



Processo Seletivo PPGFIL/UFOP 2020

Segunda Etapa: Prova de idioma estrangeiro – Inglês

RELIGION AND MORALS

Many people tell us that without belief in God a man can be neither happy nor virtuous. As to virtue, I can speak only from observation, not from personal experience. As to happiness, neither experience nor observation has led me to think that believers are either happier or unhappier, on the average, than unbelievers. It is customary to find ‘grand’ reasons for unhappiness, because it is easier to be proud if one can attribute one’s misery to lack of faith than if one has to put it down to the liver. As to morality, a great deal depends upon how one understands that term. For my part, I think the important virtues are kindness and intelligence. Intelligence is impeded by any creed, no matter what; and kindness is inhibited by the belief in sin and punishment (this belief, by the way, is the only one that the Soviet Government has taken over from orthodox Christianity).

There are various practical ways in which traditional morality interferes with what is socially desirable. One of these is the prevention of venereal disease. More important is the limitation of population. Improvements in medicine have made this matter far more important than it ever was before. If the nations and races which are still as prolific as the British were a hundred years ago do not change their habits in this respect, there is no prospect for mankind except war and destitution. This is known to every intelligent student, but it is not acknowledged by theological dogmatists.

I do not believe that a decay of dogmatic belief can do any- thing but good. I admit at once that new systems of dogma, such as those of the Nazis and the Communists, are even worse than the old systems, but they could never have acquired a hold over men’s minds if orthodox dogmatic habits had not been instilled in youth. Stalin’s language is full of



reminiscences of the theological seminary in which he received his training. What the world needs is not dogma, but an attitude of scientific inquiry, combined with a belief that the torture of millions is not desirable, whether inflicted by Stalin or by a Deity imagined in the likeness of the believer.

RUSSELL, Bertrand. Religion and Morals. IN: Why I am Not a Christian. London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004 [1957]. pp. 164-5.