

All Shall Be Well: Christian and Marxist Hope¹

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Most people would agree that there are differences between Christian hope and Marxist hope. But where do these differences lie, and how are they to be specified? According to one widely accepted account, Marxists entertain high hopes for the future of the world, convinced that nothing can stand in the way of their realization. Christians, on the other hand, entertain no such hopes. They are prepared to tolerate, or endure, the state of the world as it is, hoping only for a future 'beyond' all futures, an eternity that will redress the tragedy of time.

Even if we leave on one side the problem of how to establish criteria on the basis of which an attitude or opinion is to be judged 'Marxist' or 'Christian', this account cannot usefully serve as a starting-point for our discussion because it distorts by obscuring just those features of both Marxist and Christian hope which might make a comparison between them illuminating.

Consider, for example, the question: what is the mechanism or agency by which, on a Marxist or on a Christian account, that which is hoped for is to be brought about? Or again, consider the fact that both Marxist and Christian hope are often criticized for illegitimately 'over-riding' the tragic dimension of human existence.

In this paper, I want to offer some comments on these two issues, and to suggest some of the ways in which they hang together.

Christ and Prometheus: Agents of Redemption

In framing my first question, I spoke of mechanism *or* agency, because there are some characterizations of Marxist hope which seem to discount the 'relative autonomy' of human freedom, reducing human agency to an aspect of ineluctable natural process: a form of 'mechanism'. If this were a correct account, then the hoped-for future would be realized *whatever* anybody did about it. There would be no possibility of failure.

However, such views of the matter are distortions or caricatures of Marxist hope. I shall therefore assume that human agency, as an aspect of 'natural' agency which is, nevertheless, not reducible to *other* aspects of natural agency, plays an indispensable part in the fulfilment or failure of human hope.

This raises a question of considerable importance: by *whose* agency will the hoped for future be realized? Marx answered this question, in his time, with reference to the industrial proletariat (as at least the 'inaugurating agent' of the definitive stage of the redemptive process), whereas the answers given in contemporary Marxism are very varied. However, no Marxist could conceivably answer the question 'by whose agency?' except by reference to human beings. Man himself is and must be his own redeemer: hence the 'Promethean' strand in Marxism.

Christian characterizations of hope are 'personalist' from the start, in the sense that they assume answers to the question 'By *whom* are we redeemed, are our hopes realized?' to be more fundamental than answers to the question 'By *what*, by what means, are we redeemed?' And, of course, put like that, there is (unless you happen to be a Pelagian) only one answer: we are redeemed by the grace of God. More specifically, we are redeemed by the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All I have done so far is to indicate why the Czech theologian, Jan Lochman, should have said of the question 'Is Christ the opposite of Prometheus?' that it is 'the question at the heart of every Christian-Marxist dialogue'.² (And I recommend the chapter 'Prometheus versus Christ', in James Bentley's little book *Between Marx and Christ*, from which I have taken that quotation).

'The criticism of religion', said Marx in 1843, 'ends with the doctrine that for man the supreme being is man, and thus with the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a debased, enslaved, neglected and contemptible being'.³ According to Lochman, the fulfilment of that categorical imperative is 'the true Promethean mission – for Christians and for Marxists'.⁴

Marx, like many Christians, supposed the images of Christ and Prometheus to be necessarily antithetical. And an antithetical account of the relationship between divine grace and human freedom always *expects too little* of man. This is still, in practice and in theory, the dominant Christian temptation.

In a later section of this paper, I shall suggest that Marxian Prometheanism *expects too much* of man. And Christians, on the rebound from those dualisms – of matter and spirit, time and eternity, the political kingdom and the kingdom of God – which have too often enabled them simply to tolerate the conditions of human enslavement, may nowadays be tempted to repeat the Marxian mistake.

However, even though the images of Christ and Prometheus are not to be seen as antithetical – for Christ's passion, that which he *underwent*, and which we undergo in him, is correctly described as agency, as the *work* of our redemption – neither may these

images be simply superimposed, elided, reduced one to another.

By whose agency is that which we hope for to be brought about? If we have successfully transcended, in action and thought, the dualisms to which I have referred, we should be able to say, quite simply: by our own effort. But if this is to be a *Christian* answer, a comment on our christology, and not an expression either of *hubris* or of stoic resignation in the face of our servitude, it will be a celebration of God's continual self-gift and an entreaty for that gift's endurance. The effort that we acknowledge to be our own is not some fragile *possession*, some mere artefact or commodity that might crack under the strain, but the historical human form of God's unconquerable grace.

'An Energetic Revision of our Anthropology'

Marxist materialism, and the hope which it embodies, represents one way of seeking to transcend the dualisms that I have mentioned. The challenge to Christian thought and action contained in this attempt is spelt out, in a most suggestive manner, in one of those small-print excursions in the *Church Dogmatics* which are regularly ignored by English theologians patronising Barth from a safe distance. A summary of this excursus can serve as a bridge passage between my remarks about agency and the question of tragedy.

The discussion occurs in §46, on 'man as Soul and Body, in *Church Dogmatics III/2*, in a sub-section on 'the inner unity of human creatureliness', the 'interconnection' of soul and body.⁵ Barth locates the 'foundation' of modern monistic, reductionist materialism, not in the wealth of 'scientific' description with which it decked itself out, justified itself, but in the emergence of a particular anthropology, a particular lived account of human essence and excellence: "only he who lives in prosperity lives agreeably" – so thinks the big man contentedly and the little man discontentedly, except that the big man is perhaps seldom honest enough to admit to himself that this is how he thinks'.⁶

For Marx, this 'materialism' served only as 'a necessary weapon . . . and polemical ally'. Barth insists, quite rightly, that Marx's 'historical materialism' will be misunderstood if 'we take it to be *grounded*' on this 'ostensibly scientific materialism'. Nevertheless, he also regrets (again, I believe, correctly) that Marxism, as it developed, 'bound itself' as tightly as it did to this philosophical and pseudo-scientific doctrine.⁷

Barth presents 'historical materialism' as 'a critique of the previous course of human history', 'a summons . . . not issued to all, and therefore not to the dominant middle class', and as 'a prediction concerning the future course of the history of mankind'. 'It will not', he says, 'be ideologies that will lead mankind' to that

end which is the object of Marxist hope, to a state of affairs in which, with exploitation abolished, 'all other social sicknesses vanish with their common cause', but only 'economic material development as this is rightly understood and therefore directed at the right moment by the right intervention. 'This', he says, 'was the hope, the eschatology, which Karl Marx gave to his followers'.⁸

One may regret that it 'came about that the scientifically inadmissible deduction that the soul is material because materially conditioned became', as Marxism developed, 'the received dogma of historical materialism'.⁹ Barth *does* regret it but, unlike some Christian theologians, he acknowledges the responsibility which Christians bear for this development. 'In all the centuries', he asks (with, we may feel, an element of rhetorical overkill), 'what has [the Church] done positively to prevent the rise of that figure of the soulless man? Has it not always stood on the side of the "ruling classes"? . . . And has it not with its doctrine of soul and body at least shown a culpable indifference towards the problem of matter, of bodily life, and therefore of contemporary economics? Has it not made a point of teaching the immortality of the soul instead of attesting to society, with its proclamation of the resurrection of the dead, that the judgment and promise of God compass the whole man?'¹⁰

Entrapped in its dualisms of soul and body, spirit and matter, time and eternity, Christianity has done little, since the rise of the 'soulless man', and of the structures that enslave him, except 'complain and scold'. Nor, he concludes, 'will it have anything [more constructive] to say in the future . . . so long as it does not undertake an energetic revision of its anthropology . . . in the light of its eschatology'.¹¹

I have summarised this passage from the *Church Dogmatics* at what may seem disproportionate length in order to indicate my conviction that British (and perhaps Irish!) theologians are ill-advised to suppose that they can prudently bypass Barth in their attempts to re-appropriate and reconstruct, in our contemporary context, the elements of Christian doctrine. If we are, as Christians, to expect neither too much nor too little of man, of ourselves and of others, nothing less is required of us than an 'energetic revision' of our anthropology in the light of our eschatology. (And the 'energy' expended will, of course, be an expenditure as much of heart and muscle as of mind; the laborious production of patterns of relationship, hope and organisation, and not merely the elaboration of appropriate theoretical constructs.)

Over-riding the Tragic

In *A Matter of Hope*,¹² I agreed that there is, indeed, a tragic dimension to the Marxian view of history, and I therefore rejected

George Steiner's claim that 'Marx repudiated the entire concept of tragedy'.¹³ But I nevertheless agreed with Steiner that, in the last resort, 'the Marxist creed is immensely, perhaps naively optimistic'.¹⁴ The source of the incoherence at the heart of Marx's vision is to be sought, I suggested, in the abstract character of his account of the 'essence' of man as 'true community', and of the circumstances in which that 'essence' might be 'born' from its tragic 'pre-history'. This criticism has three principal components.

In the first place, Marx was unduly neglectful of the implications of human mortality: a mortality not only of the individual but also (as the shadow of the bomb helps us to remember) of the species. In the second place, he was unwarrantedly optimistic in his conviction that transformation of structures and circumstances would lead, not simply to a corresponding transformation of consciousness (i.e. of language and mental attitude), but to a *moral* transformation: a transformation of patterns of behaviour and relationship, such that human egotism would have been irreversibly uprooted and 'abolished'. In the third place, Marx's account of the process whereby capitalism was to be overthrown as a process constituting the last, irreversible (and, hence, eschatological) revolution, a revolution to be achieved by an agent whose radical poverty would guarantee his purity, his absence of 'particular interest', is unrealizable and dangerously infected with mythology.

Marx in provoking people to work and suffer for an unrealizable future, asked too much of them. That is the hallmark of one form of optimism. But the pessimist, the spokesman of apathy and despair, asks too little. He implores us to be 'realistic'. But how are we to avoid always asking too much of each other if we are to break the bounds of present possibility, to sustain the vision and the energy that will enable us to continue to love, and suffer, and struggle, for the transformation of 'all conditions in which man is a debased, enslaved, neglected and contemptible being'? The 'energetic revision of our anthropology in the light of our eschatology' appears to be not merely a daunting but a baffling task.

If 'asking too much' and 'asking too little' do not exhaust the range of options available to us, the alternative cannot consist in cloudy compromise between the two. To suppose that there is something which would count as sensibly and realistically asking for just the right amount is to forget that excessive and inadequate expectation express the antithetical stances of optimism and resignation or despair.

Simply to *accept* the insurmountability of existing 'limits' is to surrender the future (the more 'moderate' case for policies of nuclear deterrence would be an instance of this), whereas optimism, with its sights set on the far horizon, is only too often des-

tructive of that very freedom whose eventual fulfilment it so confidently announces.

Therefore, in *A Matter of Hope*, I tried to sketch an account of Christian hope as that form of the tragic vision which refuses to succumb to the twin temptations of an optimism which sacrifices the present (and forgets the past) and a despair which surrenders the future. On this account, the precariousness of hope arises from its refusal to tolerate either of these destructive renunciations.

Both optimism and despair, I suggested, 'know the answer'. They take it upon themselves to provide the unfinished narrative of human history with the ending which it has not yet, in fact, achieved. They confidently predict the outcome. Hope, as one form of expression of the tragic vision, is more *reticent*. The mood of its discourse is less that of assertion and prediction than of interrogation and request.

Because several of the more constructive critics of *A Matter of Hope* have found all this talk of the 'interrogative mood' either unclear or objectionable, I want to try, in the final section of this paper, to see if I can clarify the suggestion, spell it out in a little more detail, and do so in a way which will connect the question of how Christianity can avoid illegitimately over-riding the tragic with the remarks that I briefly made at the end of the section on agency.

All Manner of Thing Shall be Well

'All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well'. That (I take it) is, or may be, an expression of Christian hope. It need not be. It could simply be an expression of unwarranted optimism, or facile evasion of particular pain and responsibility. In order for it to be, in practice, an expression of authentically Christian hope, what would the character and context of its utterance have to be? This is the question which, as I take up again some of the topics that I have already touched upon, I now want to consider.

I admit that the Lady Julian's statement seems an improbable candidate to stand as expression of the tragic vision. Its exuberance seems at odds with that reticence which, I said, was characteristic of the discourse of hope; a reticence which, I contrasted with the confident eloquence of optimism and despair, both of which claim to 'know the answer', to be able to complete the unfinished narrative of human history. And yet (and this point can serve as a general clue to what follows) a lot perhaps depends on who utters such a statement in what circumstances.

In Julian's case, we remember, the statement occurs in the context of her consideration of 'all the suffering and pain of ... creation, both spiritual and physical'.¹⁵ If what she says can be said,

with integrity, there, in that darkness; if, from within that darkness (and not, as it were, from some imaginary external vantage point for the contemplation of chaos) it is nevertheless the one thing that we find ourselves able to say; then perhaps its utterance could, for all the apparent exuberance of form, be characterised by the kind of reticence that I had in mind.

In the second place, the form of her statement undoubtedly seems to be that of confident, predictive assertion, rather than of interrogation, or request. However, the issue is not to be decided in the abstract, by consideration of grammatical form, but only by attending to particular instances and contexts of use and performance.

The central issue at this point (indeed, I suspect that it is the central issue of the entire discussion) is the doctrine of creative and redemptive grace, the conviction of our creatureliness.

It is this which our hope confesses: that we are creatures of grace. To be a creature is to be a product. And we are, all of us, products of nature and history (or, if you prefer, of natural history). To be creatures of *God*, as all nature and history are, is to be, not merely produced, but to be *absolutely* produced, beyond all structures of causality. And to be creatures of *grace*, as all nature and history are, is to be, not merely produced, but cherished; and not merely cherished, but absolutely and indefeasibly cherished. To confess that we are creatures of grace is to acknowledge effective cherishing to be, we might say, God's mode of production. (It perhaps follows that the fundamental principle of Christian ethics is that production, if it is to be authentically *human* production, whether of things or relationships, ideas or institutions, has in turn to consist of effective cherishing.)

But how does the recognition of our dependence, our creatureliness, *show* itself in the language in which we bring it to speech? Here, the first thing to be said is that it does not necessarily do so in its grammatical form. There is no form of words, no tense or construction, which can be such as to guarantee that whoever uses it, in whatever circumstances, is giving expression to authentically Christian hope. 'God is love', 'Christ is risen', 'I believe in the Holy Spirit': all these statements can be and have been used, without deliberate dishonesty or conscious impropriety, as instruments of evasion, optimism and even oppression.

Correlatively, even statements whose grammatical form, or 'surface structure', is that of assertion or confident prediction concerning the future, concerning the outcome of the processes in which we participate, *may* be, in the actual conditions and circumstances of their use, instances of the acknowledgement of our dependence, our creatureliness – and hence expressions of trust in

God, pleas or requests for the realization, the accomplishment, the 'appearance' (to use the language of the Pastoral Epistles) of that which we trust to be the heart of the matter.

Furthermore, if the statements which we utter, and the actions and policies which the statements interpret, have *not* this character of acknowledged creatureliness, of request, then they are not authentic expressions of Christian hope. To put it as briefly and simply as possible, if the assertion that 'all shall be well and, all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well' is not an instance of petitionary prayer, then it is not an expression of Christian hope.

This is what I meant when I said that, if hope is not to topple over into optimism, then the character of its discourse must be more fundamentally a matter of interrogation and request than of assertion and prediction. It is only in our acknowledged dependence on the mystery of *God* that our autonomy, responsibility, freedom and hope are celebrated. The precariousness of Christian hope arises from the fact that nothing is less obvious than that we are creatures of grace. Prometheanism forgets this, as does the setting up of divine grace as the antithesis of promethean effort. Both optimism and pessimism make much more obvious, though ultimately illusory, sense.

In the third place, I criticized 'mechanistic' readings of Marxist materialism for their inability seriously to entertain the possibility of failure. The Lady Julian's statement seems to invite the same criticism inasmuch as, even though its context is the consideration of 'all the suffering and pain of ... creation', it appears to disallow the possibility of *ultimate* failure: it announces that, in spite of all suffering and slavery, chaos and incapacity, all shall most certainly *eventually* be well.

The theological correlate of necessitarian forms of Marxist hope would be those versions of the doctrine of predestination which invite either passivity and fatalism or the ruthlessness and arrogance of those self-described as God's elect. But, just as there are non-necessitarian forms of Marxism, so also there are forms of the doctrine of election and predestination which hold in tension the conviction that 'ultimate' failure has been ruled out with the recognition that all our projects are threatened with failure and eventually fail; that all our choices are heavy with ineluctable, unforeseeable and frequently disastrous consequences. As we continue to contribute to the destruction which threatens to engulf us, there is no darker or more obscure knowledge than that despair is unjustified.

In the fourth place, I charged the optimist with asking too much of man, with setting him unrealizable goals. But Marxist

optimism looks modest beside Julian's statement that *all* shall be well and *all* manner of thing shall be well. We could, of course, point out that she is not indulging in some armchair utopian description of future states of affairs; that it would be possible to make her statement our own while acknowledging that what *counts* as 'well being' can only be indicated indirectly, in the analysis of and the struggle against particular instances of 'ill being': of the debasement, enslavement and neglect of human beings and their needs; in other words, that 'well being' can only be specified in the 'negating of negations'.

We could also point out that Christianity, unlike Marxism, does at least attempt to confront the 'barriers' of egotism and mortality in its doctrines of justification and resurrection. It declares (even though its practice usually fails to exhibit the truth of the declaration) that egotism and mortality are being and will be dealt with by the historical forms of God's eternal grace, the human forms of God's fidelity.

Where mortality is concerned, we do not, of course, know what this means, except indirectly. 'All shall be well'. Therefore *nothing*, no circumstance, not even those in which all sanity and dignity, sense, structure and relationship, are cracked by chaos, disfigured by darkness, could justify resignation and despair. Those who know *this* know all that we can yet know of what 'resurrection' means.

Nevertheless, even when all this has been said (and it certainly needs to be said) the fact remains that we are permanently tempted, as Christians, to say: No, we do not expect too much *of* man, ask too much *from* him, but we ask and expect everything *for* him: we ask and expect that 'all shall be well'. I call this a temptation because it is an exceedingly dangerous way of expressing the truth that Christian hope is a celebration of our creatureliness, not an exercise in self-aggrandisement.

It is dangerous because it too easily allows us to reintroduce antithetical expressions of the relationship between divine grace and human effort, between Christ and Prometheus. Is there not a sense in which, in asking (as we do) everything *for* us, it is only *of* ourselves and of each other that we can ask it? Grace is gift, but it is gift constitutive and transformative of, not intrusive into, ourselves and our circumstances. There is no *deus ex machina* for us, any more than there was for Christ on Calvary. (This may be the point at which to remind ourselves that Julian's statement, though uttered as 'not her own', as the statement of redeeming grace, the voice of Christ, yet was and had to be uttered *by* her, as her conviction.)

This brings me, finally, to some brief remarks on the relation-

ship between hope and memory. I said earlier that Marxist hope is able the more easily to over-ride the tragic and to topple over into optimism in the measure that it gives an unduly *abstract* account of the 'essence' of man as consisting in 'true community'.

The charge of 'abstractness' refers not only to a lack of specificity, to aspects of human need and existence, consideration of which is omitted or unduly neglected, but also to the tendency to suppose that, with the 'birth' of man from his tragic 'pre-history', the tragic dimension can, with the passage of time and the fading of the 'birth-marks',¹⁶ be obliterated from memory. The dead can be left to bury the dead.

Christians, like Marxists, describe the 'essence' of man, that which is being brought to birth in history, as 'true community': the communion of saints in the new Jerusalem. But, if this account is not to suffer from the same twofold 'abstractness' then, in the first place, it must always derive its sense primarily from the memory of one actual, historical individual; from the unending attempt to understand him, to 'follow' him, and to discover, in the practice of that discipleship, what 'true community' might mean.

In the second place, no Christian account of the future of man will be adequate to the memory of Jesus unless it includes the effective remembrance of *all* past suffering and slavery, debasement and death. To understand Calvary as the place where *God* died is to understand all other places of death as Calvary.

The Marxist has no need to 'justify' the horrors of the past. It is sufficient for his purposes if he can provide them with some plausible explanation. But the question of theodicy, of the justification of past and present suffering, cannot be evaded by a Christian who wishes to claim that all that occurs, in nature and history, is the contingent expression of a God to whom the moral quality of 'goodness' is ascribed.

And yet, all theodicies – in the sense of theoretical attempts to demonstrate the compatibility of 'tragic disorder' with the goodness of God – are suspect as rationalisations of other people's meaningless suffering. Armed with a satisfactory theodicy, the need to contribute, in practice, to the redemptive liberation of man is sometimes less sharply felt.¹⁷ Christian hope remains a form of the tragic vision in the measure that it refuses to foreclose the question of the future by postulating, in the imagination, some resolution to past and present tragedy that has not been, in fact, resolved.

Whatever we are able to say and do has to be said and done as a response to, an interpretation of, an expression of solidarity with, what has been and still is *going on* in all weakness, darkness and destruction.

In an interview which he gave in 1947, Karl Barth asked: 'Has

the Church realised that Marxist materialism contains something of the message of the resurrection of the flesh'?¹⁸ That 'something' is obscured by the incoherent juxtaposition of a tragic reading of the past with an unwarranted optimism in face of the eventual future; a juxtaposition which has enabled 'orthodox' Marxism to wreak untold practical havoc. Over-riding the tragic regularly entails trampling on the tragedians.

If Christianity, for its part, could unlearn its own incoherent juxtaposition (hinted at in my opening remarks) of historical pessimism and eschatological optimism, and could instead recover and sustain the precariousness of its hope, it might proclaim the message of the resurrection of the flesh more effectively, in socially and individually transformative response to, interpretation of and solidarity with, the suffering of man.

The focal point of both memory and hope is Gethsemane and Calvary. It was *there* that God died, and resurrection began. To understand all places of darkness and death to be that garden and that hilltop is therefore to refuse to give the last word to all that entombs the body and the mind of man. Jesus taught us to address the darkness as 'Father'. But we only learn appropriately to do so at the place where he did it. It is only there, at the heart of darkness, that we are enabled and entitled to pray: 'All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well'.

- 1 A paper read to the British-Irish Theological Seminar, Cambridge, September 1982.
- 2 Quoted by James Bentley, *Between Christ and Marx* (London, 1982), p 109.
- 3 Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction' *Early Writings* (London, Penguin Books, 1975), p 251.
- 4 Cf. Bentley, op. cit. p 110.
- 5 Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III/2*, edited by G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh, 1960), pp 383–390.
- 6 Barth, op. cit. p 386.
- 7 Cf. *ibid.* p 387.
- 8 *Ibid.* p 388.
- 9 *Ibid.* p 389.
- 10 *Ibid.* pp 389–90.
- 11 *Ibid.* p 390.
- 12 Cf. esp. Ch. 18, 'Optimism, Eschatology and the Form of the Future', *A Matter of Hope* (London, 1981), pp 250–280.
- 13 George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (²London, 1963), p 4.
- 14 *Ibid.* p 342.
- 15 Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, Penguin Books, 1966), p 103. I have preferred not to take the 'motif' statement from this modern translation, where it appears, in the form taken up by the author of *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, as: 'It is all going to be all right; it is all going to be all right; everything is going to be all right' (loc. cit.).

- 16 Cf. Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', *Political Writings, III. The First International and After* (London, Penguin Books, 1974), p 213.
- 17 Cf. Lash, *A Matter of Hope*, p 271.
- 18 At least, *I think* that this is what Barth asked! Bentley gives it as the assertion that 'In the materialism of Marxism some part of the resurrection of the flesh lies hidden' (op. cit. p 68). He took it from F.W. Marquardt, *Theologie und Sozialismus. Das Beispiel Karl Barths* (Munich, 1972), p 15. Marquardt took it from W. D. Marsch, "'Gerechtigkeit im Tal des Todes". Christlicher Glaube und Politische Vernunft im Denkens Karl Barths', *Theologie Zwischen Gestern und Morgen, Interpretationen und Anfragen zum Werk Karl Barths*, edited by W. Dantine and K. Lüthi (Munich, 1968), p 181. Marsch took it from *Karl Barth. 'Der Gotze Wackelt': Zeitkritische Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe von 1930 bis 1960*, ed. K. Kupisch (Berlin, 1961), pp 120–121, where it appears as: 'Hat die Kirche eingesehen, dass im Materialismus des Marxismus etwas steckt von der Botschaft von der Auferstehung des Fleisches?'. Kupisch was reprinting an interview which first appeared in 1947 in a German evangelical periodical entitled *Unterwegs*, which is to be found in four libraries in Germany and none in Britain.

What's The Big Idea?

Ann Dummett

Suppose a fairy godmother were to appear and offer you three wishes – not, as in the folk tales, for yourself, but for the future of the world or even just for the future of the country. My guess is that the instant answers from almost everyone would start with No. No more hunger; no more wars; no terrorism; no nuclear weapons; no more unemployment. But suppose the fairy godmother were to reply, rather acidly, that she was in the business of granting positive wishes, not negative ones, and that you must say what you actually wanted to happen, how easy would it be to formulate what you wanted in the few brief moments before, in exasperation, she vanished into the blue?

There would be two kinds of difficulty in stating three wishes. The first kind would be the technical problem of finding positive answers to what is wrong: for example, unemployment is obviously appalling and should be replaced by full employment, but even if a wave of the wand would achieve this, what exactly would "full employment" be? Would it be a situation recognisably better than the present one, with far more people having jobs but with a considerable number still unwillingly out of work, or doing unpleasant and badly-paid jobs, or having to work through every weekend in