

HOW THINGS BEGAN

Sir,—Father Duggan asks me to quote cases in which his use of the term "self-contradictory" is "indiscriminate." For one such case, I would refer him to Page 35 of *Evolution and Philosophy*, where he tells us that the view that the material universe is a single substance is "incompatible with the principle of contradiction." It may be true that, as Father Duggan goes on to say, this view "affirms the real identity of what we cannot but regard as really distinct," but this only means that it contradicts our conviction as to what are distinct substances; it does not mean, as Father Duggan's charge of "self-contradiction" would imply, that it contradicts itself (as, for example, the statement that the material universe is, in the same sense of "substance," one substance and many substances, would contradict itself).

For another case, I would again refer to his assertion on Page 31 that "a self-sufficient process of becoming is a contradiction in terms." Father Duggan repeats this in his letter, when he says that "the concept of an uncaused change is literally self-contradictory," and tells us that this follows from the "self-evidence" of the proposition "that a change must have some cause." Of course if this proposition is self-evident, it does follow that the assertion that a change may have no cause is self-evidently false, since it contradicts the self-evidently true one; but that is not to say that it contradicts itself—as, for example, the assertion that an effect (i.e. that which is caused) has no cause, would contradict itself. "Being caused," in short, is not part of the meaning of "being a change," as it is the whole meaning of "being an effect." I would add that just because it would be self-contradictory to deny that every effect has a cause, it would be trivial to assert it, since the assertion would merely mean that what has a cause has a cause. On the other hand, the assertion that every change has a cause, whether it be true or false, is not trivial but important—if it is true (and like Father Duggan I think it is) it really tells us something about how change occurs; and its denial, if it were true, would really tell us something too.

It should now be sufficiently plain that I would not agree that "to say that an unknown block of marble became a statue of Apollo without the intervention of a cause is nonsense," if by calling a thing "nonsense" Father Duggan means that it contradicts itself. Nor would I regard it as "nonsense," though I would think it most unlikely to be true, to say that an unknown block of marble became a statue of Apollo (or some inanimate earth a living man) with no intervening cause but the direct action of the Creator. It is something of a philosophical fashion nowadays to describe any position with which one does not agree as "nonsense"; I must confess that I regard the fashion as a bad one.

I am prepared to answer the rest of Father Duggan's letter if nobody else does, but this is enough in the meantime.

ARTHUR N. PRIOR (Christchurch).

Sir,—I read with interest Mr. Prior's review of Father Duggan's book *Evolution and Philosophy*. I say with interest, as I was anxious to learn how this work would be received by an evolutionist—and I have taken the liberty of assuming that your reviewer holds to this theory. In all I was disappointed to

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LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

find Mr. Prior using the now outmoded arguments for evolution and confirmed in my suspicion that the modern evolutionist, biologically speaking, is still living with Darwin.

Mr. Prior is so rash as to challenge Father Duggan's contention that no philosopher who does not believe in God has talked sensibly about time and change. He mentions philosophers who have discussed these problems more rationally than those indicated by the author. Unfortunately we do not learn the names of these philosophers, and so Mr. Prior's answer holds little weight. Further, it is to be hoped that his philosophers are not rationally arguing from false premises—a prevalent modern fault.

Father Duggan asserts that biological research has failed to close the gaps in the so-called evolutionary process. All Mr. Prior can say is that the author, in proving that there are numerous differences between creatures prior to one gap as compared with those that follow, has proved nothing. But I feel that it is essential first to point out these numerous differences when discussing evolution. I have in mind the evolutionist habit of taking one or two doubtful instances among an overwhelming number of clear-cut cases and then holding the thesis proved. Perhaps Mr. Prior has forgotten the rule of logic that it is invalid to argue from the particular to the general.

As for the biologists who are doubtful as to what "major" groups many organisms should be placed in, I feel that they must be doubtful biologists. Surely Mr. Prior is aware that a philosophical system can only be built upon facts. If he wishes to condemn the thesis put forward by Father Duggan it is only intellectual honesty to first disprove the facts upon which the author has proved his case. If a reviewer cannot or is not prepared to do this I feel that he should at least remain silent rather than ask his readers to accept doubtful scientific instances as a satisfactory and all-embracing refutation of the thesis put forward by an author. It is to be regretted that Mr. Prior has neither remained silent nor given us those scientific and factual proofs which we could reasonably expect from him.

A.A.N. (Wellington).

ENGLISH USAGE

Sir,—I was astonished on reading your footnote to the letter from "Student" in the issue of December 2—astonished to learn that the over-rated Mr. Fowler should so dynamite his own lifework. The result is to uphold the speech and pronunciation of the playing ground and the picture palace against the classroom; its effects will reach to the end of time, words will be further and further divorced from their basic meaning and the richest language in the world will become a jargon. Such a decline is in keeping with modern art, in which the realist portrays physical matter as he sees it, or says he sees it—or because he has not the ability to do it any better or more truly.

I do not uphold "Student's" first paragraph, since we normally refer to the temperature as "warm" and "cool," but I do see that confusion may arise in the mind of the listener if emphasis through pronunciation does not separate noun from adjective, as in the cases he cites, although *Kol'eg* is given for both noun and intransitive verb in some dictionaries.

B. S. BARNETT (Napier).

MOZART RECITALS

Sir,—We have been listening with the greatest pleasure to Ruth Pearl and Frederick Page in their recitals of Mozart Sonatas on Thursday evenings. I would like to thank them for their beautiful playing, so musical that they subordinated the technical ability they possess to a marked degree. This is the true interpretation of artists. Their recitals have been a joy. We can only hope they will be broadcasting again.

A. COLLINS (Wellington).

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

Sir,—Recently, I heard an interesting discussion by an able panel of speakers on "Fathers and Sons." This, and an instructive talk on "Mothers-in-Law," has prompted me to write and ask if we could not have more of these discussions and talks on human relationships. Broadcasting time may be precious, but surely some of the present serials could be sacrificed for these. They will not have failed if they help one more family to goodwill and understanding.

I agree with your correspondent S. J. Strong, that a place in the evening programmes is desirable for this type

of presentation, so that all members of the family may benefit. Finally, I would like to say how much I enjoy the articles in *The Listener*, particularly that on "The Average Use of Leisure."

LISTENER (Christchurch).

"LILIAN DALE AFFAIR"

Sir,—As one of the many thousands (I am sure) interested listeners to *The Lilian Dale Affair*, I am writing in reply to two letters which appeared in a recent issue of *The Listener*. Apparently some listeners are unaware that if it were not for the advertisers, there would be no commercial radio stations. In any case, listeners have the alternative, if they do not like a particular programme, of turning the dial on their radio and listening to another station.

I consider *The Lilian Dale Affair* one of the best programmes that has been presented on the commercial stations for a very long time, and I am only writing this letter in appreciation and in fairness to the sponsors.

GRATEFUL LISTENER
(Wellington).

CONTEMPORARY ART

Sir,—Mr. Thornton's letter bristles with irrelevancies and by their means he hopes to put himself on side with the layman so that together they can deride the "local intellectual" interested in art. The very term sneers at the New Zealand intellectual, not because he is inconsistent, but because he is local. If he speaks to defend his interests the local intellectual is full of "pointless profundity," if he is silent I have no doubt that he lives in an "ivory tower."

Mr. Thornton ends his letter by suggesting that we should be impressed by quality rather than quantity, yet in the previous paragraph he expects us to believe in the authenticity of his responses to painting on the strength of the amount of travelling and listening to "informed critics" he has done. Alas, we are at cross purposes, for precisely at this point I was interested not in the quantity of pictures he had seen, but in the quality of his response.

Such bandying of words can, I admit, go on for ever. It offers a cheap victory to every protagonist and I enjoy it just as much as Mr. Thornton. Nevertheless it is a long way from the true object of our pursuit, namely the critical consideration of paintings. And in that connection I feel bound to support Mr. Snadden when he stressed the advantage of seeing works in their actual size and colour. Painting is not a wholly spiritual art (what art is?), but depends both on the spatial relationships within the picture and on the relation of the size of the picture to the beholder. Suppose one reduces, for example, any of the vast mosaic pictures of the early churches to page size, will Mr. Thornton have the temerity to suggest they lose nothing of their original splendour? As well might one reduce the Colossus of Rameses and sell it over the counter in the native market of Cairo.

JOHN SUMMERS (Christchurch).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

J.W.C. (Dunedin): People are already doing that sort of thing in letters.

Netta Gibb (Wellington): Many thanks. The recordings will be heard early next year. Details will be printed in *The Listener* when precise dates are known.

POWER INCREASES AT 2ZA AND 2XP

The regional stations at Palmerston North and New Plymouth are now broadcasting from two-kilowatt transmitters. The new transmitters have been built on sites a few miles out of the two towns, but they run unattended and are remotely controlled from the studios. The districts these stations serve now receive wider coverage and better reception than they had with the original transmitters, which had been operating for many years. The Minister of Broadcasting (Hon. F. W. Doidge) was the first speaker when the stations switched over to higher power. Station 2ZA listeners heard him on Saturday, December 31, and he broadcast from 2XP on Monday, January 2.