of any proposals on their part to satisfy legitimate Arab demands. In fact they have no proposals and cannot agree among themselves on any proposals, as Prime Minister Mrs. Meir has recently clearly revealed.

One feels, from reading this book, that Avnery does indeed express the aspirations of the as yet very small number of "new generation" Israelis, and this gives some hope for peace in the future. What one does not know is whether this small number will increase quickly enough to avoid a new disaster.

E.A.


IN THE 19th CENTURY, with the discovery of the theory of evolution by Darwin and the general advance of science, the creation of the world as it appears in the Bible was discredited in the eyes of many and a movement developed called Rationalism.

Present-day Humanists are the "intellectual heirs" of such free thinkers. In 1968, British philosopher A. J. Ayer invited 20 members of the Advisory Council of the British Humanist Association to explain, with topics of their own choosing, what Humanism means to-day.

Humanists adopt a scientific method in their approach to analysing the world around them. They affirm the principle that human beings should not be expected to accept as dogma what is not known to be true, e.g. the existence of a deity.

However, the anti-Godism which dominated the outlook of earlier humanists has been replaced with a more all-sided attitude, dealing more with the role of man, dependent as he is, upon natural and social resources. As the N.S.W. Humanist Society puts it, "Humanists hold that human moral and social conduct are best founded on reason and on the value and dignity of man."

In his introduction to The Humanist Outlook, A. J. Ayer points out that while there is no logical connection between religion and morals this does not entail that there is no causal connection, that is, the highest moral actions may come from those who adopt a religious faith and because of it. Therefore it would be a mistake for the Humanist movement to expend its main energies on an anti-clerical crusade.

Moral conduct receives a great deal of attention in this book — as it relates to war, nuclear weapons, inequitable distribution of wealth, birth control, the right to commit suicide for rational motives such as increasing senility, and the responsibility of each individual for his own actions.

A. J. Ayer points out that if there is no logical connection between religion and any code of morality, neither can science supply us with our values. We can appeal to facts to support moral attitudes but such support is not justification.

If so how do moral values arise? Who is to say which values are right or wrong? Are there any universal moral values? How do we learn to make moral decisions? These are some of the questions discussed.

Morris Ginsberg (Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics) opposes the view of the anthropologist Boas that there is no evolution in moral ideas (derived from Boas' studies of primitive societies). Ginsberg believes moral codes differ but at the same time this does not rule out that behind diversity there are gen-
eral principles, which become increasingly accepted and universally binding.

Group morality survives in racial discrimination; in war; in chauvinistic nationalism; yet universalism has grown, that is, "the recognition that there are certain things to which men are entitled whether we love them or not."

Marjorie Knight (Psychologist of Aberdeen University) supports this view when she points out that in the study of the evolution of communities one finds a high degree of mutual cooperation, at the same time as there exists an attitude of mutual aggression against the outsider. Constantly, the in-group has widened. Morals then, are derived from the interaction of groups within the community and the discovery of what most effectively advances their mutual interests. She sees the widening of "in-groups" as leading towards a total inclusion of all mankind.

Kingsley Martin (Editor of the New Statesman and Nation) states it more firmly. He wonders what happened to the scientists who once resolutely opposed the idea of making nuclear weapons. Did they — when they became establishment — "forget they were servants of the world?" He concludes, "Humanism must bring society back to the idea of a world society."

In agreeing with this a marxist might add that the idea of a world society cannot be founded in ideas of what is good or right or what ought to be, but only by estimating the needs and desires of the majority of the people and then collectively taking action to achieve these. However, people acting collectively are acting morally only insofar as they are conscious of their goals as truly human.

Nor can the individual evade the necessity of making moral choices. They are constantly before us. As Kingsley Martin states in his contribution, "Even those who surrender their independence of judgment or those who merely go by current fashion are tacitly making a fundamental moral choice."

Individuals who join organisations, parties, form alliances and so on in order to further their moral aims still need to make such decisions. Loyalty to any group must depend on what this group does. Insofar as individuals identify themselves with a group then they share in the group's action.

So moral choices face us always. James Hemming (PhD, Educational psychologist) believes that the moral education of children is a process of guided personal development so that the child learns to be responsible for himself and his own actions.

At the same time, Humanists, in the opinion of Antony Flew (Professor of Philosophy) are opposed to indoctrination of the child. A proposition is a doctrine when thoughts, not known to be true or even known to be false, "are implanted with some sort of special authority," and he instances "ideas concerning God and man's relation to God." A child indoctrinated is deprived of developing the ability to make his or her own judgment on matters which will concern its whole life.

Raymond Firth from an anthropologist's standpoint, deals with Gods in primitive societies and the Christian God and how advanced theologians are exploring ways of adapting the tenets of the Church to social change. The trend which interests him is the emphasis on the human aspect of religion, its relevance to man's every-day concerns and its role in promoting social-justice, and gives as an example the worker priests and the attempts by Catholics and marxists to find common grounds on such subjects as work-
ers’ control of industry or Marx’s concept of alienation

Sir Karl Popper’s essay, the only one not written specifically for this book, was translated from a script to a broadcast originally addressed to a German audience. He denies there are laws of history, be they mechanistic, dialectical or organic. “Emancipation through Knowledge” is his theme. His ideal of our self-emancipation through knowledge rests on discovering our own errors and the errors of others. This is not the same as the ideal of mastery over nature, which Marxists adopt. Self-criticism and self-emancipation are only possible in a pluralist or open society, according to Popper.

However, Marxists do not reject the idea that progress in knowledge is made by recognition of error as well as recognition of success. Marx’s view that our opinions are determined by class interests does not negate this view. Marx investigated society and found that in class societies, class is a constant factor in forming opinions. His view was scientific. Classless society, the true open society cannot be achieved by universal tolerance of each other’s differences if this means reconciliation of class interests.

The principles of Humanism, that is scientific method in approaching nature and society; reliance on man to make his own history; universalism in morality and so on, are encompassed by people of many diverse views.

In a recent survey by the Australian Humanist which drew 256 replies, Humanists in Australia were found to comprise: 11.4% Radical (including 1.5% Marxist, .8% Communist); 55.8% Reformist; 55% Moderate; and 24% Miscellaneous.

Among all these, there would be a more or less general agreement about the aims of Humanism as presented in

The Humanist Outlook. Where the differences lie would be in the way we are to proceed to achieve a world which is “founded on reason and the belief in the value and dignity of man.”

BARBARA CURTHOYS

PRAGUE SPRING,
by Z. A. B. Zeman.
Penguin, 169 pp., 70c.

THE AUTHOR of this slim book about the events in Czechoslovakia during last year is a Czech migrant who re-visited Prague after 20 years of absence. This absence is probably the reason for the major draw-back of his book concerning the democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia.

The analysis is based on very good general knowledge of Czech historical background and on much factual material given mainly by the Czech press. The author uses quotations from Czech dailies and weeklies in the right context and it is obvious that he has studied Czech reality for many years.

But his observations are limited by his long absence from the country. He places the beginning of the Prague Spring in the year 1967. Living in Czechoslovakia he would probably have realised that the great intellectual movement of the Czech and Slovak nations started 3-5 years earlier. Czech literature, film, theatre and art generally broke the barriers of Stalinism in the years of 1962-1964.

Zeman sees Prague Spring purely as intellectual reform. He gives a good picture of the journalists and writers’ world. His analysis of the student movement is rather vague in facts and atmosphere. Z. A. B. Zeman doesn’t write about the workers and the farmers who had their own specific reasons and motivations for challenging Novotny’s regime.