

The Real Liberal Philosophy

By FRANK DUPUIS

"Mankind has not reached its present state of development by being organised . . ."



IN HIS PROFOUND and thought-compelling book, *Freedom—The Only End*, Mr. McEachran, after a review of some outstanding nineteenth century philosophers, remarks: "The philosopher who really understands economics has not yet been born." After reading it, the present reviewer would venture the opinion that the book refutes this remark. It is essentially a philosophic work; it gives a clear outline of economic law and it reveals the basic importance of this to any comprehension of the whole scheme of things, of which philosophy is the study.

This book is both universal and up-to-date. It faces the eternal questions of personal and social life (which are inseparable), and in doing so brings to bear an impressive grasp of earlier experience and contributions to knowledge together with the discoveries of modern science and the speculations of contemporary thought. Its readability should help to give it the circulation it deserves. The reader is not overwhelmed with detail or puzzled by obscure terms. Neither need he be deterred by lack of philosophic knowledge. The essentials only are presented, in brief compass and in clear language. Here is a genuine scholar writing not for other scholars only but for any sincere person seeking the truth of the matter.

Mr. McEachran says some surprising things about the concept of the state, and those writers whose investigations of an idea stop short as soon as they can give it a familiar label might cite him as an anarchist. But those who, deliberately or instinctively, strive to harmonise their reasoning with the innate urge to be free, will find the strongest evidence to sustain them against the prevailing forces now herding us towards the collectivist prison. Those called Georgeists should be especially grateful. Labels, though inevitable, are never satisfactory. Georgeists can be presented by superficial critics as persons with one-track minds anchored to the conceptions of a tax reformer bounded in his ideas by his own time and place. Land-value taxation with free trade can stand on its own merits as a practical proposition, but its advocates, including those before and others independent of Henry George, would never have laboured so persistently if they had not seen it as an indispensable step towards human liberation. Tolstoy, with all the sincerity of his deeply religious approach, emphasised this. Now comes Mr. McEachran from a perhaps more universal angle and with the authority of later knowledge.

The author emphasises that men, ever since the existence of organised governments, have been affected in their

development by compulsions that obscure perception of their essential environment and pervert the course of their thought and actions. Philosophers examining mankind only when subjected to government or enforced co-operation have failed to notice that there are natural, instinctive laws of human co-operation governing all man's actions; for man is a social animal and could not exist in isolation. These laws govern not only his production and exchange, his revenue, personal and social, but also his higher development; for he is at once a physical, mental and spiritual being, all these elements acting and reacting upon each other. Mankind has not reached its present stage of development by being organised but by the extent to which natural instincts have been allowed free play. These instincts can never be permanently suppressed, although the efforts to do so may pervert them; they will always struggle to reassert themselves.

Therefore if we are concerned with man's evolution to a higher and happier condition, the question is not how people in any society should be organised but how they can be left to develop themselves under natural law. This is not anarchy but obedience to a wiser law than any group of rulers, whatever their motives, could devise. The popular, emotional appeal of world government as a panacea leads in the wrong direction. It would close the gates now sometimes open to escape from a greater to a lesser tyranny and prevent comparison between one type of organisation and another.

"I would remind the emotionalists of today," says Mr. McEachran, "of an old ideal to which, from time immemorial, emotion of the purest kind has been linked. This is the ideal of liberty, which throughout the centuries has inspired so much devoted action on the part of men. Liberty is more than just the song of poets and the words of statesmen, even though in these it is already noble. It is the meaning of evolution, the mainspring of biological development, the real aim of life . . . Only when we realise that individualism and not collectivism can produce real co-operation shall we regain the freedom that is lost. And to do this we must ground the individual in everlasting law."

The author pursues his theme through all the major spheres of debate, both the old, ever-recurring questions, and those of immediate bearing on modern life such as the impact of science and technology. He examines the doctrine of original sin, the individual and the state, morality and freedom, power in all its aspects, nationalism and culture, economics in relation to psychology and

religion, the Church, sovereignty, change in economic structure, etc. His ideas of how science and technology might be applied in a genuinely free society suggest some consolation to those who feel overwhelmed by the brash, noisy, ugly effects we see today.

Like the Greeks, who eschewed humbug, Mr. McEachran does not assume that "truth will prevail" whatever we do or neglect to do; and he is prepared for a long period of collectivist control to descend on the Western world, although any such control must eventually be broken by the everlasting forces inherent in man's nature.

This view might prove too pessimistic. No tyranny, mental and physical, has ever been nearer the absolute than that of the Communist party in Russia. And it has enjoyed an advantage which no previous tyranny has possessed: the resources afforded by modern science that enable the rulers to present as their own work the miracle of comparative affluence the Russian masses now enjoy.



SUNDAY, JUNE 15—Fine weather having come again, albeit for perhaps a short time. I did betake myself into the garden with deck chair for relaxing. In due course, I having studied for a nonce the antics of divers insects on and about the flowers such as there are (for God knoweth the winter was mighty long and the season much behind), my mind, by what process I know not, was once more drawn to the oft-repeated saying that the study of mankind is man.

Very well, said I to myself (for truly there was no one else within earshot that I wot of to the which I could so address myself, my wife being busy washing dishes), I will contemplate and consider, and so considered I thus:

Whereas man since time primeval has been a hunter for his needs, and being jealous of that which his efforts have won him, so often hath it been taken from him by force and by stealth by other men who are but brute beasts upon two legs—be it meat, clothing, shelter or mate (and I do pray that my wife sees not what I have written lest she scold me before the neighbours and insist that I change the order in which I have so written these necessities)—where was I? Ah, yes, being jealous of these things, man over the centuries became as it were a creature of suspicious habits, he continually thinking that his goods were not safe from thieving hands, but

And yet, after fifty years of material progress there is significant evidence of rebellion against the mental and spiritual control, and sheer necessity has forced the state planners to relax some of the economic controls. It is difficult to see how the impetus can be arrested, and if it continues it is bound to affect the West by its example.

But, whatever the future, the personal obligation remains. We may not all claim much knowledge of philosophy, but every intelligent reader can easily grasp the central truth this philosopher points out, and appreciate the evidence he brings from great thinkers to support it; and we may use this to convince others.

"It is, in fact," says Mr. McEachran, "a harder and nobler sacrifice to help on the slow movement of history, which offers no immediate glory, than to seek the pseudo-splendour of the romantic death or the tinsel sublimity of the surface cause . . . The greatest sin of all is to see the truth and to thwart it, the 'sin against the Holy Ghost' which Goethe embodied in the figure of Mephistopheles."

Diary of Samuel Remo

(ROBERT MILLER)

not saying or behaving so in so many words or actions—but more of this anon.

Whether this be so or not I cannot tell for certain, but if we are to accept what Mr. Freud, Mr. Jung and many other learned gentlemen have told us, unless a man be re-instructed in a way of thinking so that he himself sees and understands himself and the reason for his false thinking he will in time repress the thought or belief so that he becomes the last person to believe he ever thought so, yet at the same time he be sub-consciously directed to behave in exactly the same way, or nearly exactly in a different form, as though he were conscious of its cause (and I pray God I make myself clear, but no matter, since this is my diary and I doubt it will be read by anyone else).

So then invention and progress and better living and law and order and justice and the welfare state all seemeth to wither away the need for suspicion, or at least to obscure it. But it is not so, and we have not far to seek it. First, we have gossip and slander and peeping behind curtains and bawdy limericks about those we do not trust; then plays of mystery; then stories of mystery; now films and television all full of suspects and mysteries. And what happens in all these plays, stories, books, films and television programmes? Why, someone suspects