

THE



ETHICAL

RECORD

5p

Vol. 77, No. 3

MARCH 1972

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Published by

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Conway Hall Humanist Centre

Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL

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Coming at Conway Hall

Sunday, March 5

11 a.m.—**S.P.E.S. Lecture:** RONALD MASON on *The Genesis and Exodus of Today's writer*. Bass solos: G. C. Dowman

6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice** in the Library. Light refreshments, newcomers welcome.

6.30 p.m.—**Concert** in aid of the Musicians' Benevolent Fund. Georgian String Quartet, James Walker. Beethoven F op. 18 No. 1, Dvorak Piano Quintet

Tuesday, March 7

7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by Ros Kane and Peter Jones. Subject: The Failure of Prisons

Sunday, March 12

11 a.m.—**S.P.E.S. Lecture:** DR. JAMES HEMMING on *The Case Against Pessimism*. Soprano solos: Janet Underhill

3 p.m.—**Humanist Forum:** Catholicism at the Crossroads with Avro Manhattan and Fred Schmidt

6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice**

6.30 p.m.—**Concert:** Lindsay String Quartet. Dittersdorf E flat, Shostakovich No. 6, op. 101, Beethoven F op. 135

Tuesday, March 14

7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by S.T.O.P.P. speaker. Subject: Violence in Schools

Thursday, March 16

6.30 p.m.—**Bridge Drive**

Sunday, March 19

11 a.m.—**S.P.E.S. Lecture:** PROF. HYMAN LEVY on *The Logic of Experience*. Contralto solos: Irene Clements

3 p.m.—**Sunday Social:** Mrs. E. Altmann-Gold on Gold Mining in Austria, illustrated with slides. Refreshments.

6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice**

6.30 p.m.—**Concert:** Virtuoso Ensemble of London. Schubert octet

Tuesday, March 21

7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by Alec Wilding-White and Adrian Liddell Hart. Subject: The Psychology of Punishment.

Sunday, March 26

11 a.m.—**S.P.E.S. Lecture:** T. F. EVANS on *Graham Greene*. Mezzo-Soprano solos: Susannah Ellis

3 p.m.—**Humanist Forum:** Fringe Medicine with Brian Youngs.

6 p.m.—**Bridge Practice**

6.30 p.m.—**Concert:** English String Quartet, John Yewe Dyer. Shostakovich No. 4, op. 83 String Quartet, Mozart E flat K 14 Brahms F op. 88 string quintets

Tuesday, March 28

7 p.m.—**Conway Discussion** introduced by Dr. Martin Bax. Subject: Doctors and the Prevention of War

THE ETHICAL RECORD

(Formerly 'The Monthly Record')

Vol. 77, No. 3

MARCH 1972

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

EDITORIAL

Industrial action and ethics

IT SEEMS IRONIC that as I write the country is in the grip of a strike of coal miners, electricity supplies are threatened by an overtime ban for a better deal, the Fine Tubes Ltd strike goes into its nineteenth month, and there are still more than a million people in Britain unemployed.

It is obvious that the working population is not accepting unemployment as a weapon against their efforts to negotiate a better deal for themselves. But it is equally obvious that some sectors of union membership are just greedy in their demands, though I do not for one moment apply this to the miners. Those in highly-paid jobs are generally members of militant and strong unions, which is how their jobs came to be well paid. Those same unions are the ones who, spurred by past successes, become anxious to do even better, regardless of the effects on the community in the form of rising prices.

Meanwhile, those lower-paid—and often harder-worked—people such as the coal miners, suffer on for many years until they see themselves to be way out of line as regards wages. And then we reach the situation we have today.

What must be the most disturbing aspect of this particular dispute is the violence and indeed the death which has resulted. So far there has been one man killed while picketing, and many other pickets have been arrested for various offences, including violent behaviour.

In other European countries, those employed in nationalised industries have a somewhat special position, since most such industries are not required to make profits, but to serve the community. On the other hand, they have a responsibility, since their deficits are made up from taxation.

The ethics of industrial action, therefore, are profound. The suffering caused by direct action, such as when power supplies are depleted, the consequent effects of settlements, such as price increases, not to mention the incidental violence and unpleasantness as has been witnessed in the miners' strike, cannot satisfy those who are causing them.

While there is still a system in Britain of the bulk of the wealth in the hands of the few, why can we not have a Government-sponsored arbitration body which intervenes in industrial disputes after a given number of unsuccessful meetings between both sides? This would be the fairest thing for the community, and few would then feel uncomfortable about the effects of any settlement reached, since it would have Government approval.

Somehow, sanity must be brought to a mad industrial system which influences greatly the lives of each one of us. And it needs to be done soon.

The Open Society

BY

H. J. BLACKHAM

A HUMANIST philosophy underlies the notion of an open society: man is his own end: each person is an end in and for himself. If so, it is the business of society to allow each of its members to live his own life in his own way, and to endow him with the means to do so. Conversely, it is then the duty of each person to enable society to do this, by co-operation in good faith and with public spirit. The open society is about the due relations between social interdependence and personal independence. In this context it stands for the subordination of society and of culture to personal life, and for the conditions on which this can be done. "In Athens", said Pericles, "we do exactly as we please". He went on to say how this was possible.

The political condition is in the first place a democratic constitution which makes politics practicable. This means not only civil liberties and machinery for free elections to the legislative assembly, but also "open" government in the sense of full information and full consultation before legislation is drafted, and "open" diplomacy in terms of foreign commitments. The principle here is that the social rules for living and working together shall so far as possible be agreed rules, not imposed by some on all, and shall be provisional, stand open to revision by the same procedures. There is a dilemma, in that the public are liable to be insufficiently informed and shortsighted, however "open" government is, and that governments are liable to make wrong assumptions and inept decisions, however freely elected. A solution has to be sought by leaving decision-making authorities responsible for making decisions, but keeping them responsive under continuous pressure to give explanations, justify what they say or do, answer questions, pay attention to representations. Vietnam, on the one hand, and a shopping-basket view of politics, on the other, illustrate the dilemma.

Also in political terms, an open society differs from a plural society in sharing common institutions for all general social purposes, common schools and social services, for example, whilst recognising and protecting diverse cultural patterns of living: it is neither assimilationist nor segregationist, merely open, with no internal frontiers.

In economic organisation, laissez-faire is the obvious form of openness. In practice, however, laissez-faire never was practicable; and insofar as the attempt was made to practise it, Marx's criticism that it involved enslavement of the masses had to be heeded in practice. Malthus, too, has made his voice heard by later generations. The economic plenty that was technically feasible and would bring freedom for all in Marx's vision, has in good measure come without the revolution. But enslavement to technology threatens a new form of the alienation Marx saw. An exclusively economic criterion is not compatible with an open society. Similarly, Malthus is still with us: a mass society through sheer pressure of numbers tends to reduce itself to helplessness, pointlessness, and heedlessness.

In the cultural field the open society displays itself as the "permissive society". This simply means that certain areas are removed from the region of social obligation to the realm of personal choice. No society can be permissive in the sense of abolishing social obligation; but to enlarge as widely as possible the realm of personal choice is a criterion of "openness", if not of civilisation. In the history of Europe, this began with the release of religion from social control—"the magistrate has no jurisdiction over conscience" (Locke). Our society is at present discussing the limits of permissiveness in sexual behaviour. As Wayland Young pointed out in an article in *The Times*, if the door is thrown open one must expect good and

bad to come through, and perhaps in that case the bad will be doubly bad, and that will be the price that has to be paid in order that the good shall be doubly good. Some social control is necessary: people may be allowed to see, hear, do what they like, and at the same time commercial exploitation and public annoyance may be banned or penalised. This approach does attempt to separate the private from the public, which is the basis of an open society. There are then minimal public standards, and whatever private standards are established by the taste of most people.

In the schools the open society has its golden opportunity, for a school in our society may be very largely a self-creating community, and only insofar as it is, does it educate for an open society. An elitist system of education which rejects the many by the exclusively academic standards imposed is obviously out of place in an open society. So is a hierarchical school structure and an authoritarian discipline. Diversity in the curriculum, with an open approach to all subjects and room for new interests; self-directed inquiry and open discussion as main methods of learning; voluntary protection by the school of its own enjoyed activities: these are some of the main characteristics of "openness" in education.

There are in the world tendencies and trends that favour open societies, as there are contrary tendencies and trends, but the conditions are favourable enough to make it worth while to strive for this ideal within national societies and in international relations. For the rationality, sanity, happiness of human beings are at stake. The open society is a main condition of human fulfilment.

(Summary of a lecture given on June 27)

Time and Memory in Marcel Proust

BY

RONALD MASON

IT IS of value in this particular year 1971, the centenary of Proust's birth, to attempt to isolate, from the enormous variety of themes deployed in his monumental novel *A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu*, the crucial use which he makes of the two linked themes of Time and Memory, since it is true to say that not only does he use them in such a way that his book, and in a sense his life, would lack point and purpose without them, but the nature of the illumination that he contrives that they shed on his experience is such as to transform for ever not only the novelist's own imaginative attitude to life, but also every responsive reader's.

Proust in his title made a thing of the word *Time*; the first word of the French text is *Longtemps* ("For a long time", the English version begins "I used to go to bed early"), and the very last is *Temps* (the characters "stand like giants immersed in Time.") The most accurate rendering into English of the title is *In Search of Lost Time*, and Scott-Moncrieff's fine translation would be better with this at the head than the gimmicky Shakespearean echo *Remembrance of Things Past*, which extracts the positive urgency from the idea. But it is very important to remember at the outset that the long chronicle novel is about far more than that; it is about Time, but it is about Identity too, and it is about Society, and about Values, true and false. It is about Illusion and it is about Reality. It is about Love, and very curious Proust's idea of love seems to be. Along with these it is pervasively and desperately about Death; side by side with which it is pervasively and penetratingly about the redemptive nature of Art. It is about the development of an artist's sensibility and the corruption of an ornate and decadent society, and it is most skilfully poised between comedy,

lyricism and tragedy. All these themes and many more are independent of Time and Memory and yet as he shows they are all subservient to them. That is why he is careful to strike the dominant note in the first sentence, and to maintain it with controlled subtlety to the very last.

Thus *Swann's Way*, the first volume, is introduced with a passage about sleeplessness and the oppression of the slowly-passing hours; and we are shown how, in dream or in reverie, places and solid surroundings shift and change under the pressure of tedium, and while ordinary clock-time will continue to tick the moments away in sequence, other dimensions of the imagination invade the consciousness in what the narrator calls "shifting and confused gusts of memory." By careful manipulation of the inevitability of Time and the contrasting volatility of Memory, Proust gently prepares us for the great bravura passage with which the overture to the novel concludes; the central and crucial episode of the *madeleine*, the cake dipped in tea which when the narrator unthinkingly tastes it, visits him, through a trick of the involuntary associative memory, with an unfolding vision of his own past and a great access of creative joy.

This joy and its accompanying illumination are of necessity uncovenanted mercies; they cannot be controlled by the intelligence or the will. This revelation is typically Proustian; it is linked with similar experiences throughout the novel, not only with memory but with moments of sudden ecstasy aroused by the contemplation of casually-perceived objects (the spires of Martinville in *Swann's Way*, the three trees near Balbec in *The Cities of the Plain*:) and is associated likewise with certain more sedulously-conceived products of art, like the "little phrase" in Vinteuil's sonata which is so potent first for Swann and then for the narrator, and the little patch of yellow wall in Vermeer's great painting of Delft which forms the ultimate vision of beauty for the novelist Bergotte. What is insisted upon in all these experiences is the unpreparedness of the subject; "the past", says Proust, "is hidden beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object which we do not suspect"—and I would suggest that when he says "the past" there, he might mean "beauty and truth" as well.

Time and Symbolism

The whole novel is of course a prolonged and studied exercise in *conscious* memory, the deliberate organisation of past experience to a carefully defined end; but he has devised it so that the conscious sequences, that begin with his earliest recollections in Combray, shall derive directly from the involuntary revelations induced by the *madeleine*. And he sees to it that the essential origin of his enormous and complex chronicle of memory, is a highly potent symbol of the Past, Time Past, Lost Time. This is Combray, country town of the narrator's childhood vacations, and branching out from it the great twin images of the two "ways", or country family walks—the Méséglise Way and the Guermites Way, at the same time a commonplace family ritual and two parallel ways of life. Loading these two symbols with the most evocative associations possible, hawthorns, lilac-trees, water-lilies, church spires heraldic banners, he has contrived to present side by side the contrasting elements in human experience, the life of the spirit on the one hand, the attraction of history, tradition, the great world, on the other. He sees in them archetypal Innocence and Experience; and being Proust he sets them at a distance in Time and pumps nostalgia into them like a virulent drug.

He establishes these images in our minds at the outset of the first volume, rich in their implications of beauty and aspiration, promise and hope. In the remaining six volumes (eleven, in the English version) he very deliberately demolishes them. His narrator-hero is sieved through the whole range of chastening educations that Life and Society have to offer—the enigmas of love, childhood adolescent and mature, the illusions of social ambition,

the comedy and tragedy of homosexuality, the relationship between art and the artist, the imminent presence of decay and death. Along with these, especially the last, comes awareness of evil, the fact of corruption. Love fizzles out in possessive jealousy, the brilliance of the social scenes are revealed as nothing but the glittering surface over a moral and spiritual vapidity for which corruption is too positive a word. The genuine virtues of the best characters are violated and perverted by contact; those who had charmed with their brilliance or their generosity are shown up as vicious, self-indulgent, unfaithful; the dignified are degraded by their infatuations, the great artists are paid court to as artists but snubbed and belittled as men. The most conspicuous figure of all, the blue-blooded outsize aristocrat Charlus, a comic figure of Falstaffian proportions, is pitilessly stripped of dignity through his compulsive homosexuality, and left in a state of senile dementia, an obscene travesty of heraldic greatness. The narrator himself, exhausted, hypochondriac, and sickly, has lost his faith not only in his loves and his friends, but in his whole central purpose of existence. The tone of the last volumes is one of pessimism and negation.

Redemption and Recovery

The last volume redeems us. In the previous books Time has appeared to gain a decisive victory; but in *Time Regained*, the culmination of the series, the narrator triumphs. And he triumphs by the use of the devices which he has built up for us during the preceding books so that we are as familiar with them as he is—the device of the involuntary associative memory, the *madeleine* technique. In the course of the long narrative he will be found to have used at least 15 other objects beside the *madeleine* as associative agents; and in the central passage of *Time Regained* he uses at least five of these, one after the other in a kind of breathless hustling sequence. The narrator, in a state of melancholy despair because he feels himself to lack the creative gift, arrives back, after an absence of some years through illness, at an afternoon reception where he is to mix once again with the society he had so regularly frequented in the past; and here his strange receptive mood lays him open to a vivid series of sensations that begin with his stepping on uneven paving-stones in the courtyard and go on through the sound of a spoon in a saucer, the feel of a napkin on his lips, the noise of air in a water-pipe and the title of a book on a shelf, to a cumulative, and by now familiar, sense of wonderful joy and illumination. All of these recall key experiences in his past, quite spontaneously; and his conclusion is that he has been granted a vision of truth outside the domination of Time. These sensations, he believes, are proofs of the power of the human mind to “isolate what normally it never apprehends; a fragment of time in the pure state”; and, proceeding from this he argues that “this minute, freed from the order of time, has re-created in us, to feel it, the *man* freed from the order of time . . . and, situated outside time as he is, what need for him to fear the future? Death has no meaning for him.”

Sacrificial Satire

Suffused with this ecstasy, the narrator confronts, in the form of the guests at the reception, a fearful collection of ageing fashionables, the mundane world unredeemed from Time. This astonishing scene is presented with the techniques of satiric comedy, a sardonic view of a long and scari-fying parade of grotesques surrounded by an atmosphere of cracked gaiety and at the same time invested with the pervasive presence of Death. The likeness to a medieval Last Judgment is inescapable; it is a merciless portrayal of brittle and glittering superficiality of value and behaviour, seen with arresting clarity in the context of destroying Time. In this desolating parade of physical decay and spiritual bankruptcy the life-giving innocence and hope of the Méséglise Way would seem to have been stifled for ever.

The paradox is that the opposite happens. The narrator insists that at the same moment, or during the same long-drawn-out sequence of revelations, he is being simultaneously suffused with a kind of regenerative joy. He realises that the contemplation of his past with all its grim implications is giving him "the only genuine and fruitful pleasure that he had ever known." There and then he traces the source of this mysterious happiness to his realisation that these miraculous revelations can be embodied in Art, and that to create a work of art is the only way open to him to regain Lost Time; that all the material for such a work can be found in his past life. "The essential work of art," he says, "exists in each one of us; it does not have to be invented." He has, in the very same moment in which he has become aware of the omnipotence of Time and Death, recognised the regenerative power of Art. "Art", he says, "is the most real of all things, the most austere school of life, the true Last Judgment." And the word "judgment" arrives with convincing relevance on the heels of the macabre parade in the fashionable drawing-room.

Proust's narrator is converted by this revelation into a creative artist. He is transformed by this vision; he feels that, since through the conscious use of his involuntary memories he can use his own past to illuminate his own present, he has in a manner conquered Time, has subordinated it, has compelled it to his service. He can in a manner now go away and write the book we have just finished reading. His whole novel is therefore an apotheosis of creative art, for only in art can the past be reconciled to the present, and only in art can life seem to conquer death. Whether or not this is philosophically acceptable, and there seems little doubt that Proust thought it was, there can be no doubt at all that Proust made it *poetically* acceptable. He is bitterly convinced of the completely destructive nature of Time, but he believes in the power of human vision, embodied in Art, to contradict and counteract it. For those of us who are not artists there can only be vicarious comfort in this; but Proust was able to enlarge an intuitive conception into a belief that dominated his whole creative experience, with the result that he achieved a magnificent work of art that was crucially therapeutic for himself and a major imaginative illumination for his readers.

(Summary of a lecture given on October 10)

The Poet as Legislator

BY

T. F. EVANS

THE LITTLE-KNOWN seventeenth century Scottish politician, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, won a place in dictionaries of quotations by delivering himself of the statement that "if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation". Probably the successful song-writers make much more money than the legislators do, but I prefer to believe that this worthy Scot had in mind something more than mere money. He was thinking of the effect on national life, on national culture, on national civilisation itself of songs, and by inference, poetry and art generally and suggesting that the effect of these could be deeper, longer-lasting, and probably more beneficial than the effect of laws. At first sight, of course, this idea appears ridiculous. It has always had some appeal, however, and the celebrated phrase in which the actual words "poet" and "legislator" were put side by side makes a very considerable assertion that is at once more precise and more categorical than Fletcher's wry inference.

In the year 1820, the dry, witty, ironic Thomas Love Peacock, minor poet and novelist wrote an essay for a new literary periodical. The title

of his essay was *The Four Ages of Poetry* and it was written on the general theme that, following three ages of iron, of gold and of silver, English poetry in the year 1820 had reached the age of brass. Peacock gave some praise to poets of the preceding ages, to the great Greek and Latin classics, to Shakespeare who receives honourable mention, to the "greatest of English poets, Milton" and to Dryden and Pope, but he had no admiration for Scott, Byron, Southey, Wordsworth or Coleridge. He thought that the poets of his own day were anachronisms. "A poet in our times", he declared, "is a semi-barbarian in a civilised community. He lives in the days that are past. . . The march of his intellect is like that of a crab, backward. . . The highest inspirations of poetry are resolvable into three ingredients: the rant of unregulated passion, the winning of exaggerated feeling, and the cant of factitious sentiment". At the end of the essay, Peacock drew comparisons between the kinds of learning and knowledge that were really useful and those that were merely ornamental. He declared that "the progress of useful art and science, and of moral and political knowledge, will continue more and more to withdraw attention from frivolous and uncondusive, to solid and conducive studies".

Fiery Friendship

Rather surprisingly, Peacock was a friend of the poet Shelley. As well as writing letters to Shelley in Italy, he sent him parcels of books and in one of them he included his essay on poetry. The consequence was predictable. It is certain that Peacock's tongue, or a substantial part of it, was in his cheek. Shelley was in earnest. He said that his friend's "anathemas against poetry excited me to a sacred rage . . . of vindicating the insulted Muses". His vindication was *A Defence of Poetry*. This essay, a noble justification of his way of life, has many of the merits and some of the faults of Shelley's temperament and character. It is passionate and enthusiastic, at times superbly phrased and glowing in its imaginative richness. At other times, it descends into windy rhetoric and, it is more than a little solemn. Nevertheless, it is one of the most impressive statements in defence of poetry that is to be found anywhere. Shelley defined poetry as "the expression of the imagination" and found in the arts, but chiefly in the poetry of language, an analogy with the spirit as the reasoning faculty could be likened to the body. It was poetry to Shelley that sweetened and inspired society and prevented it from degenerating into the state of depravity that would always result from "an unmitigated exercise of the calculating faculty." "While the mechanist abridges, and the political economist combines, labour," said Shelley, "let them beware that their speculations, for want of correspondence with those first principles which belong to the imagination, do not tend, as they have in modern England, to exasperate at once the extremes of luxury and want". In the closing pages, Shelley ascends to almost empyrean heights and assumes a dithyrambic note, "Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world".

It is easy, and some might say, all too easy, to be carried away by Shelley's passion and fervour. It is necessary, however, to try to examine, as calmly as possible, exactly what he tried to say and one way of doing this may be to test the assertions against our own experience. We have had just over a century and a half of what Peacock referred to as "the progress of useful art and science" and we may be able to judge whether we have derived the greatest benefit from this, and whether there has been any corresponding and complementary influence for good wrought by poetry during that time. Some poets, and good ones among them, achieve

a quite extraordinary fame and popularity. In the lifetime of the more mature of those present, there have been perhaps six poets, who have gained a wider reputation than that earned among people who might be expected to be specially interested in poetry. The six are Kipling, Rupert Brooke, Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas and, happily still with us, John Betjeman. (I realise that this list may be somewhat arbitrary: it could include Masefield, Chesterton, Belloc, Hardy and perhaps Auden and Day Lewis. If one wished to extend poetry very widely and take in some actual legislators, one could include such distinguished poets as Q. Hogg-Hailsham, J. E. Powell, Mrs Mary Wilson and J. A. Snow). Some of these have had a wide influence. Kipling's verses have been sung in music-halls and elsewhere, almost literally *ad nauseam*. (Have *Gunga Din* or *The Road to Mandalay* contributed to a wider or deeper understanding of problems of relations between the races?) Of the six named however, three only could be called, by the most elastic extension of the imagination, "trumpets that sing to battle", Kipling, Brooke and Yeats. The description does not apply to Eliot, Thomas or Betjeman. Indeed, it is only necessary to pursue this line of thought for a few minutes to realise that what one might call public, as opposed to private poetry is now very much out of fashion. There is still a Poet Laureate, it is true, but it is very doubtful whether anyone takes that functionary at all seriously. No disrespect to Mr Day Lewis is intended and the remark applies to him in his public personality only. Indeed, mention of Mr Day Lewis calls to mind the stanzas which he wrote as a preface to his translation of the *Georgics* of Virgil, published at the beginning of the last war. With what seems a wry smile, he began his opening verse with the line:

Poets are not much in demand these days
and concluded the verse:

still, it gives us the hump
To think that we're the unacknowledged rump
Of a long parliament of legislators.

The arrival of time, however, when no-one looks for legislation from poets, in the sense of guidance on great questions of the day, declarations of support for revolution in France, or Russia, of support for freedom fighters in Greece or Spain, of encouragement to armies, in South Africa, or in later wars, or for outcries on social and political subjects of a more domestic type, does not mean that Shelley's phrase is entirely devoid of meaning today. There are, after all, private members' bills as well as public measures among legislative enactments. I was listening yesterday to a scholar speaking about the work of a distinguished living poet, Mr Ted Hughes, and one of the things that was said about Mr Hughes was that he conceived it the poet's duty to give us words with which to unlock the many mansions inside the head. Mr Hughes thinks that his poems may be about the split personality of modern man, the one that is behind the constructed spoilt part. When we look at poetry in this way and if we extend our category to include all those artists who try to express the imagination, as Shelley put it, we can see that a great number of the most important writers of the century, from Joyce and Lawrence in English, for example, have been steadily liberating the human mind. The results may be seen in the gradual enlightenment of the community on important matters of personal behaviour and this has extended to the legislators, so that we may say that the poets have legislated by proxy. The gradual movement away from repressive action such as censorship in publishing and entertainment is an obvious example.*

Another direction in which the poets can still legislate is in connection with their own raw material, language. Some critics of social development declare at intervals that we are passing from the age of literacy into the

age of—possibly audio-visual communications. There is much in the approach of those who put forward such theories from which it is possible to learn a great deal, but they go too far when they suggest that language is at an end as a means of communication and go on to say that all our speech or what will pass for speech in future will be in the form of electronic impulses or pop music. In the realm of personal intimacy alone, language still has much to say and it can be argued that language must still be used in public and political communication, or our plight will grow even more desperate. T. S. Eliot, who, in many respects, was not the most forward looking of poets, declared that the poet's task was to purify the language of the tribe. Some poets such as Eliot himself and W. H. Auden have withdrawn from the battle and treated themselves as private contemplative thinkers rather than public bards. This may have been a loss, but they both—and others have done this too—realised that what is said, in private and in public, is conditioned by the language, and the poets have therefore a continuing responsibility. In view of some of the developments of modern communications, the newspapers and other publications and means of entertainment, the poet's responsibility may be greater than ever.

To say this is to accept Shelley's limitation of poetry to expression of the imagination in words. If we extend it to include all the other creative arts, we may have an easier task to prove that the poet can still be a valuable and, indeed, essential legislator. The pressures of money and so-called efficiency in our society are such that without our artists we would have nothing to conserve and nobody would feel like starting conservation societies or movements. The phrase "the quality of life" is used by many people, perhaps including ourselves, who do not think very hard what they mean by it, but I doubt if many here would willingly accept any society in which art was not something more than a mere decoration. The artists and the poets must still lay down some of our laws. I hope that they will not sing us to battle, but I believe that they can still show us how to live. Poets may not be the most successful of legislators but it can hardly be claimed that the professional ones are either.

* A movement in the opposite direction in the field of education is of great interest. In an essay in the first of the notorious education "Black Papers" in 1969, one of the editors, A. E. Dyson, surprisingly a teacher of literature, said that much of what he considered our present troubles was the result of the working of "a bankrupt and dangerous romanticism . . . with its roots in the early nineteenth century or even before". He quoted, "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" (Blake); "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truths of Imagination" (Keats); "Let Nature be your teacher" (Wordsworth). Those who place their greatest reliance on such dubious qualities as "authority" and "discipline" will always find the poets legislating against them.

(Summary of a lecture on November 21)

HUMANIST FORUM

Channel — Bridge or Tunnel?

PETER CADOGAN, who chaired the meeting, stressed the fact that as a non-political Society we did not take votes. We looked out contentious subjects in order to further our personal insights.

Mr. Donald Hunt, arguing the case for the Channel-Tunnel Group, reminded us that the dream of constructing a permanent cross-channel link, whether bridge or tunnel, between Britain and France, had a long history.

As far back as 1802 a French engineer submitted a plan joining these two countries together. In 1878 the French sunk the first shafts of a tunnel for a distance of two kilometres; in 1880 the English followed suit with a tunnel stretching for 2,000 yards towards France. These earlier attempts had to be abandoned because of the prejudice against it of the military and political pundits of the day who regarded the tunnel as giving easy access to marauding bands of soldiery. As Mr. Hunt pointed out, a vision—like a baby—was easy to conceive but difficult to deliver.

However, the tunnel bogey was finally exorcised by Harold Macmillan, who declared that a tunnel would not be affected by modern warfare. In 1957 the present Channel-Tunnel Group came into existence. Engineers of international repute studied all methods of constructing a permanent link—a bridge, bridge-tunnel, railroad-tunnel—all technically feasible. In 1960 they submitted their plan for a twin-railway tunnel. In 1963 a joint working party of British and French officials produced a paper to deal with two proposals: A—a tunnel proposed by the Channel-Tunnel Group; B—a bridge proposed by the Channel-Bridge Study Group—both to be privately financed.

The decision of the Channel-Tunnel Group to promote a tunnel was not because they were disenchanted with bridges but because the estimated cost of the tunnel was half that of a bridge, added to which the type of bridge under review, 230 feet above sea-level and supported by 150 concrete piers for a length of 22 miles, would create 140 additional hazards to shipping in the already congested English Channel. The channel is used by 80 maritime nations—one of which is Russia—whose permission has to be obtained before construction could even be thought of. It was clear that the Shipping Court at the Hague would be kept busy for a year.

Escalating Estimates

In 1960 the estimated cost of a bridge was approximately £250,000,000; in 1963 it had risen to £300,000,000. The present day cost of a tunnel was £130,000,000; in 1973 it was expected to rise to between 250 and 300 million pounds. The cost of a bridge of *avant garde* design as well as a man-made island which the Bridge Group now proposed was likely to be well over £800,000,000.

He found the views of Mr. Roger Lascelles as expressed in a recent article, "I want to feast my eyes on mile upon sweeping mile of glittering waters and the spectacle of ships from the four corners of the earth moving at my feet", highly imaginative and entertaining, but impractical. We had to face up to the harsh, economic realities. There was no doubt that a tunnel was the cheapest, safest way to replace the present air-ferry service.

Mr. Lascelles, speaking for the Bridge Group, admitted to imperfections in the bridge project submitted in 1960; its design was antiquated; any level-headed schoolboy could have done better. For instance, the spans under the main sea lanes were hopelessly inadequate and a hazard to shipping even before the era of bulk carriers.

But engineering practices had advanced; it was grossly unfair to judge the bridge project, not on its own merits, but in the light of the 1963 report.

The present bridge proposal, incorporating a well-designed and substantial mid-channel island, altered the whole situation. Firstly, the island would show up the precise location which was now an area of hazard; seamen would be able to navigate with better effect and small craft would never be more than five miles away from a harbour. The island would form an excellent half-way point for a major international bridge, both during construction stage and after completion, be both a mooring and discharge point for bulk carriers and passenger vessels. It had possibilities as an industrial area and a discount zone in a Europe converted to free trade. Laser lighthouses—the greatest invention of the decade—would be erected in every corner of

the island. Given substantial height, such as a bridge would afford, these lights would be seen 40 miles away at night. The piers would be floodlit and in bad weather ships would be talked through the various shipping lanes.

Mr. Lascelles condemned the niggardliness of two Governments which spent millions on a project like Concorde and then hesitated about costs involved in a concept which could compare favourably with one of the seven wonders of the world. Besides, estimating the costs of the bridge without taking into account its revenue-earning potentialities, was worse than unfair. The number of car-owners was increasing; the tourist trade, both to and from the Continent, was expanding. Provided the toll fee was kept to a moderate £5 which would be well within the pockets of the poorer and enable the rich to take fleeting trips, either to shop or even dinner, the bridge would become a paying project in no time. The theoretical economists, in counting the higher cost of the bridge as against the lesser sum of a tunnel, lost sight of the human factor of patronage. Countless men and women would rather stay at home than go through a subterranean tunnel of between 30 and 40 miles in length with eight trains in front, any one of which could break down, leaving them trapped in the stifling heat.

Mr. Lascelles ended his address with an impassionate plea for the imaginative as against expediency, the ennobling against mediocrity.

Mr. Willem Frischmann, who spoke in support of Mr. Lascelles, said that enough changes had happened since 1963 for the Minister of Transport to re-study both the tunnel and bridge projects to see which was best. He believed that a bridge with two-mile spans and one supporting pier would decrease costs—in shallow waters, smaller spans for smaller boats.

The island in centre could become the capital centre of Europe, both culturally and commercially; big ships could berth and oil tankers have a refinery there.

As Mr. Hunt had two speakers against him, he was given a chance to reply. He reiterated that in his view the International Court would not permit more hazards to shipping. There have been cases where light ships have collided with structures such as the bridge. As for the eulogising about the bridge, it was rather surprising that the protagonists were against Concorde which was after all also a tremendous technological break-through.

From the floor, Dr. Lovecy wanted to know how many fog days there were in a year over the channel.

Mr. Lascelles replied that there was fog mostly in winter and autumn but that the sea mist was below bridge height.

Mr. Rankin, also from the audience, supplied a few more facts. A Trinity House navigational survey showed an average of 30 to 40 fog days per annum. There was a lot of foul weather in the Dover Straits so that he was a bit doubtful about the "glittering sun". He thought the laser lighthouses a bit of a red herring as the existing ones were sufficient, although something in the middle could be helpful. Ventilation in a tunnel could very well be a problem. Lorry traffic would increase if the island were used as a port and Euro-City may well become a pollution centre. Perhaps the permanent link should be a combination of bridge and tunnel and not be thought of as one versus the other.

TINA DELIUS

(Report of a Humanist Forum held on May 23)

Meet the Movement

Owing to insurmountable technical difficulties caused by the national power crisis it is not possible to include the interview with Richard Clements, O.B.E. this month, in the Meet the Movement Series. This is being held over with the intention of publishing it next month—*Ed.*

For the Record

BY

THE GENERAL SECRETARY

The Importance of Talking

Some people have sometimes criticised "South Place" for being a "talking shop". They might be better advised to criticise themselves for not seeing the importance of talking! Our English empirical tradition puts all the emphasis on *action* with the result that those who want to *reflect* often get put down as armchair philosophers. This is a dangerous business. If you happen to be in a cul-de-sac, and don't stop to reflect, the only possible outcome is a lethal collision! Since collision-course seems to be our general condition today it could be that what this country needs is something like a "South Place" in every community. The churches and political parties used to fill this need but now no longer do so; and further, the enormous complex of voluntary societies on which so much of our social health depends, is again under the same practical constraint to produce instant action without proper reflection.

There are at least two important positive features about talking shops. Firstly they are meetings of people, much the same people, over a period. This does not call for any justification since person-to-person communication is an end in itself—it is very much what life is all about.

When people who like each other (by and large!) meet to talk about subjects that they find of interest (more or less!) they go out happier than when they came in and better prepared to face the world outside. If the thing really gets going their society becomes a base for all kinds of relationships and projects that then take on an independent existence. And so it is that every good society is also a marriage mart and a place where the children of those marriages can be helped to find their philosophy and their social feet over the years. "South Place" looks back over nearly 200 years of family tradition.

The second feature of a good talking shop is its instrumentality in devising a workable, satisfying and cementing personal and social philosophy. For two years this month I have been presiding over our lectures and discussions and it is clearly apparent to me that we are already a long way along the highroad to a common consciousness. I doubt if we could get this down in black and white yet but it is fascinating to see the way in which our regular members get stuck into the discussions with vigour and panache while visitors sit in tongue-tied silence.

One doesn't want to spoil a good cause by overstating it however, and it remains true that if thinking does not ultimately lead to action it will be pointless. But the key word there is "ultimately". It is the thinking that is the prerequisite of the *quality* of the action. When we have met and done our talking and gone home or to work, then in industry, commerce, the professions, as citizens and in our personal relations we apply our thinking and feelings to objectives and work in hand. We are then the better primed according to the value of the priming in the first place.

The Humanist movement seems to be missing its chances all too often. We can afford to be really ambitious in filling the church-and-state vacuum. If we were to think, as Humanists, more about humans and less about "government" we might get somewhere. It seems that only two local Humanist groups in the whole of Britain have premises of their own—that is ourselves and the Leicester secularists. This is an appalling confession to have to make; and all three houses for the elderly recently set up by the Humanist Housing Association are in London. It occurred to me when at the Christmas Party at Rose Bush Court that its excellent little Common-

room had the makings of a first class talking shop. Why not construct houses for the elderly all over Britain with talking-shop facilities built in?

Coming to Conway Hall

Some time ago Richard Hoggett said on TV that he had stopped reading books by English writers since they had nothing to say—all his reading was of Americans. That was a pretty shattering indictment and it will be Ronald Mason's subject on the 5th. Mr. Mason lectures in English for the Extra Mural Board of London University. Dr. James Hemming has provided a challenging title for the 12th—The Case Against Pessimism, and our old friend Professor Hyman Levy, back in good health and fresh from a four-part autobiographical series on "the box" will be with us on the 19th; Tom Evans on the work of Graham Greene on the 26th. Graham Greene is of course a Catholic but writes novels without any suggestion of special pleading. Are things so now mixed up that we have Catholic humanists? We certainly have "Christian humanists".

The Catholic Corpus Christi College in London was set up some years ago for mature Catholics from all over the world and it has been a storm centre for the past few months as Catholic radicals struggled for freedom with Catholic authoritarians. Fred Schmidt, a Canadian teacher, was co-author of the letter to the *Guardian* that helped to make the whole thing public and he will appear on our platform with that controversial writer Avro Manhattan who pulls no punches when it comes to confronting the Vatican.

The Tuesday theme for the month is "Fear, Violence and Punishment". Ros Kane was a founder of Radical Alternatives to Prison. Peter Jones is an ex-prisoner. Alec Wilding-White was trained as a barrister, went into industry then over to drama and art therapy and has worked in Pentonville and Holloway. Adrian Liddell Hart, son of the great military historian and theoretician, has visited many prisons both in this country and abroad. The subject of violence in schools will be introduced by a speaker from STOPP, the society of teachers opposed to physical punishment in schools. Dr. Martin Bax is a member of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War.

Finally the Forum on the 26th. This will be on "Fringe Medicine" and it turns out to be such a big and important subject that we shall return to it later as the theme for the month on Tuesdays. This first meeting is to open up the subject as a whole. It is an interesting reflection that both organised religion and Humanism since the end of the nineteenth century have been closely related to health matters.

PETER CADOGAN

BOOK REVIEW

Scientific Knowledge and its Social Problems

Scientific Knowledge and its Social Problems, by J. R. Ravetz. (Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press: £5.00 hard cover).

READING DR. RAVETZ'S book has recalled the keen interest and pleasure he aroused when he lectured at Conway Hall last May. Once again the genuine character of his knowledge, and of his concern for his subject, serve to engage our attention from the beginning of this penetrating study.

In effect, he takes on the bold task of examining, as a surveyor, the whole edifice of science. Huge and imposing as seen from outside, it is still being

extended at such a rate that some of its occupants are afraid it may collapse under its own weight. Dr. Ravetz, by directing our attention more closely to the intricate fabric of the structure, enables us to see vital points where support from other sources must be brought in, not merely to keep it up but in order to serve the best interests of mankind.

Of course, he does not resort to any such imagery, nor does he attempt the impossible task of schematising science by fields, disciplines, or the like, with all the attendant anomalies of basic, theoretical, pure, technical, applied, and so on. Instead, science is seen to comprise a vast and changing collection of fragments, relating to each other like the debris on a stony beach rather than the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Accordingly, his opening chapter, "What is Science" gives simple guidance in a common-sense process of research towards understanding the question, and how it is that simple answers are not adequate.

"We are all grateful for the comfort and security of life that is achieved by modern technology . . . (and accept) the claim that all these good things are the by-products of scientific research . . . (also) reliance on textbooks for such personal crafts as rearing children and even achieving a happy married life." BUT, "what the general public appreciates . . . (not what the scientists are doing) . . . can be classed under two headings. The first (techniques) is the collection of devices that make life easier to live, or the destruction of life more efficient. The second (natural magic) is the production of strange and wonderful effects without recourse to supernatural agents . . . the manned exploration of space is the best example."

Equally clear, of course, is the dependence of science upon the general public for its vital resources in men and materials. This is the complementary aspect of the social place of science, and from it arises the crudest form of the problem of social responsibility. The reader probably knows this crude issue already—it is the basis of the Rothschild report with its insistence on a customer/contractor principle to regulate funds for research. Roughly this agrees with the broader statements in this book—

"To the extent that industrialised science depends on large-scale investment from industry and the State, it must be responsible to those institutions."

The difference is that Dr. Ravetz perceives a deeper problem, the danger of degeneration if higher purposes are neglected—

"To the extent that science becomes organised around the service of commercial and military industry, it will be subject to the criticisms of being dirty work. Attempts by leaders of science to conceal this connection . . . will accomplish nothing but a further decline in the prestige and morale of science."

In a large measure, the growth of industrialised science has overthrown the ethical standards desirable in the social relationships of science; viewed historically, the ethically-neutral search for scientific truth has become warped to selfish ends. At base, the process of change is attributed by Dr. Ravetz to economic factors (cost of facilities, proprietary value of results, career value of prestige, influence of administrative and business procedures, etc.) and he gives a perceptive and lucid account of the abuses which occur. Looking back to quotations from Helmholtz in the same chapter, the reader can see well enough how the faith of 1893 has fallen into decay—

"Let each of us think of himself, not as a man seeking to gratify his own thirst for knowledge, or to promote his own private advantage, or to shine by his own abilities, but rather as a fellow-labourer in one great common work bearing upon the highest interests of humanity."

The general nature of science, and the severity of the moral problems it has led to are thus made clear in Part I as a foundation for more intensive examination of what is involved. At this point, because I admire the work, it seems desirable to redress the balance in one particular. On the evidence, it is science which has been rendered corrupt by the immoral influences present in society; the search for truth remains ethically neutral, but men are drawn away from it by social deterrents, ranging from unjust rewards to fear of misuse (for instance, James Shapiro, footnote p.56). In singling out this one issue for comment, I am not asserting that it has no recognition in the book, but simply that it merits emphasis to match its importance in the total scheme.

Achievements Acclaimed

For practising scientists no less than other readers, the contents of Part II, on The Achievement of Scientific Knowledge, provide an intellectual feast of the finest quality. As such, it is impossible to do it justice in a review which can lay no claim to authority. Basically, the task undertaken and carried out superbly is to discern in the total social activity those processes which yield scientific knowledge, and to describe the work whereby the practitioners as individuals are responsible for data, whilst collectively responsible for the re-working into information out of which scientific knowledge is, in time, obtained.

It is only fair to add that many who find these brief remarks arid and repellent would probably enjoy much of the actual text, taken on a "dip and skip" basis.

It is in Part III, Social Aspects of Scientific Activity, that ethical questions loom large, for instance the requirement for reconciling the collective purposes with the private interests of the agents concerned. Consideration must be given to the various kinds of "property" created by scientific endeavour, ranging from the prestige of the innovator to the technical know-how bought and sold as a manufacturers' commodity. Attitudes to novelty, contesting or welcoming new ideas, shed light on the motives of individuals and of "schools". Finally, the very difficult but vital matters of controlling the quality of scientists' work, and the ethics and professional standards of scientists generally, are dealt with.

Problems and Functions

Part IV, Science in the Modern World, provides in the first place an illuminating discussion of the distinction between scientific problems (concerned with general advancement rather than an allotted function to be performed) and those which are technical (to perform a stated function) or practical (directly serving a human purpose). After detailed studies of each group in turn, an account is given of fields of enquiry which are "immature" or "ineffective"; this includes observations on pseudo-sciences and folk-science, putting some hallowed topics into an amusing light:—"Economics is doubtless the folk-science of all those committed to an economy planned in any degree".

Finally Part V gives a recapitulation, a historical perspective cautioning against simplistic predictions, and some forecasts tempered by the author's wisdom in this respect. Difficult as it is to make a choice, and although Dr. Ravetz concludes by quoting Francis Bacon, the following may be taken as a fair sample of his message:—

"Now the threats to human welfare and survival made by the runaway technology of the present provide opportunities for . . . beneficial research in a wide range of fields; and the problems there are as difficult and challenging as any in academic science . . . The response to this peril is rapidly creating a new sort of science: critical

science . . . The work of enquiry is largely futile unless it is followed up by exposure and campaigning; and hence critical science is inevitably and essentially political . . . It is like the politics of the Enlightenment, where a small minority uses reason, argument, and a mixture of political tactics to arouse a public concern on matters of human welfare."

This book of 436 pages is a work of true scholarship, remarkably discerning and thorough in its treatment of a complex and increasingly controversial subject. As such it could be of very great importance if all who profess to guide our affairs, and others who care for the future, would pause to read and ponder as a change from lead and pontificate. Obviously it is not a panacea-book, but in reading it I often thought—this bit should be compulsory reading for U. Bigshott. Possibly this bit of my review should be compulsory reading for Dr. Ravetz, first to express gratitude for his work, and then to suggest to him that the urgent need for Social Responsibility in Science is traceable to an equally real need in commerce, in industry, in politics, even in education both secular and religious. In the aggregate, the need is for a Science of Social Responsibility, or, in one word, Ethics.

DR. A. LOVECY

Your Viewpoint

Abolish church schools!

The British Humanist Association is organising a campaign to desegregate our educational system by turning church schools into county schools. We are writing a pamphlet on church schools which we hope will contain first hand evidence of conditions in these schools.

We would welcome information from teachers, parents and pupils on religious indoctrination in church schools, disregard of parents' and childrens' rights, problems in single schools areas, and any other experiences; also general information on the numbers of church schools in different areas, copies of schools brochures etc., etc.

Will anyone who can help please write to:—

PATRICIA KNIGHT,
Abolish Church Schools Project Group,
37 Crofters Mead,
Courtwood Lane,
Croydon CRO 9HS.

That book

At the end of a recent Humanist Forum which I attended the Chairman (our General Secretary), in the course of giving out the notices of our Society, announced that we had sold a large number of copies of *The Little Red Schoolbook*.

Quite apart from the section in respect of which it was prosecuted, this is a contentious book. It calls for such "freedom" in schools as to amount almost to anarchy and it has been strongly attacked by a number of responsible professional teachers and their organisations who have said that their work would be seriously impaired if some of the ideas propounded were introduced in schools in the ways suggested.

And the book is by no means politically balanced. The only recommended books on the last page (208) are: Fidel Castro: *Major speeches*; Amílcar

Cabral: *Revolution in Guinea*; Eldridge Cleaver: *Revolution in the Congo* and Che Guevarra: *Socialism and man in Cuba*.

Hardly a mind opening list! Indeed it is a list of extreme left wing revolutionary writings.

I appreciate that, as a Society, we try to provide a wide forum for the expression of views. I wonder however whether the General Committee and the members as a whole approve of this change in the general direction of our affairs and I should be grateful if you would air the matter in our journal. It is important that we should have an enthusiastic active General Secretary but our activities must not distort the function and responsibilities of the South Place Ethical Society whose tasks do not, in my view, include the propagation of Anarchism and pushing the circulation of anarchist and extreme left wing revolutionary literature.

R. T. REED

London, S.E.21

The General Secretary replies:

The general tone of *The Little Red School Book* is warm, friendly, intelligent and understanding. Its conclusion is that "teachers and pupils ought to work together for change. There doesn't have to be conflict between them". But, unhappily, there is conflict because of the very system that teachers have to operate and which drives so many of them to the point of nervous breakdown or to the abandonment of the profession. It is that system that is criticised.

Last year we had an Education Study Group that met for many weeks and produced some useful documents on the humanist approach to the teaching of social philosophy and sex. In the course of these meetings we met Richard Handyside and read the LRSB. It seemed to all concerned that the press had treated the book most unfairly. It is very important that we be governed by the evidence and not the shallow judgements of the sensationalising press. We had some criticisms to make but this did not effect the substance of the case.

For many years I was a teacher in secondary modern schools and I can vouch for the general accuracy of the book, criticism of the system and the usefulness of the many constructive suggestions that it makes. The book also provides, may I add, the best indictment of drug-taking that one is likely to find anywhere. It does this in no less than 33 pages of careful examination of the facts—enough to put anyone off.

The book's outlook is, of course, radical but there is no mention of politics except in relation to education and then only in the most general terms: "the system is controlled by the people who have the money".

The reference to books on the last page is not part of the main text of the book. It is the English publisher's "plug" for his own wares and it would have been better if it had been left out. The book was, of course, originally written in Denmark and then translated and amended to fit English conditions.

The Editor adds: The book referred to is freely available to children in Denmark, where it originated, and in Sweden and I think Germany too. It is we, the British, who are backward in dispensing freedom.

South Place and Religion

I find Dr. Lovecy's argument in the January *Record* very persuasive. Religion, God and atheist are words which are almost entirely devalued. No two people are likely to agree on any precise definition of the first two and in view of this the third becomes practically meaningless. I don't myself like the term 'religion' because I was brought up at a time when it had a very definite meaning with which I was not in sympathy. Now religion no longer need be theistic; to more and more people it signifies no more

than one's personal belief whether in Christianity, Marxism, Humanism or in just the need for human kindness as a relief from political bickering.

As S.P.E.S. for legal reasons has to live with the word 'religion', we might as well come to terms with it and evolve an interpretation of it which fits our principles. When we can persuade the Law to accept this we shall be in a much more secure position than we are at present. Of course this need not impede our right to be critical of beliefs we do not hold.

PERCY SOWTER

Shenfield, Essex

● While I admire Dr. Lovecy's dialectical ingenuity. I cannot accept his contention that "religion as commonly understood is no longer a useful concept". I suspect he has an unconscious "humpty dumpty" attitude towards the words he uses. His analogy can be easily turned against him. Nourishment as commonly understood may apply to a wide variety of different foods but, apart from the dietetic concepts he outlines, it surely connotes *eating*! So, likewise, religion as commonly understood connotes *worship*—of a god or supreme being (e.g. Buddha), belief in some kind of continued existence after death and generally a willingness to accept belief in supernatural events. Ought we to use the word "religion" to mean something quite different?

Nor can I agree that S.P.E.S. did not have its origin "in a negation" for as I understand it, it began as a body of religious people who rejected the doctrine of hell. It has since gone on to reject, one by one, all the other doctrines which made it a religious body at all, piling negation on negation until there was nothing left.

If we define our purpose as joining together in fellowship 'to strengthen and advance the moral stature of man', how does one justify describing this as "religious"? Dr. Lovecy argues that this is an "urge" which is "the one factor most nearly common to all forms of religion". I question this. The factor common to all forms of religion is not a moral urge but a feeling of reverence to supernatural beings superior to mankind and an "urge" to worship. I do not believe you can exclude beliefs about the nature of reality and the origin of the universe from a definition of religion, unless of course you start using the word to mean something wholly different from what it means, and has always meant, to the overwhelming majority of men and women.

Admittedly this is an entirely semantic argument. What, after all, do the words mean? What do any words mean? All I contend is that words are a means of communication between human beings, that they are useless unless they mean the same thing to those who use them and, if this is accepted, then "religion" means, not just a moral code but also a set of beliefs of a particular kind about the world and life.

J. STEWART COOK

Windsor, Berks.

Fundamentals

The piece on fundamentalists in the October *Record* does not express with sufficient force the *baleful influence* of those who accept every word in the bible literally. Whereas later chapters of Genesis may give rise to some interesting clues about prehistory, the notion of Fixed Creation has been and, even to this day, remains a stumbling block to progress in Science. It essentially denies Evolution not only in Biology but also in other sciences. While Catholics and Protestant Fundamentalists out of expediency (morals are "purely prudential") teach syllabus evolution in schools, even saying "it is their teaching, not ours", their attitude and inability casts a damp blanket on the whole outlook of scientific endeavour. This makes it difficult for the young to appreciate the creative force of the idea, which applies to atoms

and stars as well as to animals and plants. Such an attitude may even contribute to rendering the behaviour of pupils difficult.

I have seen the activity of the fundamentalists in a large school in Tanzania where much resentment was caused among pupils and Tanzanian staff; there was even discrimination against the Catholics. Given a proper chance, the local staff and pupils would, without doubt, be able to solve the agrarian and other social and technical problems of their country.

Oxford

JARVIS CRESPIN

Money matters

It is gratifying to learn from Mr. G. K. Young, evidently an apologist for the current school of economic thinking, that Major C. H. Douglas was a rational thinker whose views were worthy of consideration in the highest quarters. This is a considerable advance brought about, one may suppose, by the abject failure of the classical theories to preserve the least appearance of financial honesty or economic success. Money that has lost 87% of its value this century cannot boast of much virtue.

Critics of all monetary reform fly as by instinct to that old favourite, Government expenditure, as the pernicious cause of inflation. And what good use the banks make of such new securities, Mr. Young, for themselves. What a nice base for a pyramid of new credit? This righteous indignation by the defenders of Sound Finance reminds one of the advice received by the Select Committee Sub-Committee visiting America to enquire into the Federal Reserve Bank. The professional stewards of financial rectitude gave this priceless advice to their visitors: "All Governments, if sufficiently pressed for money, would tend to print money rather than tax. The Federal Reserve System is a curb on the irresponsibility of a Government, a curb on this indiscriminate power to print money" (p. XC par. 9, Report 258)

Monetary reformers are up against this congenital belief in the virtue of the present system and the battiness of its critics to the extent shown in the above outpouring of wisdom from the very fount of all financial wisdom—the Federal Reserve System. And what could be more nonsensical?

Mr. Rands has shown in simple straightforward logic how inefficient and indeed obstructive the present money system is and what are its evil social consequences. All money under the present system is borrowed from the banking system. Though the currency is printed under delegated powers from the Crown, *all* is in the end, borrowed from the banking system and carries a hire charge notwithstanding the fact that the State alone possesses the legal power to print money. (Q.1131) Is not this in direct breach of the law by which the State possesses this sovereign power alone? But that does not end the scandal. Q. 77 elicited the reply that "the note issue is a relatively small part of the money supply . . ."

This reply is on Treasury authority. We see therefore that although the State alone possesses the legal right to create money—and presumably use it itself without paying someone else tribute for its use—other institutions have created the remaining volume of money, consisting of course of credit. By what legal right therefore has this been done? And what are its inevitable consequences?

The inevitable consequence is debt, national debt and private debt, in ever escalating degree, growing at compound rate, by a private banking system which must create universal debt and set itself up as creditor to the whole.

The enormous flow of money back into their system in payment of interest makes a distribution of adequate purchasing power impossible. This is what the $A + B$ Theorem sets out to show in a mathematical way, but the falsity of the system is apparent from the above reasoning, and the clear explanation given by Mr. Rands. Argument may well take place around the mathematical presentation of proof, but no such mathematical proof is required in reality. If a State is foolish enough to allow banking to create money

by book-keeping processes, then by this false accountancy system it is but a matter of time for the State and its people to lose all title to wealth. This point has now been reached, in all probability, hence the enormous indebtedness to which the author makes reference.

A. M. WADE

Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset

South Place News

New members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members: Michael Richard Brett-Crowther, Co. Durham; Sandra Childs, N.15; Terry Alan Davis, E.8; Mrs. Betty Dawidowicz, S.W.7; Frank Dunn, S.W.4; Vera Hickmott, Teddington; Erica Jakobs, N.6; Miss Linda Kitson, S.W.7; Donald E. Lane, N.10; Joseph McClintock, E.17; Wolf Nelki, S.W.12; Mrs. Valerie Medina, N.W.9; Julian Sheen, W.5 and Charles Frederick Sherry, Ilford, Essex.

Literary lapse

Our library in Conway Hall is a great asset, but over the years it has been used so much that books borrowed or browsed have not always been correctly replaced. The result is that a good deal of cataloguing and sorting out now needs to be done, and we are looking for volunteers. The work would probably be carried out on Saturday afternoons, though the library is attended by Mrs. Altmann-Gold on Sundays. Anyone willing to spend some time in this very necessary work should contact Mrs. Altmann-Gold or the General Secretary at Conway Hall.

Out and about

The possibility of organising a Sunday coach outing during the summer is being investigated by the Social Committee. At this stage, we only wish to find out how many people would be interested. Anyone who might wish to join in such an outing is requested to let Rose Bush or the General Secretary know at Conway Hall.

March ramble

The next ramble will be held on Saturday, March 4. It will include a visit to the Soane Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, followed by short walk in the area. Meet leader, Dr. S. Crown, in the vestibule at Conway Hall, at 1.45 p.m.

Theatre Visit

Mrs. Altmann-Gold is arranging a theatre party for Saturday, March 26, to see "Say Who You Are" at the Tower Theatre. The curtain rises at 7.30 p.m. Contact Mrs Altmann-Gold or the General Secretary at Conway Hall for tickets, at 40p or 50p.

South Place, poetry and prisons

If that seems an unlikely heading then it is because poets George Griffiths and Malcolm Peltu, regular readers at our poetry and music evenings, have been to jail—Reading Gaol in fact—where they had a really captive audience!

Their first visit was last August and their second, by special request, just before Christmas. They were very well recieved. With them went Mahmood Jamal, Pat Miller and Steve Scott, all of whom have also featured in the Conway Hall evenings. Next they go to the London Hospital to read and sing at the nurses home.

We expect that the next evening of poetry and music in the Library will be in March. The date was not fixed at the time of going to press so will members and friends interested ring Margaret Pearce at the office

and she will tell them about it. She and George Griffiths are responsible for the organising. It would be useful, too, to have a short mailing list of those specially interested.

Sunday socials

The March Sunday Social is on the 19th. Mrs. Altmann-Gold is giving a talk, illustrated with colour slides, on a gold mining village in Austria. Tea is at 3 p.m.

For April, there will be a poetry reading session. It will be necessary to organise it well in advance, so anyone wishing to read their favourite poetry, or their own poems, should contact Rose Bush at Conway Hall, to help with programme arrangement.

Kindred organisations

In order to help pay for increased services, the **Independent Adoption Society** is appealing for funds, and has published a brochure outlining its work and giving examples of what can be done. Anyone interested in obtaining a brochure, or wishing to make a donation should contact the society at 160 Peckham Rye, London, S.E.22.

The **Workers' Education Association** is organising a tour of Westminster on Saturday, March 18 at 3 p.m. Mr. Will Farrah will conduct the party around the Cathedral, Westminster Hall, Westminster School and Lambeth Palace. The meeting point is Westminster Underground station.

The series of fortnightly meetings held by the **National Secular Society** at the Clarence Hotel, Whitehall, continues in March with a debate on corporal punishment in schools, on March 3, a talk by Nigel Sinnott on Irish freethinkers on March 17 and David Tribe on The Decline of the Intellectual. All meetings commence at 8 p.m. The N.S.S. Annual Dinner is at the Paviour's Arms, Page Street, Westminster on March 26 at 7.30 p.m. The Guest of Honour is Helen Brook.

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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, 75p p.a.; Life Members, £15.75p (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 75p) 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 75p. Matter for publication should reach the Editor, Eric Willoughby, 46 Springfield Road, London, E.17, by the 5th of the preceding month.