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THE MODERN SUPERSTITION

THE beginning of a change in the conduct of world affairs is becoming evident in the expressions of a handful of artists and writers, and while it is only a beginning, requiring a century or two more to gather strength, with perhaps some man-made disasters to drive it home, the lesson of history has already been learned by the few. The lesson is the utter uselessness of power, whether of a man or a nation.

Spiritual teachers, philosophers, and mystics have long made this claim, but with little effect upon human behavior. Hatred, said the Buddha, ceases not by hatred but only by love. It is better, Socrates declared, to suffer wrong than to inflict it. And Jesus, as we know, repeated the rule of the Buddha. Finally, in summary, here are some paragraphs from Gandhi:

> Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of an evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration. (1920.)
>
> Yours should not merely be a passive spirituality that spends itself in idle meditation, but it should be an active thing which will carry war into the enemy's camp. Never has anything been done on this earth without direct action. I reject the word "passive resistance" because of its insufficiency and its being interpreted as a weapon of the weak.
>
> What was the larger "symbiosis" that Buddha and Christ preached? Gentleness and love. Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the enemy's camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood. Christ drove out the moneychangers from the temple of Jerusalem and drew down curses from heaven upon the hypocrites and the Pharisees. Both were for intensely direct action. But even as Buddha and Christ chastized, they showed unmistakable love and gentleness behind every act of theirs. (1920).

Gandhi, it will be said, preached counsels of perfection. That is quite true. But he also made intermediate counsels for the great majority not ready for "perfection." He knew that practice sometimes makes perfect, that the way was still right though the motive might be weak. And he was "pragmatic" enough to welcome the good results of a good policy.

It is here, in the pragmatic way of thinking, that we have most of the instruction, in our time, of the making of the course of history. The "perfection" can come later—much later, perhaps—if perfection can ever come about. We shall quote from a book that has had recent attention in Review—*The Writer and Human Rights*—published in Toronto, Canada, by Lester & Orpen Dennys, 78 Sullivan St., Toronto, Ontario, in 1983, in behalf of the Toronto Arts Group for Human Rights. We find in an essay by Joseph Skvorecky, a Czech who migrated to Canada, a passage taken from a novel by Joseph Conrad (*Under Western Eyes*, 1911):

> . . . in a real revolution—not a simple dynastic change or a mere reform of institutions—in a real revolution the best characters do not come to the front. A violent revolution falls into the hands of narrow-minded fanatics and of tyrannical hypocrites at first. Afterwards comes the turn of all the pretentious intellectual failures of the time. Such are the chiefs and the leaders. You will notice that I have left out the mere rogues. The scrupulous and the just, the noble, humane, and devoted natures; the unselfish and the intelligent may begin a movement—but it passes away from them. They are not the leaders of the revolution. They are its victims: the victims of disgust, of disenchantment—often of remorse. Hopes grotesquely betrayed, ideals caricatured—that is the definition of revolutionary success.

"I wonder," Skvorecky says, "if anything can be added to this penetrating analysis?" Going on, he says:

> It is estimated that violent communist revolutions in our century have dined on about one hundred million men, women, and children. What

has been gained by this sumptuous feast? Basically, two things, both predicted by the so-called classics of Marxist-Leninism: the state that withered away, and the New Socialist Man.

The state has withered away all right—into a kind of Mafia, a perfect police regime. Thought-crime, which most believed to be just a morbid joke by Orwell, concocted when he was already dying of tuberculosis, has become a reality in today's "real socialism," as the stepfathers of the Czechoslovak Communist party have christened their own status quo. The material standards of living in these postrevolutionary police states are invariably lower, often much lower, than those of the developed Western democracies. .

The Czech novelist concludes his essay:

In his *Notebooks,* Albert Camus recorded a conversation with one of his communist cofighters in the French Resistance: "Listen, Tar, the real problem is this: no matter what happens, I shall always defend you against the rifles of the execution squad. But you will have to say yes to my execution."

Evelyn Waugh, whom I confess I prefer to all other British writers, said in an interview with Julian Webb: "An artist must be a reactionary. He has to stand out against the tenor of the age and not go flopping about; he must offer some little opposition."

All that I have learned about violent revolutions, from books and from personal experience, convinces me that Waugh was right.

Another contributor to this book, the Swedish writer and journalist, Per Wastberg, begins:

Writers, having no power, have moral authority. Our responsibility is to ourselves and to the future. The thought of the future not as a Utopia where everything becomes better but as something infinitely fragile is new to our generation. As someone has said: we no longer look upon our world as inherited from our fathers, we look upon it as borrowed from our children.

This realization, that our world is indeed borrowed from our children, is one of the fruits of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and of the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth.* Slowly we are recognizing that our wealth is ephemeral, that we live in an epoch of diminishing returns. What does this mean? It means that we are entering an age of scarcity, that our abundance will not last. And this in turn means that the truth about the future will be neither understood nor acted upon by the nation-states. For how can governments which rely on the approval of the masses accept and support the insight of a few prophetic souls? The future loss of abundance—although by no means entirely in the future—is not something that men in power will dare to predict when the "public" longs for prosperity. The publicists for states dare not be pessimists and tell the truth. Unaligned individuals—and this means writers and artists—make the discoveries that lead to loss of faith in states. Wastberg seems aware of this:

Literature points to means of experience not easily expressed within institutions. It is like love: best privately enjoyed, but with social consequences. Literature, as I see it proclaims that man is unpredictable and impenetrable, never to be entirely defined and thus never to be put to rational use by others. No geometry, no government or data bank can fully map out the needs of man, his dreams and fantasies. And so every work of art contains something liberating. That is why the censor hunts it, why so much energy is devoted to destroying such fragile things as dreams, thoughts, works of art—and their creators.

It follows that the creative writer is by nature anti-state. George Woodcock, Canadian anarchist and critic, gives some evidence:

A writer can and often does help prepare the climate of opinion and feeling in which a revolution occurs. The writings of Voltaire and Beaumarchais, each in his own way prepared the people's minds for the French Revolution. If they had not fostered in the French middle classes a mood of rejection toward the *ancien régime*, the Revolution of 1789 could hardly have taken place. But what happened in that Revolution—the Terror, the dictatorship of the Jacobins, the grim spectacle of the revolutionaries slaughtering each other after they had rid themselves of the aristocrats, and the eventual rise of the dictator Napoleon—neither Voltaire nor Beaumarchais ever foresaw. None of this was part of the future they envisaged. Voltaire's bones were buried with honor in the Pantheon by the revolutionaries, but if he had been alive in the 1790s, he would probably have shared Condorcet's choice of poison or the guillotine. Even Beaumarchais, master of intrigue though he was, had to flee from France and was condemned to death in absentia by the revolutionary tribunals.

> These are the men we often think of as the fathers of the French Revolution.

How different the American Revolution, which accomplished its ends. As Hannah Arendt remarks in *On Revolution:*

> It is odd indeed to see that twentieth-century American even more than European learned opinion is often inclined to interpret the American Revolution in the light of the French Revolution, or to criticize it because it so obviously did not conform to lessons learned from the latter. The sad truth of the matter is that the French Revolution, which ended in disaster, has made world history, while the American Revolution, so triumphantly successful, has remained of little more than local importance.

Why should it have been so? Because, perhaps, neither the American leaders nor many of those who fought in the revolution sought power for themselves. Freedom was their concern, not the rule of others.

George Woodcock continues his analysis:

> Revolutions are not realizations of the idealistic visions of writers; they are sociopolitical eruptions in which the collapse of an existing structure of power creates a vacuum into which many forces rush, seeking to take over the vacant situations of authority. The freedom that may have been the dominant desideratum in the prerevolutionary period is the first victim of the struggle for power.

Why do people "struggle for power"? Because, when they gain power, they are able to have and to hold—to take things away from people without power. This is no secret. But those who take part in other people's struggle for power, without having any lust for power themselves, do so from ignorance, from their belief that the powerful are needed to protect the freedom of all. They lack faith in moral authority. While it is true that moral authority alone is vulnerable to deceit, in a society where moral authority is respected deceit becomes increasingly difficult. The pressure of community opinion is not easily overcome and the deceitful are much more usually found in urban areas where people, even neighbors, hardly know one another. In such circumstances, liars do not become known by reputation, and clever pretenders are accepted for what they claim. In addition, there are all those who "go along" as the easiest thing to do. Then resistance becomes painful, often fatal. Freedom then depends upon a willingness to die.

Jacobo Timerman, a journalist who was imprisoned by the Argentine authorities and now lives in exile in Israel, writes in the book we have been quoting:

> In Argentina there were probably one thousand guerrilla fighters when the armed forces took over in 1976. In five years they killed thirty-five thousand people in their war against subversive terrorists. The armed force *created* what our greatest living writer, Jorge Luis gorges, described as the terrorism of the state. There was no censorship in those years in Argentina, after the armed forces took over; but according to the Commission of Families of Missing Journalists, one hundred journalists have disappeared. So it was a kind of biological censorship. Many times, like many of my colleagues, I had to make a decision about what to do in these conditions. People who had fought against the Nazis in Germany usually said in these conditions you could go underground or you had to go into exile. But for an independent newspaper, this is practically impossible. Many journalists who were part of a political party, or of some other kind of organization, could go underground together with their political party, or they could go into exile. But somebody who's working on a newspaper that is open to the public, legally published, has to make another kind of decision: whether he is going to accept self-censorship, to close his eyes, or whether he is going to try to do something. If he decides to do something, it is very difficult to define—every day if you have a daily newspaper—exactly what you are going to do.
>
> Of the ten national newspapers in Argentina at that time, only two newspapers were badly persecuted, my own and the Buenos Aires *Herald,* an English newspaper—in different ways of course. I had no ambassador who represented me, but the editors of the Buenos Aires *Herald* were British citizens; they had the British ambassador supporting them, and they could have their fight in a different way. . . .
>
> When there are twenty thousand people missing in Argentina, one hundred journalists is not a big number. But it is a big number when you take into account how many journalists work in Argentina. In that context, one hundred journalists missing in Argentina is the first genocide of journalists known in our century.

One thing we noticed while reading this book is that it presents writers we have never thought of as existing at all! Apparently, there are writers everywhere, these days. For example, Fawaz Turki is a Palestinian writer and poet who now lives in the United States. In his contribution he says:

> The Palestinian writer is always under observation. There is a direct correlation between the degree of his activism and the kind of observation he is subjected to. The knock on the door, in the middle of the night, is all too common, and always takes place after the writer has given a reading, a lecture, or a poetry recital that the authorities did not like. Their excuse is always that he is "cooperating with the terrorists." His house is searched and his manuscripts are confiscated. Virtually every major Palestinian writer in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as in pre-1948 Palestine (where the Palestinians who live there now are called Israeli citizens) has been at one time or another imprisoned. Or placed under preventive detention. Or house arrest. Or confined to their towns. Incarceration, in this case, always implies abuse—physical abuse. . . . That is the plight of the Palestinian writer under occupation in the West Bank/Gaza and in pre-1948 Palestine.
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> The plight of the Palestinian writer in exile, in different parts of the Arab world, is actually identical to what every Arab writer endures. He is not, in other words, singled out because of his national identity.
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> As is well known, the Arab world is ruled predominantly by insecure, repressive, and violent regimes whose continued existence derives from suppression, by state power, of any kind of democratic dissent; by regimes whose survival, for the most part against the mass sentiment, is underwritten by either one of the two superpowers. Why Arab society finds itself under such conditions is not, of course, our concern here. But obviously it has to do with the colonial experience that the Third World, of which the Arab world is a part has had to endure for something like five hundred years, and with the fact that decolonization, when it came, was a process of continuing colonization (under a different guise) undertaken by indigenous landlords subservient to the interests of foreign powers.
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> Suffice it to say here that the Palestinian writer, like the Arab writer in general, must publish material that is responsive only to the political paradigm in the country where he lives. The moment he becomes, by virtue of his being both craftsman and militant, an adversarial current in his host state, he becomes the object of censorship, abuse, imprisonment, and worse.

We add here a comment by Jacobo Timerman that needs to be remembered in all such matters. He says that "the people who are fighting most openly for the rights of Palestinians are the Israeli democrats, including myself."

> And I have read, in the Israeli press, in newspapers like the Jerusalem *Post,* much stronger statements demanding freedom of expression for the Palestinian than the statement made by our Palestinian poet here today. And I have read, in the Israeli press, better descriptions of the persecution and discrimination against the Palestinians *in the Arab countries* than I have seen from any Palestinian writer.

What are these Israeli democrats, and the "democratic', writers in other lands, contending against? We all know the answer: they contend against the coercive power of the state.

An unpopular thinker of the nineteenth century, Herbert Spencer, put his finger on the trouble they encounter—and struggle against with only moderate success—calling it "the Great Political Superstition." He titled the paper which became the last chapter of his book, *The Man Versus the State,* with these words, then said in his opening sentences: "The great political superstition of the past was the divine right of kings. The great political superstition of the present is the divine right of parliaments." It is this superstition which makes the people of even the modern democracies tolerant of the terrorism of modern states, for what, after all, is nuclear power but an instrument of the terrorism of states?

Yet if we read the books by writers who comprehend the methods of these states as well as what can and cannot be accomplished with nuclear weapons, we soon learn the military uselessness of this immeasurably destructive power. Even some military men are agreed on this. And even some military men, along with a great many others, are now reading Gandhi as a result.

REVIEW
READ THE BOOK

ONE reason why Plato is often given second place in world thought, after Aristotle, is that Plato believed that the nailed-down certainties of logic are not as important as the decisions a man makes when he cannot be "logically" sure that he is right. Aristotle, on the other hand, insisted that the syllogistic sure thing had the highest rank in the pursuit of truth. But Plato saw that the "sure thing" does not require us to think, but only to accept what has been "demonstrated." He, in turn, insisted upon the importance of a *choice;* on following an inner guide even when we cannot be *sure*—sure in the sense of indisputable mathematical proof. Only the secondary truths can be made certain, he held, and so Aristotle has been deemed the wiser of the two.

Yet Plato, with the decline of faith in mechanistic calculations, has been getting more attention in recent years. People wonder about the value of a certainty which costs us our intellectual and even our moral freedom. A statement not subject to dissent, when accepted, in no way improves our character. And as Socrates affirmed, what does not improve our character, while it may bring skill in argument, may prove delusive. Following Socrates, Plato developed the dialectic, the form of inquiry which looks for first principles, making them the test of all else. Both he and Socrates held that only a good man can have wisdom.

But why should a man wish to be good, when there arc so many advantages to be obtained by self-interest? Plato found this question difficult to answer, as do we all. Yet there have been and are good men in the world, and Plato proposed that the one who, like Socrates, chooses this path is led by a divine madness, an *eros* or love which announces itself from his inmost being, declaring what is right to do. Given the impulse born from this madness—which, alas, is not always divine—the man is led to cultivate his understanding of what is good to do, using the dialectic, the question-and-answer inquiry, in order to train his mind in the recognition of the value of justice. For Socrates, the "madness" came from his *daemon,* his inner or higher self, an instructor that the old Athenian would never dispute. Yet that only some men, not all, felt the constraint of the daemon remained a mystery. It was this that caused Plato so much uncertainty as to whether virtue could be taught. Men, he showed, could teach their sons the skills they needed to be "successful," but they could not impart the wisdom by which skills are used responsibly. Yet surely Plato regarded Socrates as one who had found a way to teach virtue. He succeeded in this with some, although not with Callicles, Polus, and others, such as Alcibiades.

The question we are raising here is: How do we know what we know? How do we know that it is true? All that a Platonist can reply is that the real truth is self-validating. One knows in one's heart what is true. Yet in this a person can be endlessly self-deceived. There are demons of appetite, of arrogance, of conceit, as well as the Socratic sort of *daemon.* And there are techniques for the imitation, for producing the appearance, of righteousness, as Machiavelli well knew. The mystery remains.

Yet thoughtful men—usually themselves good—keep on wondering what it is that drives men to be good, and then become wise. This brings us to the book we have for review—Martin Buber's *Ecstatic Confessions,* first published in German in 1909, and now offered in English by Harper & Row ($16.95), translated by Esther Cameron. This is Buber's investigation of the divine madness. As the editor, Paul Mendes-Flohr, tells us, Buber said to his original publisher, Eugen Diederichs, that the volume would be concerned "much more with the affirmation of life and a positive spirit than with asceticism and a flight from the world." In it he gathered quotations from the *Mahabharata,* Islamic mystics, Plotinus, Jakob Böhme, Jalal al-din Rumi, Lao-tse, and a number of hardly known women mystics. Buber says in his Foreword:

> I am not concerned with finding a conceptual "pigeonhole" for ecstasy. It is the unclassifiable aspect of ecstasy that interests me. Certainly it also has another aspect, by which it can be situated in the causal context of events; but that is not the subject of this book. The ecstatic individual may be explained in terms of psychology, physiology, pathology; what is important to us is that which remains beyond explanation: the

individual's experience. We pay no heed here to those notions which are bent on establishing "order" even in the darkest corners; we are listening to a human being speak of the soul and of the soul's ineffable mystery.

In his Introduction Buber says:

> If religion has really "developed," as people say, then one may regard as an essential stage of this process the change which the conception of God has undergone. At first human beings seem to have explained with the name God primarily that which they did not understand about the world; then, however, oftener and oftener, that which they did not understand about themselves. Thus ecstasy—that which humans could least understand about themselves—became God's highest gift. . . .
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> In the experience of ecstasy itself there is as yet nothing that points either inward our outward. Whoever experiences the oneness of I and world knows nothing of I and world. For—as it says in the Upanishads—just as a man embraced by a woman he loves has no consciousness of what is outside or inside, so the mind, embraced by the primal self, has no consciousness of what is outside or inside. But the human being cannot help placing even what is most subjective and free, once it has been lived, in the concatenation of the commotion, and forging for that which, timeless and fetterless as eternity, passes through the soul, a little past (the cause) and a little future (the effect). But the more authentic and unbound the experience is, the harder it necessarily is to place it in the circle of the other, of what is bound—the more natural and irrefutable it is to ascribe it to one who is above the world and outside all bonds. The human being who trudges along day by day in the functions of bodiliness and unfreedom receives in ecstasy a revelation of freedom. One who knows only differentiated experience—the experience of meaning, of thought, of will, connected with one another, yet still separate in this separation and conscious—comes to know an undifferentiated experience: the experience of the I. One who always feels and knows only particulars about himself suddenly finds himself under the storm cloud of a force, a superabundance, an infinity, in which even the most primal security, the barrier between the self and the other, has foundered. One cannot burden the general run of occurrences with this experience; one does not dare to lay it upon his poor I, of which he does not suspect that it carries the world-I; so one hangs it on God. And what one thinks, feels and dreams about God then enters into his ecstasies, pours itself out upon them in a shower of images and sounds, and creates around the experience of unity a multiform mystery.

Buber is wonderfully satisfying. Most of the time you know exactly what he means and it seems just and right. He affirms and he doubts, yet his doubts become only questions about uncertainties. He will not pretend. And so, after a time, you trust him more and more.

The report of the ecstatic, he says, is not a stammering but is "might and mastery."

> He wants to create a memorial for ecstasy which leaves no traces, to tow the timeless into the harbor of time; he wants to make the unity without multiplicity into the unit of all multiplicity. The thought of the great myth awakens, a thought which runs through all the times of humanity: the myth of unity which becomes plurality because it wants to gaze and be gazed at, to know and be known, to love and be loved, and which, while itself remaining unity, embraces itself as multiplicity; of the I which begets a Thou; of the primal self which transforms itself into the world, of the divinity which transforms itself into God. Is the myth proclaimed by the Vedas and Upanishads, Midrash and Kabbala, Plato and Jesus, not the symbol of what the ecstatic has experienced? Did not the masters of all times, who created and recreated it again and again, draw on their own experience? For they too have experienced unity; and they too passed out of unity into multiplicity. But because their ecstasy was not the irruption of something unheard of, overwhelming the soul, but an ingathering and deep upwelling and a familiarity with the ground, the Word did not lie upon them like a driving conflagration; it lay upon them like the hand of a father. And so it guided them to insert the experience—not as an event in the commotion, nor as a report in the intelligence of time, but to put it into the deed of their lives, to work it into their work, to make of it the new poem of the primal myth, and thus to place it not as a thing among the things of the earth, but as a star amid the stars of heaven.
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> But is the myth a phantasm? Is it not a revelation of the ultimate reality of being? Is not the experience of the ecstatic a symbol of the primal experience of the universal mind? Are not both a living, inner experience?
>
> We listen to our inmost selves—and do not know which sea we hear murmuring.

Buber, one is tempted to say, is quite as good, himself, as those whom he quotes in this book. His prose sings, and the translator has a part in the voice. For his selections, see the book.

COMMENTARY
APOLOGY AND CORRECTION

IN MANAS for May 5, 1976, Frontiers published a glowing report of Operation Flood, an enormous milk-distributing project to benefit some 30 million people living in urban areas in India—Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, and Madras. Our report was based on a story in the *London Times* which told how an Indian, Verghese Kurien, graduate of the University of Michigan as a dairy engineer, brought the milk of buffaloes and cows to the milk-starved people in these cities by organizing dairy production cooperatives on a large scale, improving the quality of the milk delivered by "better breeding, feeding, and animal hygiene." Kurien, it was said, competed successfully with international companies such as Lever Bros. and Nestlé, which offer dairy products, by underselling these suppliers. He was financed, it was reported, by Unicef and Oxfam.

But now we find, in the second article by Bharat Dogra, mentioned but not quoted in this week's "Children," that Operation Flood has in some ways had an effect precisely opposite to what we suggested ten years ago. Apparently, it is easy to be misled in such matters. In the conclusion of this article "Disaster," Dogra says:

> Who then has benefited from Operation Flood? Not the villagers. The production of dairy products has in certain areas passed out of their hands since they cannot compete with the capital-intensive, highly financed cooperatives and since the hybrid cattle being made available today are of little use to them. The poorer among them have also been deprived of *chach*, the by-product of making *ghee*.
>
> Land and feedstuffs have partly been taken over by the cooperatives for producing milk and expensive milk products which are sold to the cities whose inhabitants alone are able to afford them. The villagers may eventually be faced with a shortage of draught animals as the hybrid bullocks, which have no use for this purpose, are sold off to butchers in the cities.
>
> Indeed, those who have really benefited are the industrial nations and their own highly pampered dairy industry. They have managed to get rid of vast milk surpluses largely produced with the aid of unnecessary subsidies from the Common Market. Companies manufacturing dairy equipment have also benefited since the cooperatives are ready markets for the machinery they produce, which peasants can never afford.

Moreover, the hybrid cows are not suited to the rigors of Indian agriculture, being more susceptible to disease and not well adapted to the hot Indian climate. The poorer farmers either do not have milch cows or lack the land on which to pasture them, so that they may go dry. The *ghee* spoken above is a clarified butter made from buffalo milk, while *chach* is nutritious by-product that is an important part of the diet of the poor. Operation Flood has put out of business various village-based enterprises, so that even middle-level peasants are hurt by the big-city operations which have been taking over *ghee*-making. The rural poor have less milk to drink, while the urban poor lack the money to buy milk. In short, as the editors of the *Ecologist* say: Operation Flood is "just one more of the FAO-devised and World-Bank-financed disasters that are creating impoverishment and hunger throughout the Third World."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NEWS ABOUT INDIA

IN a recent MANAS lead article the writer began with extensive quotation from a book, *Poverty, Development and Poverty*, self-published in Delhi by the author. His address and the price were provided, with the comment that this book "is not the sort of volume one will ever find in the shops in the United States." The author is Bharat Dogra, an Indian environmental journalist, and we now find that he has contributed two articles to the *Ecologist* (No. 1/2, 1985) on the subject dealt with in his book. If the *Ecologist* were available to students in the school libraries of America, such material could be used by teachers to show the follies and even anti-human results of a great deal of the "foreign aid" in which many Americans take pride.

What does Bharat Dogra write about in his books and articles? The title of one of his *Ecologist* contributions is "Forcing the Starving to Export their Food." He begins:

> It is evident to all that one of the main causes of malnutrition and famine in India as elsewhere in the Third World is the systematic replacement of subsistence farming by large-scale, export-oriented agriculture. This still does not prevent the Indian Government (with encouragement from international agencies) to do everything in its power to further accelerate this fatal process in the interests of earning more foreign exchange for development.
>
> Like most countries under colonial rule, India during the last two centuries has suffered from the systematic diversion of land from the production of staple food crops to that of export crops, a process which occurred even when serious food shortages existed in the country. But more unfortunate is the fact that today, nearly thirty-seven years after independence, a concerted drive to increase farm exports is being made at a time when serious hunger and malnutrition continue to exist in the country. . . .
>
> Particularly notable has been the increase in the export of some staple foods which the local population requires. Thus the export of rice increased during this period [ten years] by over twenty times (32,000 tons to 726,000 tons) while the export of fish which constitutes the main source of animal protein in coastal areas has more than doubled.
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> Exports of vegetables, fruit and pulses (peas, beans, lentils] which are an essential part of the diet of the Indian people increased during this period by more than six times, from 123 million to 797 million rupees.

This is Dogra's conclusion:

> In today's exploitative system a large number of people in India do not have the purchasing power to meet their most basic food needs. Instead of taking those steps required to assure that the poor meet their minimum nutritional needs, the government seems to have decided to use the country's land resources for growing cash crops so as to earn the foreign exchange required to maintain a massive state bureaucracy and the well-to-do minority in the large cities.
>
> This simply represents a systematic transfer of resources from the rural people who are thereby condemned to malnutrition and, at the current rate at which things are proceeding, to eventual starvation. What is truly depressing is that this should be the global policy of national governments, international agencies and multilateral development banks—those who at present determine agricultural and trade patterns throughout the world.

In a note introducing this article, Edward Goldsmith, *Ecologist* editor, recalls that Mrs. Indira Gandhi, when she was Prime Minister, claimed that India has "achieved food self-sufficiency," which became the full justification for the Green Revolution. But self-sufficiency was far from realized. As Goldsmith observes:

> To say that a country is "self-sufficient" in food does not mean that all its inhabitants have enough to eat. It simply means that the "effective demand"—a purely economic concept—has been satisfied. This means that those who have enough money to spend on food have been satiated and that there is no remaining economic demand for any more food.
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> Unfortunately it so happens that the vast mass of the grossly underfed in India have no money. This means that their biological requirement for food is not reflected in "effective demand." This in turn means that food "self-sufficiency" can co-exist with malnutrition and indeed famine on a very large and increasing scale.

Goldsmith quotes from the *Statesman* for Dec. 22, 1984:

> "Of the 23 million infants born in the country [India] every year, only 3 million may be truly healthy. . . . Of the rest, 7 million are likely to suffer from minor forms of *malnutrition.* Three million are expected to die before they complete their first year and one million before they reach childhood. And 9 million would enter adulthood with impaired physical stamina and reduced mental ability because of *severe malnutrition.* Thus only 15% of the children would have full genetic potential of growth and physical and mental development."

"How, in such conditions," Goldsmith asks, "can one conceivably justify the policy of systematically increasing agricultural exports? "

For access to Bharat Dogra and his book, see page one of last week's MANAS. For people in the United States, the *Ecologist* is $28.00 a year, with reductions for schools and people with little money; the address is Worthydale Manor Farm, Camelford, Cornwell PL32 9TT U.K. This is a large magazine which deals effectively with ecological issues, provides good book reviews, and takes the view that Science should not only tell what is, but what ought to be. In the issue under consideration, there is this quotation from Ruth Nanda Anshen:

> The outworn Cartesian, scientific world view has ceased to be scientific in the most profound sense of the word, for a common bond links us all—man, animal, plant, and galaxy—in the unitary principle of all reality. For the self without the universe is empty.

* * *

Geography lesson: The San Juan Islands sound like a tropical region, but they lie in the Pacific Ocean at the northwest corner of the United States, in the Haro Strait which separates Vancouver Island from the U.S. and the Canadian mainland. The four main islands of the San Juans are Orcas, San Juan, Lopez, and Shaw; they all total 768, but some of them are rocks and reefs visible only during low tide. Fifty of the islands are populated and 175 have names.

How do we know all this? Someone, a reader or friend, has sent us a large book—a picture book of magnificent color photographs by Ed Cooper, *San Juan Islands,* with engaging text by Ruth Kirk, issued in 1983 by the Graphic Arts Center Publishing Co., P.O. Box 10306, in Portland, Oregon 97210.

Apart from the beauty of the region, a main attraction of the islands is the simple life of the people. They fish, of course, catching salmon by the reef-net method developed by the Indians—with technical improvements—and raising sheep which they shear for wool which they spin, then weave. A local resident on Lopez, one of the larger islands, Wendy Mickle, relates:

> "It's nice and sociable, getting together and spinning. . . . Last month the school here suspended classes for a day and brought in community people to teach the kids spinning, dyeing, and weaving. . . . by phoning around I easily got the use of seven spinning wheels. . . . You can learn spinning in two or three days with a good teacher."

The islands are a birdwatcher's paradise. Ruth Kirk, who gets about in a small sloop with her husband, says:

> Birdwatching turns me philosophical—and in these waters without turning my head, I see hundreds of marine birds of more than a dozen species. I watch a pair of auklets and note exactly how they submerge. For example: first the head goes down; then the tail makes a brief, triangular appearance; and they're gone. No thrashing with feet or wings, or squawking. The auklets are looking at you with their striped faces and yellow bills. And then they're not.

There are still a few places like this left in the United States—healthy, beautiful, and properly poor.

FRONTIERS

Humans Are Complicated—and Free Agents

IF the truth be known, *everybody* believes in free will, although some people argue contemptuously against it. We blame people for what they do, are more horrified by some offenses than others, and look up to and even deify a wonderful few because of their behavior (if they are gods we can feel a little less accountable, ourselves), and usually decide that the individuals defined as *psychopaths* are not really human at all. Yet it is somewhat comforting to be able to say that people who do bad things are made to do them by heredity or environment—and what else is there to a human being? A lot, it turns out.

In *Harper's* for last August, David Kelley discusses this question in a review-essay which considers eight books concerned with criminals and their punishment, and the theories relating to why offenders do what they do. The writer says at the beginning, setting the question:

> If our actions are a product of causes outside our control then it is unfair—and ineffective—to blame criminals for what is really the fault of society, or their parents, or their genes. We must try to alter those causes, and use punishment solely as a means of rehabilitation. If our actions are freely chosen, however, then society can hold us responsible for them and refuse to indulge the kinds of excuses that determinism offers. Punishing wrongdoers is then a form of retribution, and a way of removing them from our midst.

Lately, Mr. Kelley says, the popular vote has been in the direction of free will. People didn't much like the insanity defense of John Hinckley, and Congress responded by tightening the requirements of the insanity defense. After a recent dip, the crime rate has continued to rise, and law and order along with being tough on crime and criminals are gaining public endorsement.

But in the effort to *explain* criminality, Kelley says, scholars in this area incline to determinism.

> The most powerful models of explanation we have are drawn from the physical sciences. The social sciences have not abandoned the hope of finding laws that govern human action in the way that the law of gravity governs the motion of a stone; and journalists who set out to explain particular crimes, to get behind the "story," are drawn ineluctably into the search for causes. But the search always runs into problems, problems that arise from the very assumption that criminal behavior is solely a product of causes beyond the criminal's control. Thus to solve the social problem of crime we must first confront a philosophical one. We need to acknowledge the inadequacy of determinism.

The author examines the various theories found in the books proposing how and why some people are conditioned into performing criminal acts; the explanations are interesting but not good enough. Neither heredity nor environment satisfies Mr. Kelley as an explanation of crimes. Citing *The Tangled Wing* by Melvin Konner, which finds genetic endowment mainly responsible for what we do, he comments:

> This is not to say, of course, that the environment is irrelevant, merely that environmental determinism is as narrow and simple-minded as genetic determinism. As Konner writes, "Any analysis of the causes of human nature that tends to ignore *either* the genes *or* the environmental factors may safely be discarded." . . .
>
> In the human brain, the massive expansion of the frontal lobes made possible two traits that have always seemed to distinguish man from other animals: the capacities for self-awareness and for abstract, conceptual thought. Konner has almost nothing to say about these capacities, or about the fact that they enable us to modify and override the more primitive responses of evolutionarily older parts of the brain. . . . Psychologists in the nineteenth century identified a disorder that seemed to involve no cognitive impairment—those who had it were often quite intelligent and clearheaded—but rather a gross deficiency in what used to be called the *moral* faculties: the capacities for deep feeling, working toward goals, living according to standards, cooperating with others.

In many cases, criminals have been found to be quite intelligent, yet creatures of impulse, unable to feel shame, regarding morality as purely

a matter of appearance. The criminal wants to be top-dog and fear that he will not be successful institutes a major threat "because puncturing his inflated self-concept is psychological homicide."

Mr. Kelley turns to another book:

> In *Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice,* Charles Silberman describes the brutality of crimes committed by Juvenile delinquents, often without remorse. Silberman attributes this to the fact that they "have been so brutalized in their own upbringing." More generally, he suggests that crime usually springs from an impoverished self-conception, caused in turn by economic poverty: "In a society that rewards success and penalizes failure . . . to be poor is to live with continual self-doubt." But this cannot be the whole story unless we assume—and the assumption is often made by social scientists, usually without the benefit of evidence—that the individual derives his self-esteem exclusively from the responses of others. That assumption leaves no way to account for the fact that people differ in precisely this respect: the autonomy of their self-estimates.

Instead of reserving space for "editorial comment," we give the last words to Mr. Kelley, on whom we can hardly improve:

> The conflict between free will and determinism first arose in philosophy, and most of the philosophical arguments for human freedom have been variations on a common theme. Because we are capable of self-consciousness, it is claimed, we can focus attention on an impulse or feeling and examine it from a kind of inner distance that can weaken its aura or grip. Because we are capable of conceptual thought, we can evaluate these impulses and feelings—their consequences, their effects on others, their compatibility with our principles—and choose whether to act on them. We are free agents because those capacities give us veto power over the forces that move us.
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> Determinists have always found this argument naive: science, they say, will show that behavior is governed by causes beyond the reach of conceptual thought and self-awareness. But in the case of crime, at any rate, the trail of scientific inquiry keeps circling back to those very capacities. It would be too much to say that science can establish human freedom. That will always be a philosophical issue. But the old assumption that science is a witness against free will is not true either—it will not survive a close look at what scientists have actually discovered. Human beings have turned out to be far more complicated than the sciences of man have anticipated. We may just turn out to be as complicated as we have always thought.

Scientific journals please copy.