

of Christ, but see worth in His teachings; (c) those parents who do not themselves believe, but nevertheless wish their children to hear the Christian case and to decide for or against it later on; (d) those who are opposed to changes of any kind.

Your proposal for "neutral" ethical instruction in schools provokes the question "Where do we go for source-material?" To highly controversial figures like Comfort, Crick, Arnold Lunn or the Bishop of Woolwich? To the writings of professional philosophers? I agree with you that the Old Testament is now not very useful as source-material for ethics, its main claims to attention being cultural and historical. But why throw away the New Testament as a source? The principles laid down by Christ remain relevant—a fact of immense significance. It is quite possible to deny his divinity and yet to recognize that he was a man of immense genius who changed the world for ever.

As we all know, it is going to be difficult enough for children to make decisions on ethical matters as it is. Let us try to help, not to hinder. Parents who do not believe might have real difficulty in giving such instruction at home, as you suggest they should.

Yours sincerely,

H. N. V. TEMPERLEY

Department of Applied Mathematics,
University College of Swansea,
Singleton Park, Swansea.

New Constitution for British Physicists

SIR,—While I do not wish to endorse all that Professor Blackman said in his letter of January 4 (*Nature*, 221, 105; 1969), I think it is true that had members of the Physical Society realized, at the time of amalgamation with the Institute of Physics, that within a few years their identity would have disappeared altogether, that what was proposed was really a take-over, the offer would have been rejected or at least bitterly opposed.

Some of us have, in fact, taken a long time to realize just what was happening: a sad commentary, in many cases, on the pressure of papers on our desks.

I do think, however, that the council of the IPPS would do well, if it wishes to retain its reputation for scientific integrity, to take heed of the advice given in your article (*Nature*, 220, 952; 1968) and to allow more time for discussion within the joint organization. A year would not be too long.

Yours sincerely,

KATHLEEN LONSDALE

125A Dorset Road,
Bexhill-on-Sea,
Sussex.

Probability and Prejudice

SIR,—In the course of a book review (*Nature*, 221, 291; 1969) Professor M. S. Bartlett discusses the problem of three prisoners, two of whom are to be executed. His comments merit further discussion. He first remarks that if, as has been reported, the problem nearly wrecked a conference on theoretical biology and yet yields at once to Bayes's theorem, it does not say much for the conference participants. This seems a little hard on the theoretical biologists who will typically have learnt their probability from a member of the frequentist school who, if he mentioned Bayes's theorem at all, will have played it down as of minor interest. The fault surely lies with the statistician, not the biologist.

The second point is more material. Bartlett draws the conclusion that subjective prior probabilities are indefinite.

The basis for this assertion seems to be that the prisoner, Matthew, is entitled to feel happier if P (the probability of the jailer naming Mark if both Mark and Luke are to be executed) equals $3r$. If $r > 1/3$, the Bayesian analysis shows that this is impossible so that Matthew is inconsistent. If $r = 1/3$, this requires $P = 1$. Taking $r = 1/3$ as a reasonable value, this shows that Matthew's elation is only justifiable (to him!) if he believes that when there is a choice, the jailer will always name Mark. So I would say to Matthew, "If you feel elated it is equivalent to your assuming this preference on the jailer's part". Matthew would typically reply that he has no reason for thinking the jailer has such a preference: therefore, I say, he has no reason for feeling happier. The subjective probabilities must cohere and their value lies in doing just this—in the example in establishing coherence between Matthew's happiness and his opinion of the jailer. This seems to me to lead to a definite conclusion of some value, contrary to what has been said.

Yours sincerely,

D. V. LINDLEY

Department of Statistics,
University College London,
Gower Street,
London WC1.

International Meetings

September 9–12, **Conformational Analysis**, Brussels (R. C. Smekens, Executive Secretary, 49 Sq Marie-Louise, Brussels 4, Belgium).

September 9–15, **Foundry Congress**, Belgrade (Professor M. B. Pajevic, Sevez Drustava Livaca SFRJ, Karnegijeva 4, Belgrade, Yugoslavia).

September 14–19, **International Society of Rehabilitation of the Disabled congress**, Dublin (Joseph N. Malone, National Organization for Rehabilitation, 25 Clyde Road, Dublin 4, Ireland).

September 15–16, **Bridge and Structural Engineering Symposium on Safety**, London (A. R. Collins, Civil Engineering Research Association, Old Queen Street House, 6 Storey's Gate, London SW1).

September 15–17, **Trunk Telecommunications by Guided Waves**, London (Conference Department, The Institution of Electrical Engineers, Savoy Place, London WC2).

September 15–17, **Programming Languages for Numerically Controlled Machine Tools**, Rome (Dr E. L. Harder, c/o Westinghouse Electric Corporation, 1204 Milton Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15218, USA, and Professor A. Caracciolo di Forina, Centro Studi Calcolatrici Elettroniche, University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy).

September 15–17, **Aerospace and Electronic Systems**, Washington DC (Institution of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Box A, Lenox Hill Station, New York NY 10021, USA).

September 15–17, **Congress of World Veterinary Poultry Association**, Belgrade (Professor L. Kozic, c/o Institute of Preventive Veterinary Medicine, Belgrade J. A., 8, Yugoslavia).

September 15–19, **Tropical and Sub-tropical Fruits**, London (The Scientific Secretariat, Tropical Products Institute, 56-62 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1).

September 15–19, **Electronics for Civil Aviation**, London (Electronic Engineering Association, Berkeley Square House, Berkeley Square, London W1).

September 15–20, **Chemical Engineering, Chemical Equipment and Automation Congress**, Mariánské (III Chisa 1969, Czechoslovak Scientific and Technical Society, POB 857, Prague 1, Czechoslovakia).