker will be Sheila Oakes, the new Secretary of the National Peace Council and the second with how we view the rise and spread of "multi-nationals" (for this the speakers will be announced later).

The Tuesday theme for May will be *Mind and Brain*. We start on the 4th with a meeting on the theme itself when the speaker will be Professor Robert Jones, Professor of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada and currently attached to the new Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead. On the 11th and 18th we shall be breaking into the taboo subject of death. The Quinlan case in the US has sparked a most important debate about the nature of death and how far to take the prolongation of life. Dr Chris Pallis, a neurologist, has taken a leading part in the debate in this country (on TV and in *The Times*) and he will be our speaker on the 11th. On the 18th it will be the turn of Dr J. A. A. Nichols of Guildford (our thanks to Mr George Swade for the introduction) and he will talk about the psychology of dying. We shall end with a debate: "That changing people is more important than changing society" a vintage problem!

Mrs Olga Blackham

Mrs Blackham, wife of Harold Blackham, died in hospital on March 25 three weeks after a severe stroke. There was a private cremation on March 31. She was actvie in the old West London Ethical Society and, later, in the Townswomen's Guild. A personal memoir can be obtained from Mr Blackham at 22 The Avenue, Twickenham, Middlesex.

AROUND THE SOCIETY

☐ The RPA and the BHA have mooted the idea of recreating the Humanist Council to bring the four kindred societies into some kind of stronger and mutually beneficial association. An initial exploratory meeting has been agreed. It might work if there are serious things to talk about and to do. But it will *never* work unless we start by respecting each other's positions. There are some Humanists who go out of their way to deny that religious humanism is possible and so flatly deny the whole history and tradition of *South Place*. If they want *South Place* co-operation they had better do some re-thinking. For our part we don't question the authenticity of rationalism or secularism—we should just like the compliment to be returned, that's all.

☐ The Bring and Buy Sale organised by Ray Lovecy with the help of her husband and a number of members was a success. A cheque for over £30 was handed to the Treasurer.

☐ The Monday class on philosophy—*Human Perfectibility*—tutored by Peter Cronin and organised jointly with the Extra-Mural Department of the University, has just concluded its 24 sessions successfully. It went so well that the students are considering continuing under their own steam! If you are interested (and if it happens) ask me for details. The class has met from 6.30 pm until 8.30 pm in the Library.

☐ The Benefit Concert organised by the London Society of Magicians for

Mrs May Greaves, the widow of Colin Greaves, our late Caretaker, will take place at 7.00 pm on Sunday May 15 in the Large Hall. Colin died as the result of an accident when putting up the curtains for a concert of the LMS. We much appreciate the thoughtfulness of the Society's initiative and hope our own members will come on the 15th. The tickets are £1.50 and £1 available from the office. We are, of course, donating the use of the Hall.

□ You will all be getting the Annual Report and the notice therein of the AGM on May 26. Can we look forward to a good turnout? In some societies the AGM is just a rather boring formality—not so at South Place. It is an important sounding board of members' opinions and all suggestions made there are taken up by the General Committee. Hope to see you then . . .

PETER CADOGAN

DISCUSSION

The Case for the Archbishop

DAVID ASHFORTH, Chaplain of Imperial College, London, set the scene by defining of religion as a framework where in all other elements of experience might be related and understood as a whole. This was the function of theology and the Church in the Catholic Middle Ages.

With Copernicus, Galileo and the Renaissance, however, there was a new cosmology that dethroned theology and made its function one of many foci with the arts, science and more material objectives. As the consequence of this separation of areas of concern, each moving independently with its own rationale, there was no longer any single over-arching theme and impulse as in the Middle Ages.

However, by the 19th century missionaries were convinced that they were taking the light to darkest Africa. There was a new comprehensive compulsion in a Christianity that was bound up with industrial, commercial and scientific confidence and expansion. Interestingly enough, Marxism in its present colonial phase is going through the same motions as the Empire builders of one hundred years ago. Like early Catholicism and later evangelism Marxism claims to explain everything. Thus we may well question what the Russians are doing in Angola, but we are at the same time well advised to remember that we did the same thing in Rhodesia and elsewhere.

The Victorian synthesis, however, broke down partly through the advance of scholarship and science and partly because of the traumatic experience of World War I. Since 1918 (except among Marxists) there has been no overall view of the world but rather as Wittgenstein put it, "a series of areas of discourse". Science, art, theology, sociology, money-making, fashion, sport etc—each as a separate discipline working to its own language rules.

It seemed that life might succeed seen that way. But then one asks, what is the matrix of it all? And the only answer is materialistic self-seeking. Today's values come from TV commercials and the ethics of envy constitute the new social philosophy. We are surrounded by hugh advertising campaigns that invite us to envy those who have more than we have. This is, Mr Ashforth believes, what the Archbishop meant when he declared that we have *not* got an economic problem. We don't suffer from the absence of wealth, but from a degraded attitude towards it. We have

not found any way to make society cohesive other than through self-interest.

This country is controlled and manipulated by a small elite. In political and trade union elections for example, a close study of how candidates are elected shows that the choice is effectively made by only a tiny handful of people.

The problem for us therefore is how not to be a state dependent. How to defend individual and group integrity against continual processing, how to avoid being sheep. Do we join the elite? Do we try to take over the media through which the elite communicates its values to us? The control of the means of communication is certainly central.

David Ashforth gave an amusing example of a Theological College in which a group of people set out to discover where the centre of power was. Theoretically, it was vested in the Principal, when in fact it was vested in his secretary, because he only knew what his secretary allowed him to know and was only able to communicate through her instrumentality.

In David Ashforth's view the strength of Christianity was that ultimately it was not available as a power base for anyone. A good Christian was an eternal dissident and the proper function of the church, as in Chile and Brazil, was to be critical of authoritarian regimes of any kind. On the question of freedom it was quite possible to take a theistic point of view on the grounds that we are allowed to take decisions and obliged to accept responsibility for their consequences. Ours was a pluralistic society and despite its great limitations it was still the best kind of society to be in.

Mr Ashforth recalled meeting one of Wittgenstein's students who remembered his teacher in later years pointing out that language games and discourse are not separate as he had previously been thought to have been. They are linked. And it was a good thing to remember, with Bronowski, that the practice of science can be as creative as the arts or poetry.

It was important to look forward to increasing contact between the separate disciplines of life and reject oppression from whatever quarter it came.

P.C.

(*Summary of a Discussion held on January* 13)

Viewpoint

Love-Hate Marxism?

When Peter answered my question at the time, I did not expect to see a whole page about it in the *Record*!

Marxism may be "received opinion" in many quarters, but I have never been taken in by it. Peter was, so he spent 20 years in coming back to reality—but *does* that justify such bitter hostility? A "love-hate" relationship isn't all hate.

MRS RAY LOVECY

London E4

South Place News

New Members

We have pleasure in welcoming the following new members: Mr R. Dupuis, NW3; Miss A. Steffitt, Middlesex and M. S. W. Wheeler, Newtownabbey, N1.

Sunday concerts

These are suspended for the time being, and restart in October.

Ramble

This month's ramble explores the Trent Park and Ferryhill Farm nature trails. Distance about four miles. Meet John Brown at Oakwood underground station at 2.30 p.m., Saturday, May 8.

Social

We are pleased to have Rose Bush recollecting her years of membership of the Society and other matters, on May 15, the social starting at 3 p.m.

Gathering

There will be an informal social gathering at 6.15 p.m., before the Annual General Meeting on May 26.

Poetry

Reading and discussion, with the Bec Poets and the Puck Poets takes place on May 28, at 8 p.m.

Sunday Special

Mrs Ray Lovecy reports: The "Bring and Buy" on April 4 was well supported and a cheque for £30.90 has been paid in to the Society's funds as a result. Thanks are due to the many members who brought and bought so generously, and especially to the dozen members and friends who helped so well on the tables and with the catering.

It is expected that the proceeds will pay for seven tables for use at the Sunday Forums and Socials.

Kindred organisations

The **Waltham Forest Humanist Group** is holding a public meeting on Abortion, at the Ross Wyld Hall, Church Hill, London E17 on May 14. The meeting starts at 8 p.m., and the speakers are Millie Miller, MP, and David Paintin, of London University.

Continued from page 2

Tuesday, May 18
7.00 pm—**Discussion** introduced by **Dr J. A. A. Nichols.** Subject: **The Psychology of Dying**

Sunday, May 23
11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: H. J. BLACKHAM** on **Do Animals Have Rights?** Tenor solos: David Waters
3.00 pm—**Forum: The Rights and Wrongs of the Multinationals**
6.00 pm—**Bridge and Scrabble**

Tuesday, May 25
7.00 pm—**Debate: "That Changing People is More Important than Changing Society"**

Wednesday, May 26
7.00 pm—**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** preceded by social gathering at 6.15

Friday, May 28
8.00 pm—**Poetry Reading and Discussion**

Sunday, May 30
Spring Bank Holiday, no Meetings

Sunday, June 6
11.00 am—**Sunday Meeting: W. H. LIDDELL** on **The Best History is Propaganda**

South Place Ethical Society

FOUNDED in 1793, the Society is a progressive movement which today advocates an ethical humanism, the study and dissemination of ethical principles based on humanism, and the cultivation of a rational religious sentiment free from all theological dogma.

We invite to membership all those who reject supernatural creeds and find themselves in sympathy with our views.

At Conway Hall there are **opportunities for participation** in many kinds of cultural activities, including discussions, lectures, concerts, dances, rambles and socials. A comprehensive reference and lending library is available, and all Members and Associates receive the Society's journal, *The Ethical Record*, free. The Sunday Evening Chamber Music Concerts founded in 1887 have achieved international renown.

Services available to members include Naming Ceremony of Welcome to Children, the Solemnisation of Marriage, and Memorial and Funeral Services.

The Story of South Place, by S. K. Ratcliffe, is a history of the Society and its interesting development within liberal thought.

Minimum subscriptions are: Members, £1 p.a.; Life Members, £21 (Life membership is available only to members of at least one year's standing). It is of help to the Society's officers if members pay their subscriptions by Bankers' Order, and it is of further financial benefit to the Society if Deeds of Covenant are entered into. **Members are urged to pay more than the minimum subscription whenever possible, as the present amount is not sufficient to cover the cost of this journal.**

A suitable form of bequest for those wishing to benefit the Society by their wills is to be found in the Annual Report.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

TO THE HON. REGISTRAR, SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY
CONWAY HALL HUMANIST CENTRE
RED LION SQUARE, LONDON WC1R 4RL

Being in sympathy with the aims of South Place Ethical Society, I desire to become a Member and I enclose as my annual subscription the sum of

£..... (minimum £1) entitling me (according to the Rules of the Society) to membership for one year from the date of enrolment.

NAME .....
(BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE)

ADDRESS .....

.....

OCCUPATION (disclosure optional) .....

HOW DID YOU HEAR OF THE SOCIETY? .....

DATE ..... SIGNATURE .....

The Ethical Record is posted free to members. The annual charge to subscribers is £1. Matter for publication should reach the Editor, Eric Willoughby, 46 Springfield Road, London E17 8DD, by the 5th of the preceding month.

David Neil & Company Dorking Surrey