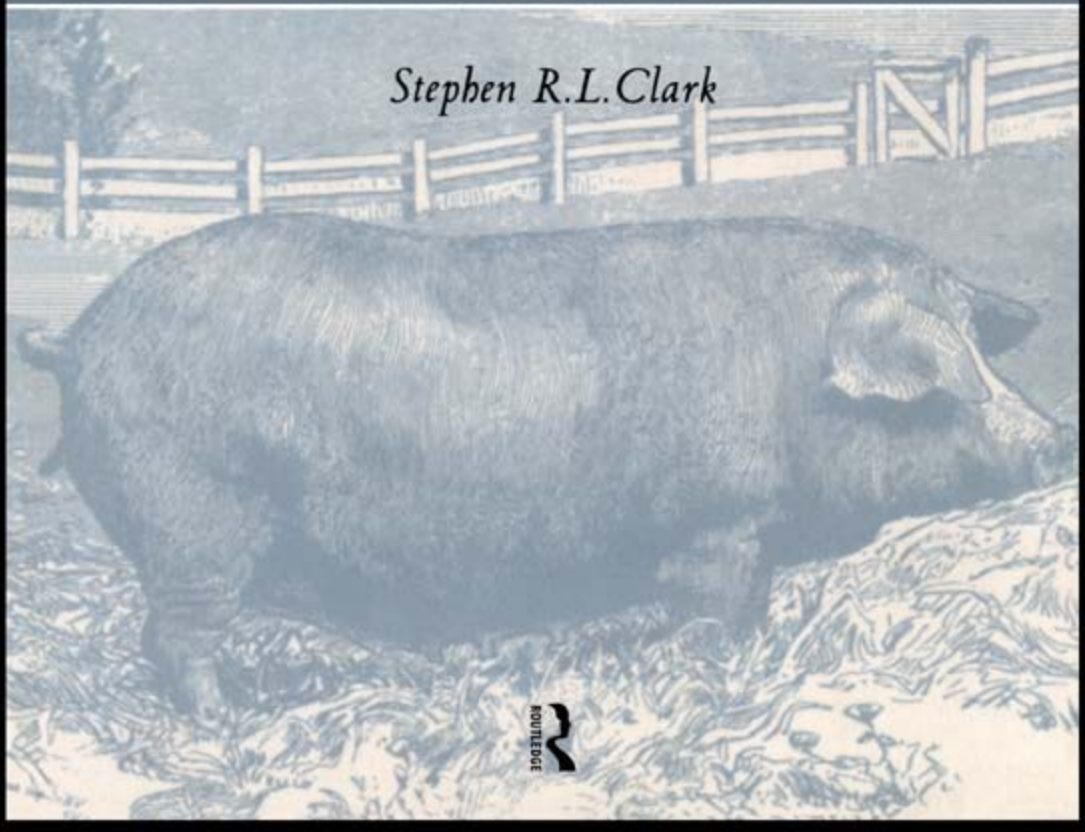
the Political Animal

BIOLOGY, ETHICS & POLITICS



Stephen R.L. Clark

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> Stephen Clark is a very perceptive and original philosopher. *The Political Animal* shows the very great interest that a biological/ethological approach to politics can have. It is an extremely thought-provoking study, a valuable contribution to political theory.
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> Stephen Clark's book is immensely welcome....He does full justice to the rational ideas which have shaped Western political thought but he places that thought – and human life altogether – firmly in the far wider context of the evolved biosphere....He gives a fresh and most useful slant to a whole range of apparently familiar topics – anarchism, nationalism, environmentalism, slavery, above all perhaps the meaning of the family. Read him.
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In *The Political Animal,* Stephen Clark investigates the political nature of the human animal. His book, based on biological science and traditional ethics, probes into areas of inquiry hitherto ignored by traditional political theory. He argues for the significance of social bonds that transcend state authority and provides numerous examples of how the needs of human beings are better served by institutions other than the imperial state.

Understanding the ties that bind us suggests that 'states' have less authority and importance than is presently supposed. Stephen Clark believes that a properly informed political philosophy must take the role of women, children and the domestic virtues more seriously and be prepared to face up to the ethnocentric and domineering tendencies of the human animal.

Stephen R.L. Clark is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Liverpool. He is the author of *Animals and Their Moral Standing,* also published by Routledge in 1997.

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Biology, ethics and politics

Stephen R.L. Clark

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Lines from W.B. Yeats's 'The Seven Sages' are reprinted by permission of A.P. Watt Ltd on behalf of Michael B. Yeats and Macmillan London Ltd and of Macmillan New York.

Introduction

This is at once a companion volume to an earlier collection of papers, *Animals and their Moral Standing,* and an independent exploration of issues in political philosophy. My aim over the last twenty years has been to consider human society in the light of zoological information, treating human beings as the human animals that in fact they are. 'Treating human beings as animals', of course, has unwelcome connotations: my intention, emphatically, is not what is commonly intended by that phrase. To treat someone 'as an animal', in common speech, is to ignore any serious wishes that they have (beyond, at best, such interests as food or sex), to try to control them by threats or bribes, to neglect their troubles and kill them if they make us even momentarily uncomfortable. To behave 'like an animal', correspondingly, is to act out momentary impulses of desire or fear, without regard to any consequences for oneself or others. It is my conviction that all this rests on ignorance, and willed self-delusion. Respecting animals (including human animals), we shall both understand and treat them better.

My approach to political philosophy has been conditioned by many accidents of family relationship, early reading and professional experience. I was born into a family staunchly devoted to the historical Labour Party, and conscious of its own origins in the labouring masses of Staffordshire and Shropshire, on the border between Wales and England. Though I have never actually lived there, and have only occasional contact with my relatives, I still regard myself as native to that border landscape, and a member of the Anglo-Welsh lineage (it is of course occasionally convenient to distance myself from the 'mere Englishness', with which – in the eyes of others – my Oxford education has identified me). During my adolescence (and beyond) my imagination was fed by science fiction, on the one hand, and the Greek classics on the other. What is here and now has always seemed to me a tiny and unrepresentative segment of reality. As Boethius told us, in one of the founding texts of European civilisation, the earth is no more than a dimensionless point by comparison with the heavens. What is odd is that those who remember this are supposed to be less 'realistic' than those who choose to forget it.

My first independent academic work involved me in the study of Aristotle, the founder both of systematic political theory and of natural history. 'Natural history', indeed, was an enquiry into the ways that both humans and non-humans lived. By studying other animal societies we may come to see how human societies work, or how they may be made to work. Aristotle believed, more strongly than Plato, that human beings were different from others – or rather that *free* human beings were different. Only those who are free can take responsibility for their own lives, individually and collectively. State structures, as they feature in more recent political thought, always tend to the slavish. The drift of my thought has been towards the anarchistic version of Aristotelian politics (largely neglected in mainstream scholarship).

The second influence on my thought, as I have already hinted, lay in the next major academic work I did: to discuss the moral status of (non-human) animals. What sort of society could we or should we form once we began to take them seriously, as 'fellow voyagers in the odyssey of evolution', neighbours and fellow members of society? Some of those issues I addressed in the papers now collected in the earlier volume, always with an eye to the implications for our own social organisation. At the same time I began to address problems that mainstream political philosophy had defined – in my view absurdly – as marginal. What would society be like if women, children, animals were taken seriously as makers and movers? What will it be like if we move away from the hierarchical structures that even 'good liberals' still live by? What will it be like if we allow the voice of sentiment a larger role, rather than insisting on the abstract laws devised by 'rational man'?

Not so long ago, nor all that far away, we knew our place.[1] The old could command the young, parents command children, the well-born command the lowly born, men command women, and the High King over all. No-one need have any doubts about their duty. We all owed duties of deference to those above us, and of care to those below. Horses, dogs and cattle had their position too (and one that was sometimes higher, in its way, than those of many humans). On the one hand, they could be punished for stepping out of line; on the other, they would be valued and rewarded for playing their part. Wild creatures were assigned to similar roles, at once a reflection of, and a justification for, the status society of civilised humanity. The vision still has enormous influence, even amongst people who think they have escaped. Witness that reactionary fiction *The Lion King,* which requires us to believe that the land will be fertile, and 'at peace', if the rightful king (high up in the food chain) withstands the incursion of undisciplined hordes (hyenas) who seek to transcend their natures!

Status society does have merits. In its proper form, it is because we fulfil our duties of care, to our inferiors, that we may be owed obedience. As Humphrey Primatt, an eighteenth-century Anglican clergyman, insisted in his plea for decent

treatment of non-human animals, 'he who boasts of the dignity of his nature and the advantages of his station, and thence infers his fight of oppression of his inferiors exhibits his folly as well as his malice' (1839, p. 22). Those duties of care, and forbearance, were diminished when political and moral theorists successfully challenged status society in the name of contract. Instead of owing obedience to our natural superiors, the story went, we owed it only where there was, or could reasonably be thought to be, a contract of obedience. Mutual obligations, it was said, rested on an actual or hypothetical agreement, and a decent human society, accordingly, imposed identical duties of care and forbearance on all adult human beings. Non-human creatures, being incapable of making contracts or abiding by them, were excluded, as they had been by the Stoics, from all forms of justice. Human children, women and the weak were also marginalised, for just the same reasons. Even as status crumbled as a moral and political norm for 'civilised' humanity it was reinforced, in its least respectful form, for everything non-human, and for many humans too. Uncivilised humanity, or 'savages', or 'children' were treated as fair game: they, too, could not be judged to 'own' the land they lived on, or to have made bargains that a civilised court would enforce. Nowadays, we pay lip service to the thought that *all* human beings have equivalent rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Non-human creatures and 'savages' are still largely undefended; even children are defended, it sometimes seems, more for what they may become than for what they actually are.

In its seventeenth-century beginnings, contract society did not in fact give absolute rights of ownership and use to human beings. Strictly, we could never own the land itself, but only, at most, its fruits – and those on condition that we left as good for others. The moral doctrine that recent environmentalists have attributed (no doubt correctly) to the native peoples that European colonists despised and conquered, was actually one that those same Europeans held. The Conservative Minister of the British Crown who recently quoted Ruskin in support of the Rio Convention might as easily have quoted Jefferson, or Locke, or Leviticus. We had no 'right' to destroy the land, nor deny it to other creatures who had as great a need of it as we. Nor could we have any 'right' to treat non-human creatures cruelly. 'You bought [the horse] with your money, it is true, and he is your property; but, whether you are apprised of it or not, you bought him with a condition necessarily annexed to the bargain. You could not purchase the right to use him with cruelty and injustice. Of whom could you purchase such a right? Who could make such a conveyance?'[2] Ownership, in English and other law, has never conveyed a legal right to do exactly as we please with what we own, and there were plenty of rulings in our history to dictate some decent treatment for creatures that were our 'property' (as being things that we could buy and sell). 'The righteous man has a care for his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel', so the

Book of Proverbs dictated. Even when the wicked did nothing 'against the law' in beating their dogs or their horses or their wives and children, what they did would meet with public disapproval.

For though the surface doctrine was the Stoic one, that non-rational creatures could not be treated 'unjustly', the tradition was clear that certainly they could. 'You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn' (Deuteronomy 25.4); 'you shall not yoke ox and ass together' (Deuteronomy 22.10). Both these commands mean more than what they simply say: the clear implication is that the animals who work and suffer for us shall not be refused their pay, nor put to work in ways that do not suit their natures. Everyone understood that there was, after all, a sort of bargain with domestic creatures – as almost everyone in Britain now condemns the present treatment of (male) calves surplus to the requirements of the dairy industry. The bargain was not an explicit, verbal one – but neither was the hypothetical bargain that we human citizens were said to have struck. There are very few cases of any explicit bargain at the root of any human state (Locke can identify only such occasions as those bargains between desperate ruffians, aka the founders of Rome, that enabled them to seize a territory and make a state). The point about contract talk is simply to direct our attention to the advantages we gain individually from keeping the present peace. The peace is one that should be kept (it is a real peace), if all of us can gain from it. Similarly with our domestic creatures: our bargain is that we look after them. The word of the Lord to Ezekiel:

> Prophesy, man, against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them, You shepherds, these are the words of the Lord God: How I hate the shepherds of Israel who care only for themselves! Should not the shepherd care for the sheep? You consume the milk, wear the wool and slaughter the fat beasts, but you don't feed the sheep. You have not encouraged the weary, tended the sick, bandaged the hurt, recovered the straggler, or searched for the lost; and even the strong you have driven with ruthless severity....I will dismiss those shepherds: they shall care only for themselves no longer; I will rescue my sheep from their jaws, and they shall feed on them no longer.
>
> (Ezekiel 34.1–4, 9 f.)

I acknowledge, of course, that the words refer to the rulers of Israel: but the metaphor makes no sense, in its context, unless real shepherds were really meant to care for sheep.

There were also rules laid down for our relation with the wild. You shall not take both mother and young from any nest (Deuteronomy 22.6 f.; see Leviticus 22.28), nor plough up all the fields so as to deny food to the poor, the stranger or the wild things in your country (Leviticus 19.9 f., 23.22, 25.6 f.). If we do, the story went, we would be thrown out of the land: we enjoy it only on condition that we do

not take it wholly for ourselves. 'The whole world has rest and is at peace; it breaks into cries of joy. The pines themselves and the cedars of Lebanon exult over you: since you have been laid low, they say, no man comes up to fell us'(Isaiah 14.7 f.). 'The land shall have the sabbaths we denied to it' (Leviticus 26.34).

I mention these commands, these tacit bargains, not to exalt one moral and religious tradition over all, though it is the tradition in which I was raised, and to which I still hold. Similar injunctions can be found elsewhere – and it is important that those who campaign for international change should find the appropriate seeds for ecological and humanitarian change within the customs of the relevant country. My purpose is at once to answer the common claim that Christian or Jewish tradition is 'environmentally unfriendly',[3] and to lay out the processes that have led us, in the settled West, from one moral code to another. The contract society eliminated, or strove to eliminate, many failings of status society. It did not wholly eliminate its merits, but the non-human suffered more as a result than need have happened. The older tradition included many duties of care and forbearance to the non-human, duties that could be rationalised as products of a sort of bargain quite as easily as liberal, human rights.

It is worth adding that 'the Enlightenment' is now often blamed for errors that were actually made much later. The heroes of the Enlightenment, for example, did not intend to suggest that the only obligations were ones freely undertaken, as though we had none until we made them for ourselves. That sort of adolescent fantasy can only be a temporary delusion. Of course there were things that we ought not to do (whether or not we wanted to); of course there were things that we ought to do (whether or not we had agreed to them). Parents should care for their children; children should honour parents; nothing was given to us to waste or to destroy. The point about 'consent' was not that all our obligations were self-chosen, but that no adult had any greater right, 'in nature', to dictate the future than another. Precisely because we did have obligations not of our choosing, we ought not to impose extra burdens on others. Maybe there are real duties of deference, but even if there aren't, it does not follow that there are no duties.

The next great shift in moral sensibility, which has also proved to be double-edged, introduced the notion that pain was, as such, an evil. We ought not to cause such evil, and maybe ought to take steps to prevent it. Until the eighteenth century moralists probably took it as their task to show that pain was *not* an evil, or not one that decent people minded much about. It was wrong to betray one's friends and country, wrong to steal or to do murder; greed, ill temper and unchastity were wrong. Possibly it was wrong to rejoice in the *undeserved* suffering of others;

it might also be wrong to regret their deserved suffering. Those moralists who then began to insist that pain was after all an evil, something that should not exist, and perhaps that it was the only real evil, were vulnerable to the charge that they were taking on the mind of brutes. Brutes, after all, felt pain: if pain were an evil, or the main or real evil, then we ought (absurdity!) to take their pain into account in reckoning on right actions. If brutes' pains mattered to these moralists, it must be because they were themselves brutish, cowardly and licentious. The moral school that came to be called 'utilitarians' played an important part in pressing for legislation to regulate the treatment of both domesticated and wild animals (including human animals). If they could suffer, then we ought to treat them gently, and protect them against what injuries we could. It is unfortunate that 'utilitarian' arguments are now taken to be those that turn on quantifiable, human advantage: save the whales because they might come in useful later! The founders of the school would have been appalled by this: stop harassing the whales because it gives them serious pain, and has not even the excuse of sparing others' pain.

The catch with such 'utilitarian' calculation has been that once it aspires to count up the amount of good or evil, it is strictly incalculable. Once self-styled experts claim to have an 'objective' methodology for making decisions, the road to tyranny is open. Chesterton identified many of the evils implicit in appeals to the 'general' (which is no-one's) good. As he remarked, 'nobody could pretend that the affectionate mother of a rather backward child *deserves* to be punished by having all the happiness taken out of her life [by removing her child to 'special care']. But anybody can pretend that the act is needed for the happiness of the community'.[4] One of his common themes is the misuse of medical judgement to incarcerate eccentrics: no-one who has attended to what has happened in this century can think this concern absurd. Canavan (1977), in her account of his radical populism, has identified one episode in particular, involving Cyril Burt (whom Chesterton criticised): in an article of 1950 Burt recalled how 'with the advent of compulsory education' there was medical concern about 'mental deficiency', which was perhaps attributable to small skull size. Burt remarks without comment or apology that of those children of the poor subjected to craniectomy to 'remedy' this 'fault' 25 per cent died and the rest showed no mental improvement.[5] The reader, she goes on to say:

> can perhaps understand Chesterton's anger at a system of social reform that delivered the defenceless poor of the country into the hands of doctors who could try out their theories on these human guinea pigs and take children

> from their parents on grounds of arbitrarily assessed 'mental deficiency' – in order to subject them to appalling and futile operations as a result of which twenty-five per cent died and even those who survived showed no improvement.
>
> (Canavan 1977)

The older ethical system urged us to live as decent human beings, and might easily have made the wider demand explicit: to allow or to help non-human creatures to live as decent a life according to their kind. The righteous man would have a care for his beasts, but would expect to see them suffer for good causes, ones that promoted virtuous living. The newer system denied that anything should ever be made to suffer, except to reduce the sum total of suffering. That dangerous concession made it right, after all, to make animals suffer if human suffering could thereby be reduced (or a reduction expected). And moralists retained enough of the outlook of a status society to believe, without thinking much about it, that *our* suffering was of another order than *theirs*. Animal pains and pleasures must be merely physical. Humans would suffer agonies (it was implied) if they could not have their favourite foods, or watch their favourite sports, or find out fascinating truths about the world. Humans suffer (it was asserted) far more pain at bruises, wounds, infections, cancers. So though we might regret giving pain to 'animals', it must be better than allowing 'humans' to have those pains instead. An exactly similar piece of self-deception allows us to suppose that 'savages' and the poor don't feel as 'we' do. Even those who claim to be good democrats in fact exclude large numbers of their fellow subjects, reckoning them 'immature', 'insane' or 'imbecile'. In demanding that 'they' obey 'us' we expect a deference from them that they may be ill-disposed to give – an unwillingness that proves their imbecility, no doubt. 'The objection to an aristocracy is that it is a priesthood without a god'[6]– without, that is, anything to defer to (which more accurately defines a modern democracy). Good citizens like ourselves defer to no-one – but there are plenty of people whom we expect, half-consciously, to defer to us. Chesterton on Cobbett:

> He suddenly summons up before us all the army of Englishmen who had no hope of having any breakfast until they could somehow beg work from hard or indifferent men; who wandered about the world in a normal state of hunger and anger and black despair about the future; who were exposed to every insult and impotent under every wrong; and who were expected by the politicians and papers to be perfectly mild and moderate in their language, perfectly loyal and law abiding in their sentiments, to invoke blessings on all who were more fortunate and respectfully touch their hats to anybody who had a little more money.[7]

Bluntly: existing governments exist by historical accident, and persist solely because they have their hands on power and patronage within a given region. It is fanciful to pretend that in democracies everyone gets a chance to 'participate in some way in the government or in the deliberative function in turn according to his rank or ability or condition', as Marsilius, after Aristotle, defines a 'polity'. In a 'democracy' the most powerful faction rules (not necessarily even the one with majority popular support), and need pay attention to the lesser factions only if its power is threatened (and then only to the more useful of those factions). The dominant faction will call itself 'the people' or even 'the poor', but it is likely to be neither of these things. Nor is it at all likely to show much consideration for peoples far away, or the poorest of its own state. Every rebellion of the presently oppressed serves mainly to distance the rebels from still lowlier persons, who are despised by those now glad to rise above them. The wish to govern is intrinsically a wish to rise,[8] and those who rise must have something below them.

It follows, unfortunately for those outside the magic circle, that the humane, welfarist impulse had much less impact than its founders would have wished. Some things were outlawed: all those things, in fact, that our chief legislators did not themselves much want to do. Child labour, bull baiting, cock fights, dog fights, torturing cats for fun became illegal – though not without protest from those who thought that practices like that encouraged moral virtues such as courage (or at least indifference to blood and pain) and love of glory. But of course, it was urged, we should not 'Go Too Far': non-humans, after all, are of another kind than humans, and the poor can't really be expected to know how to run their own lives. They remain, in fact, within a lower status, and depend upon our fluctuating kindness rather than on clear bargains or radical utilitarian concern.

Kindness does fluctuate, and so does our perception of what counts as pain. Mere (stabbing, throbbing, aching) pains of a clearly 'physical' kind are not the only ones we now acknowledge. Animals may suffer agonies of boredom, loneliness, frustration, stress, which are far worse than momentary pains. Welfarists may acknowledge these and seek to prevent or cure them. They may even begin to wonder whether it is wrong to deprive a creature of a happy life, or of some natural functions, even if it does not actually suffer: a creature blinded from birth has been deprived of something good, even if it never knows its loss. Once that step of sympathy is taken it may even occur to us that killing a happy (or potentially happy) creature is a wrong. This goes beyond the muddled doctrines that we have inherited. Conventional moralists will usually agree that *hurting* animals (at any rate without a good excuse) is wrong, but not that it is wrong to kill them (painlessly). As so often, even conventional moralists are not quite so sure in practice: a family that brings its pet dog to be killed merely because they're tired of it, or want to go on holiday, are surely displaying some defect of character, betraying some implicit

bargain. We no longer allow our children to go out killing cats, or squirrels, or birds merely to try out their catapults or guns. We have begun, in fact, to think that causing pain *and death,* except for very good reasons, must be wrong. Whether culinary or cosmetic reasons are sufficient is in doubt. Are even 'medical' reasons good enough? 'What justifies the totally disproportionate cost of our presence? Ask it for once without presupposing the answer of the egotism of our species, as God might ask it about his creatures: why should a dog or a guinea pig die an agonising death in a laboratory experiment so that some human need not suffer just such a fate?' (Kohak 1984, p. 92) What justifies the cost of civilisation, borne by those whose land or labour is required to grow cash crops?

As we begin to realise that our status is suspect, that we cannot just go on accepting the pretexts and compromises that allow us, in practice, to do almost everything 'we' choose to do, to 'animals', to 'savages', and to the land itself, we need to work out bargains, and new ways to enforce them. We need a 'new pact with nature'. One route to this involves a global ecological authority, 'with teeth'. Unfortunately such a GEA would inevitably be a global government, an absolute dictatorship, and most of us would shrink from such a thing. Even if it were founded with the best of intentions, it would most probably be run with the very worst. The alternative route to moral (and environmental) sense is the slow and careful formulation of national law and international treaty, founded in the (differing) moral sensibilities of peoples round the world. We do need some general principle, and I would propose the liberal principle itself, suitably modified to include, explicitly, more of the world's creatures than past liberals thought to do. We should act according to those laws that allow as many creatures as possible, of as many kinds as possible, the chance of as decent a life as possible. This is not to say (but rather to deny) that we should always act to prevent, cure, punish injuries. In a liberal world creatures do suffer and fail and die. The liberal bargain simply insists that our mutual dealings should not be rigged to promote the interests of any particular individual or group. We should not muzzle the ox, nor plough up every field, nor seek to control the lives of creatures who can manage quite well by themselves.

That vision is not of the 'Peaceable Kingdom' when 'none shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain', but only of the liberal society, where we are at liberty to try our luck, and to make, and enforce, such bargains as can be seen as fair. In moving towards its realisation we should aim to incorporate insights and working practices from earlier moralists. Status society, contract society, virtue ethics and utilitarian ethics all contribute something to our understanding. Legislation and international treaty take shape over many years, according to no one principle. What matters most is the direction that we're heading. And we will, of course, see no improvement as long as the demand exists for something that we cannot achieve without injustice. Even decent people choose to ignore the costs of their favourite

food-stuff, favourite game or pastime or ideal way of life. Once they begin to understand those costs, they may eventually make fewer demands. Until they do, all legislation to protect the land, and the creatures that we share it with, will be mere words.

We are, as Aristotle said, *political* animals. That is, we need to take account of the opinions and life plans of others if we are to accomplish our own goals. We are evolved, and bred, to live alongside, and with, creatures of many kinds, at once unlike and like us. The moral I draw in all the following chapters is that we shall live best when we learn to 'let things be', to enjoy their presence in the world and their occasional company and collaboration. One day, we shall not need, nor think we need, 'the State', but behave, and treat each other, as the animals we are. Learning what that is like will involve the greatest social change since the Neolithic. Unless we are careful, it may be a change back *to* the Neolithic.

Notes

1. Some of this material was first delivered at a conference on conservation at the London School of Economics in January 1995, and since published in *National Geographical Journal of India* 41. 1995, pp. 225–30, and in abridged form in *Chronicles of Culture* 20 (6). 1996, pp. 13–16.
2. John Lawrence 'On the rights of beasts', in *A Philosophical Treatise on Horses, and on the Moral Duties of Man towards the Brute Creation* (1796, 1802, 1810): extracts conveniently printed in Nicholson 1879, p. 92.
3. A point I have addressed in 'Global religions', in R. Attfield and A. Belsey (eds) *Philosophy and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and at greater length in *How to Think about the Earth* (London: Mowbrays, 1994).
4. Chesterton 1923, p. 91: cited in Canavan 1977, p. 122.
5. C. Burt 'The trend of national intelligence', *British Journal of Sociology,* 1. 1950, cited in Canavan 1977, p. 58.
6. Chesterton 1923, cited in Canavan 1977, p. 141.
7. Chesterton 1925, p. 216, cited in Canavan 1977, p. 35.
8. On which fundamentally misguided wish see my 'Tools, machines and marvels', in Roger Fellows (ed.) *Philosophy and Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), pp. 159–76.

1 Aristotle's woman[1]

When writing a study of Aristotle's anthropology in the early 1970s (namely, *Aristotle's Man*), I assumed that his account of the nature and possible well-being of humankind applied indifferently to male and female.[2] I reserved for an appendix those of his remarks which made a radical distinction between the two varieties. On that occasion I attempted the claim that his denigration of women was a relic of Platonism, that there were traces in his thought of a more liberal analysis, and that women should reasonably aim for the same well-being as males. Aristotle, of course, held to Gorgias's view, not Socrates', that virtue is a various thing – a young man's virtue is not an old woman's; a man would be cowardly if his courage were no more than a courageous woman's; a woman forward if her modesty were no greater than a good man's.[3] Many such virtues are needed for a good commonwealth, and civic virtues (of the male) must take precedence above familial virtues (largely of the female).

Man is a political animal, whose well-being resides primarily in the exercise of theoretical, secondarily of political and practical, virtue. We ought (compendiously) to worship and serve the divine in the mode proper to a deliberative and social creature. Ought women, in Aristotle's view, to do the same? If man is a political animal, what is woman?

One answer – the one I gave before – is that 'man' here translates '*anthropos*'. There may be differences between male and female, but none that are relevant to intellectual and ethical capacity. This response gains force from the comedy of *cherchez la différence,* immortalised in Paul Jennings' duo: man Erith, woman Morpeth (Jennings 1963, p. 16). It is very difficult to think of any significant, non-physical difference which would not be instantly disproved within our own acquaintance. Socrates, by Xenophon's account in *Symposium* II, insisted that women were, or could be, the equals of men in courage and assurance, though perhaps inferior in strength and steadiness of judgement. By Plato's account (*Republic,* 451 f.), he argued from the supposed equality of the sexes in animals

(e.g. dogs) to that of humans – though here, too, women are accounted generally weaker than males, and it is not clear that the proposed equality of male and female auxiliaries is intended to affect the life of the common people.[4]

Musonius said that horse riders and huntsmen make no difference in the training of males and females: female dogs are taught to hunt just as male dogs are, and anyone who wants a mare to perform a horse's tasks gives her the same training as a stallion. So why should male human beings be given a different education and upbringing from females? Don't men and women need to acquire the same virtues, and can't they do so from the same education? A man must think; so must a woman. What is the use of a fool, of either sex? And each needs justice as much as the other. A man cannot be a good citizen if he is unjust; a woman cannot manage her household well if she doesn't do so justly.[5]

Musonius, a late Roman Stoic, was a good and consistent feminist. But Aristotle would point even here to an admission that male and female duties are diverse: men for the city, women for the household. Luther said the same, at least of fallen humanity:

> (Man) rules the home and the state, wages wars, defends his possessions, tills the soil, builds, plants....The woman is like a nail driven into the wall: she should stay at home and look after the affairs of the household, as one who has been deprived of the ability of administering those affairs.[6]

It is not a view wholly without influence in our own day.

Aristotle rejects Socrates' proposal on the grounds that humankind is one particular animal species – wild beasts don't form households (*Politics,* 2.1264b4 f.). Because humans do, in Aristotle's view, male and female excellences are significantly different. Xenophon's Ischomachus suggests that male and female join together in marital companionship to produce and rear children, for the comfort of their own old age, and to keep their possessions (*Oeconomicus,* 7.18). Marriage, in Athenian terms, is the gift of a daughter for the maintenance of a household, and children are its pledges – childless marriages don't last.[7] Women, being more sensitive to heat and cold, more affectionate to their children, more timorous, are better fitted to the indoor life, and males to the outdoor life. Unlike Aristotle, Ischomachus adds that women can be men's equals in memory and self-control. Aristotle thought their *memory* superior:

> Woman is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, at the same time is more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and strike. She is more prone to despondency and less hopeful than the man, more void of shame or self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive

> and of more retentive memory. She is also more wakeful, more shrinking, more difficult to rouse to action and needs less food.
>
> (*Historia Animalium,* 9.608b11 f.)

In brief, woman is cold and wet (*De Generatione Animalium,* 1.729a28 ff.).

Aristotle agreed with Socrates in this, that women were weaker than men, and with less steady judgement. Particular cases might appear to refute this claim, but they are precisely 'unnatural' pairings, ones in need of special explanation. Women have deliberative capacity, but without authority (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1.1260a12 f.). That he gives no argument for this claim – as Mulgan complains – is true, but it is easy enough to see what his reasons were.[8] Even Xenophon's Socrates expresses some doubt as to whether women could be responsible for their failings (*Oeconomicus,* 3.11). Women were so much less able to withstand their own passions as not properly to be called akratic at all.[9] A common enough view: 'to be a slave of pleasure is the behaviour of a licentious woman, not a man' (Anaxandrides fr. 60.17); 'I know grown men who are no better than women in defending themselves against the assaults of Aphrodite upon the heart of youth; but they are male, and that helps them' (Euripides, *Hippolytos,* 967 ff.). Women can be clever enough, but their cleverness is tricky, not sound moral intelligence. Too often they do what they want, not what they think they should. Xenophon's Socrates, again, is driven to complimenting Ischomachus on his wife's 'masculine mind' (*Oeconomicus,* 9.19), displayed in a readiness to draw logical conclusions and attend to her duties. Women need the discipline of a good householder. So Sparta, by Aristotle's account, was ruined: that the males were dominated by their wives, in whose hands the property had gathered (*Politics,* 2.1269b12 ff.). Even Athenian women, who could not themselves inherit property, were feared if they brought riches with them. Their power was not only psychological (as might a Victorian wife's be), but economic: divorce would lose their lord the dowry, or the property they belonged to. 'It is in their role as transmitters of property that the community displays concern for and extends protection to its women'.[10] Property must not be left masterless, and unnatural unions, where women gained too much power, led to trouble (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 8.1160b33). In Athenian law, by the way, a will could be invalidated if drawn up under the influence of old age, insanity, drugs or women (ps. Demosthenes, 46.14). The Spartan example was a warning: their womenfolk showed less courage than others when their land was invaded.[11]

How can any of this be defended or made to seem reputable? Is this not the same sort of fantasy as produced the picture of strong, thick-skinned morons to serve as natural slaves? Surely humankind is but one species, one form? Aristotle says as much (*Metaphysics,* 9.1058a29), adding that 'male' and 'female' are like 'dark' and 'pale' – they name no specific difference. But that is not the end. Women

are infertile males. When the paternal principle of motion has failed to gain full mastery of maternal material, moulding it to the father's form, the result is a female (*De Generatione Animalium,* 4.766a18 f.). The woman cannot sufficiently concoct her blood to produce a living being (*Ibid.,* 2.738a34), because she is colder (*Ibid.,* 4.765b8 f.). Because she is colder, we may conclude, she is also less confident, less strong, less able to resist test and temptation. That, too, is why women, like children, have high voices: the deep voice is the sign of a nobler nature (*Ibid.,* 5.787a1 f.), and women are too weak. Castration turns the male back to the female state (*Ibid.,* 5.787b20 f.), though Aristotle does not seem to notice here that eunuchs do not commonly bear children.[12] Intemperate, or undisciplined, women, be it noted, are calmed down by childbirth (Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium,* 4.774a3 f.) – their unconcocted residues expelled at last. Note also that Aristotle is not consistent in his ruling that women cannot strictly be 'intemperate'.

Aristotle is aware that some features of women, as he observed them, are products of social conditioning. Their weakness in pregnancy could be alleviated by exercise (*Ibid.,* 4.775a29 f.), and breath control. The legislator should insist that they pay daily visits to the temple (Aristotle, *Politics,* 7.1335b14 f.) – women do feature regularly in dedications and processions – and should not bear children till they are 18. Earlier childbearing is bad for children and mother alike – such was the reason why the oracle 'Plough not the young fallow' was given to the people of Troezen (*Ibid.,* 7.1335a20). Ischomachus, whose wife was 15, also addresses himself to the need for exercise – though he thinks that sufficient will be gained from the daily potter round the house to see that housekeeper and maids are hard at work, and the wife's own bread-making and blanket-folding (*Oeconomicus,* 10.10).

The luxury and cowardice (alleged) of Spartan women was also a failure of discipline. If wives are failing in virtue, the fault may be theirs, but must be the householder's: Socrates asks Critoboulos if there is anyone to whom he entrusts more important matters and to whom he talks less than his wife (*Ibid.,* 3.12). The good householder gives his wife things to do: his task to get, hers to keep. Thrift is a feminine virtue.[13] The beginning of society lies with the independent householder, Cyclops-like, giving laws to his wife and children (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1.1252b23 f.). In a developed state, there may be a magistrate expressly to maintain order amongst women and children – though who could control the movements of the poor or the luxury of oligarchs' wives (*Ibid.,* 4.1300a4 ff.). Extreme democracies and tyrants favour women, and do not control them, for their gossiping may reveal plots, and they will not themselves revolt (*Ibid.,* 5.1313b34 f.). Good statesman, good householder must take care.

Women who take too little exercise are sickly; women who are not well brought up nor given their proper duties will be licentious. But the same is true of males. Why should males have a monopoly of civic power or authoritative rationality?

Aristotle clearly thinks that the gap of achievement and character between male and female is not merely a cultural but a biological datum. That generation is a union of form and matter, that it is better for the form-bringer and the matter-bearer to be separate (Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium,* 2.732a3 f.) ensures that the male is better endowed than the female. The female loses blood each month, so regularly suffers that debility (*Ibid.,* 1.727a3 f.) that males suffer after seminal emission (*Ibid.,* 1.725b17). The mother, we should note, is not simply an incubator, as other Greek thought sometimes suggests (Aeschylus, *Eumenides,* 655 f.).

Nature assigns no weapons to females – and so bees are not female (Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium.,* 3.759b3 f.) – for their 'residue' (the stuff not used for basic upkeep) is marked for use as foetal material. Equally, nature allows no males to care intimately for their young – so bees aren't male either (*Ibid.,* 3.759b3 f.). Fathers love their sons, but less than the mothers do (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 8.1161b26 f.). 'Mother-love' is Aristotle's chief example of unselfish love (*Ibid.,* 8.1159a28 f.), though he is no more eager than later commentators to give women any moral credit for this. Popular wisdom prefers to reckon a woman who fails in love a moral monster, while a male who manages it deserves the more credit for works of supererogation!

This difference of sexual role is greatest in humankind (Aristotle, *Historia Animalium.,* 9.608b5 f.) just because humankind is the most perfect of animal kinds, one in which the opposites are most clearly distinguished and most fully collaborative. Humankind is a thing of couples, even more than of city-states (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 8.1162a17 f.; *Politics,* 1.1252a26 f.), for that is how the kind achieves its natural immortality. Male/female, master/slave, parent/child: these are the polarities on which all human society is founded.

Why does the male/female relationship have the character Aristotle imagines? What indeed is that character? Amongst barbarians women are treated as slaves, for barbarian males, too, are slaves, incapable of reasoned self-control (*Politics.,* 1.1252b5 f.). The same error is made by the Persians in the relation of parent and child (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 8.1160b28 f.). The relation of natural master to natural slave should be despotic; of parent to child, aristocratic; of man to wife, that of a statesman over his subjects (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1.1259b1 f.). There is the chance of justice between man and wife, more than between man and children or possessions (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 5.1134b15). The man's nature, to be sure, is superior – his courage is the courage of command, hers of obedience[14] – but he should rule as would one destined to take his turn as subject. This is odd: if women are so like children, so irresponsible that they cannot be entirely trusted, should they not be treated as children? Aristotle indeed elsewhere describes the proper marital rule as aristocratic (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 8.1160b32). Presumably the point is, again, that some matters are to be left to women (*Ibid.,*

8.1160b34 f.). They share the rule of the household, not by turns but by role-division. The clever and thrifty housekeeper is a Greek ideal.[15]

The proper conduct of these duties requires virtue, and women as well as men can see where duty lies. Aristotle does not say of women, as he does of slaves and children, that they cannot be *eudaimones,* cannot live and act well as responsible agents (Aristotle, *Politics,* 3.1280a32 f.; *Nicomachean Ethics,* 10.1177a8 f.). But they cannot share in the civic life, and are as such no true parts of the political community, do not take their turn at deciding how the city is to be governed. What sort of eudaimonia is open to them? Aristotle is as forgetful as most male theorists of the existence of women as subjects: how many political theorists begin by isolating the needs of humankind as food, shelter and *women* (Ruth 1979)? What would he say? It seems unlikely that a life sequestered in the women's quarters could have been conducive to philosophic virtue. The women 'embarrassed at being seen even by males of their own family' (Lysias, 3.6) are clearly an extreme case, described for rhetorical effect, but they were not ridiculous to Athenian ears. Women could not expect theoretic eudaimonia, nor yet secondary eudaimonia – the civic life of a good city where some men, at any rate, philosophise. Their role must be supportive at a second remove: tertiary eudaimonia, the household life (Garside 1971). For the Athenian, the laws of Athens show, anything was better than spinsterhood.[16]

Intelligent Greeks clearly saw that their household arrangements made for difficulties. Ischomachus's 15-year-old bride had spent her life to that point doing, saying and hearing as little as possible (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus,* 7.3 f.). However pompous Ischomachus sounds to us (no worse, indeed, than most of Xenophon's heroes), at least he made an effort to find his wife honourable and useful work, spoke to her as to an intelligent pupil and took her as a true companion in the household. Greek women married young, and even Aristotle, who disapproved of early marriages, proposed a gap of twenty years between man and wife – the man marrying at 37, the woman at 18. This is because men are fertile for longer, and mature later (Aristotle, *Politics,* 7.1335a1 f.). Recent research suggests that this was a good way to ensure a preponderance of male children. Equal development is unnatural in humans – females mature to their own lesser maturity sooner than males (Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium,* 4.775a11 f.). Such an age gap inevitably encourages the male, his way of life long established, to regard his wife as a child to be matured (or not) under his care. It may perhaps help his children to respect him, not to consider him a mere contemporary, but the evidence is rather against this.

The most alarming feature of Greek domestic life is the failure of the Greek father.[17] Later patriarchalist thought could exalt the paterfamilias, master and husband. Every man, in his own household, could hold (in theory) powers like those of the king. But such power is possible only if it is present, and only if it is

supported from outside. The Cyclops was not really so much of a patriarch, for human males are not really so much stronger or so much more awe-inspiring than females; human patriarchy is social rule by the whole male cohort (a term of ethological art), not by solitary giants.

To turn to the first requirement for a successful paterfamilias, that he be present: as Slater (1968) remarks, 'one cannot be a family patriarch at a distance' (p. 9). 'The rejection and denigration of women mean rejection and derogation of domesticity – of home and family' (*Ibid.,* p. 7). The proper life of the Greek male was out of doors: visiting in the early morning, inspecting his farm, practising his military accomplishments, debating in law court, agora and assembly (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus,* 11.7 f.). This is of course to speak of a particular class of Greek, but it is the class that in Aristotle's view has been enabled to achieve a fully human life. His wife it is that controls the household's internal order, its outgoings: though strictly she cannot engage in any economic transaction for a value of more than one measure of barley, perhaps six days' food,[18] and it would be unusual for her to do the shopping: Herodotus (II.35) notes it as one of the Egyptians' eccentricities that the women do the trading and the men stay at home to weave. None the less, the wife is in charge at home. The Spartan pattern, where males live within their peer group and visit their wives for furtive nights – a pattern acclaimed by at least one classical scholar,[19] who should have had more sense, because it helped to keep the 'romance' in marriage (which was certainly not the point) – was only an exaggerated version of the common middle-class Greek scheme. Add to this that all male children have had the experience of living under the thumb of a passionate, unhealthy and probably frustrated mother and listening (no doubt) to her assaults upon his absent father – and you have the recipe for disaster. Father-beating is a constant theme of legend and comedy (see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 7.1149b8 ff.). The impossible question in Greek dialectic is: 'Have you stopped beating your father yet?' This need not mirror reality – we joke about mothers-in-law, but not about baby-battering. But it does reflect the tensions of the Greek household. The maturing youth was socialised, it has been argued, not through identification with his father, but through the *erastes* relationship. That is, how the male citizen-to-be is inducted into the male cohort, the citizen body. When he is grown, his terror of women and of female sexuality equips him in turn for the role of homosexual paedophile, and his unfortunate wife for that of frustrated mother.

To be sure, some marriages must have been sound, and Odysseus's praise of marital companionship (Homer, *Odyssey,* 6.182 f.) echoed in many households – though the Greeks (or Greek males) do seem to have thought of this as the luck of finding 'the right woman'. Xenophon thinks it worthy of notice that Nikeratos and his bride are in love with each other (Xenophon, *Symposium,* 8.3). Some fathers got on well with their children, though it is not encouraging that there needed to be a law compelling sons to care for their aged parents (Herodotus (II.35) found it odd

that Egyptian daughters had to, but not sons).[20] But though humans are very versatile and capable creatures, it is well to remember what the Greeks had to deal with. Those who claim that 'the Greeks at their best were sane, high-spirited, clear-headed, beauty-loving optimists, and not in the least other-worldly', and that 'their legends are almost without exception free from the cloudiness, the wild grotesques, and the horrible features which beset the popular traditions of less gifted and happy peoples'[21] are speaking against the whole weight of the evidence and being patronising as well. Plato had a more realistic view of the stories told the young, and of the effects of family life. His own fantasy life, be it said, reveals a constant attempt to take over the female role: Socrates is a midwife, ideas are brought to birth, the erect penis (Plato, *Symposium,* 206c) is pregnant. Aristotle did not approve of Plato's radical solution, the destruction of the household. He is a more secure and conventional Greek, though he shows signs of relating the female to the indefinite, the even, plurality, the left-hand side, the mobile, the crooked, darkness, evil, the oblong, cold, passivity, matter, back and bottom.[22] It is also perhaps worth noting that the Prime Mover moves as does the *eromenos*: and as Dover has pointed out,[23] the *eromenos* is not expected to enjoy nor to desire the event. It is also distressing that Aristotle should suppose that male pleasure in sexual congress comes only at the end, with seminal (or rather pneumatic) emission (Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium,* 1.728a9 ff.). This is very exhausting.[24] The Greeks were not well equipped for sexual pleasure, despite their popular reputation as happily bisexual lovers. Beauty is dangerous (Xenophon, *Memorabilia,* 1.3.8 f.). Antisthenes solves his sexual problems with any available female flesh, and wishes he took less pleasure in the act (*Ibid.,* IV. 38). Sophocles, on Plato's account, welcomed old age as a refuge from the tyranny of sex (Plato, *Republic,* 329b8 ff.). In later years even the humane Plutarch felt obliged to urge that husbands have sex with their wives at any rate three times a month, as it were to renew a treaty (Plutarch, *On Love,* 769). All such 'wet' emotions as pity, sympathy and identification with women were suspect, assigned to women and despised as such. Aristotle, unlike Plato, allowed dramatic art to rouse such passions, but only that they be 'cleared out', and the watchers enabled to live securely in the male cohort, regarding sexual congress merely as a means of disposing of residues and begetting children. Too great an indulgence leads to baldness, by the way (Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium,* 5.783b29 f.), as the brain, being colder, is affected first by the loss of internal heat.

Aristotle did not take Plato's step of abolishing the household and introducing women to the male cohort. Instead he sought to reform the household, instituting rules and practices that might enable humans to cope. The city could be only half-eudaimon if female virtues were not inculcated (Aristotle, *Rhetoric,* 1.1361a8 f.; *Politics,* 1.1260b19 f.), if the householders failed in their task of teaching virtue to their too-passionate wives. His scheme of education, though less extreme than

Plato's, does involve considerable state supervision of child-rearing practices even before the age of 7. He does not concern himself with the education of girls: it is to be presumed that they should learn by imitation what their duties are to be in a future household.

Our problems, perhaps, are not quite the Greek ones, and our solutions need not be Aristotle's, nor Plato's. Some features are a constant, however. Consider how Dionysius unerringly pinpoints the problem:

> Take the question of marriage and intercourse with women. A lawgiver must start from this, just as Nature starts work on our lives from it. Now some have taken the beasts for their model, and allowed males unrestricted intercourse with females, in the hope of freeing people from lustful desires and murderous jealousy and many other evils which afflict both families and entire states through women. Others have banished this wanton animality from their states by uniting one man and one woman, but have made not the slightest attempt to legislate for the safeguard of marriage and female chastity, dismissing it as an impossibility. Some have neither allowed sexual acts without a contract – the custom of some barbarians – nor abandoned safeguards over women as the Spartans have, but have imposed on women many laws to ensure chastity. Some have even established an office of supervising the good behaviour of women: but this provision for keeping watch on them was insufficient for its purpose, too weak to force a woman not naturally virtuous to lead a chaste life.
>
> (Dionysius of Halicarnassus II. 24.4)

The problem, in brief, is *women.* Other nations have employed chastity belts, clitoridectomy and infibulation, public humiliation and careful indoctrination. Women just can't be trusted. They are so distressingly weak that if we males allowed them an inch they'd be in total control within the year.

Aristotle's response to the problem posed by women and by the need to relate the small and large groupings of society (household and city) was that of the good Greek: women should be concerned with family matters, and men with civil, but women should not be left to themselves. The corollary is that men should not be left to themselves either. Adult males were citizens from the time that their names were entered on the deme registers, and might vote. But they were not expected to speak at the assembly nor to hold office till they were themselves householders – another reason to delay marriage until their fathers were ready to retire. Citizens were household representatives, and should not join themselves entirely to the male cohort as the Spartans did.

This picture of proper social order should not be dismissed merely on the ground that it stops individuals doing whatever they want, nor on the ground that it appeals to fundamental biological data that are either mistaken or irrelevant to the moral and political case. We certainly should not uphold feminism by denying the biological roots of human nature, nor by claiming there is no human nature. It is precisely because humans do have a nature that the Greek experiment was, in some respects, so destructive – though it also had very fruitful consequences for art and philosophy. In Aristotle's day, comparisons with the non-human were intended to promote sexual equality or human unsociableness, and Aristotle's riposte was to deny the comparison. We should remember the warning, that humankind is one particular species, and that we know too little to extrapolate from apes to humans, or even from one variety of macaque to another. What is natural to baboons may not be natural to us.

But what is natural to baboons? Animals, despite Dionysius, are not all promiscuous, lawless, selfish beasts. Aristotle recognised parental feeling in them, the more developed in the more intelligent (Aristotle, *De Generatione Animalium,* 7.753a8 f.). Later study has shown the complexity of animal response, its embeddedness in social order.[25] We know too little for any detailed generalisation, but one thing is perhaps now clear. In any mammalian species the problem is not the female, but the male. Any animal breeder knows as much: what to do with the males?

Popular ethology still tends to represent males as the really significant individuals, the leaders and masters. More careful study suggests otherwise. The relationship of male to female is not of mastery. We misperceive a lion if we think he has a harem; contrariwise, the stable pride of lionesses adopts one or two lions for short periods. Male cubs are evicted early, along with a few female, and must find their own way back into a pride, where they are 'kept males' until replaced. Female hamadryas baboons feel no compunction about 'adultery' – they retreat behind the nearest boulder – but conciliate their supposed lord when they return. In social primate species the general pattern is that males are flung out to the rim of the group, from which a few may eventually return. Sometimes the males devote themselves entirely to hierarchical dispute within the male cohort; sometimes they seek rather to ingratiate themselves with the female lineage on which their society is centred. In human society male children may be initiated into the cohort by dreadful mutilations, such as subincision (which leaves the male urethra exposed, or even with a hole in it), that serve both to block off their memory of being an infant under female control and provide symbolic wombs. Vagina envy is a frequent phenomenon – as it is, you will remember, in Plato.

From this perspective, politics is a particular effort by the male cohort isolated

from the female lineage to provide its members with a sense of being and belonging. Patriarchalism involves a corresponding effort to break up female nexuses, to bring daughters to the husband's home and create a new male lineage – the household. Despite the regular praise of mother-love Greek legend reveals a distinct fear that they would not prove loving: the terrifying figure of Medea, killing her children to strike back at their father, spoke to Greek experience. Doubtless much of this is nothing more than love of good story, or an ingenious argument – like Antigone's 'proof' that she must love her brother more than children or husband.[26] The point is that such an attachment was recognised as inevitable, but also as one to be replaced by loyalty to another male, the husband, and his family.

What best social order would result from taking this approach seriously I cannot now examine. Efforts are already being made to get women back to their proper domestic concerns, and already being earnestly resisted. If our problem should really be 'what to do with the males', it might be possible to revive that ancient division of interest without too much absurdity. Man is a political animal, but need not devote himself to male politics: he might rather seek to participate in the child-rearing, food-gathering, society-maintaining activities of the women. Hierarchical politics, dominance routines, insistence on territorial position are games that male-oriented males play. If we allow the female lineage, the female nexus to form again, or recognise that it exists already, and seek an entry into that system of parental affection and mutual assistance, we may have the basis for a more humane society. The lesson of the 'undercover' nexus of female attachments is that organisation and society need not be based on the hierarchical patterns familiar in ordinary political life. If women are capable of eudaimonia, capable of participating in the civil life of a decent society, perhaps we need not suppose that theirs is a tertiary, supportive form of eudaimonia. It might instead be worth considering that the form of civil life to which women have been confined contains a truer and better sociality to which males may also hope to be admitted.

I should not be understood to be suggesting that women are all virtuous, nor that matriarchy is to be preferred to patriarchy. The point is rather that dominance relationships of the kind embodied either in patriarchal or matriarchal culture can be seen as peripheral to the central concerns of human society. A genuine civil life need not consist in the activities of the well-to-do Greek male, and fathers need not love their children at a distance. A new Aristotelianism, taking account of modern ethological knowledge, can find the human, fully human, in both male and female kinds. One error would be to seek a return to patriarchalist ways; another to encourage women to take higher places in society defined solely by the purposes of the male cohort. Aristotle, after all, offers the groundwork for a better solution than Plato's to the human problem.

Notes

1. See my article in *History of Political Thought* 3.1982, pp. 177–91. (An earlier draft was read at a Political Thought conference in Oxford 1980.)
2. The Greek language does, after all, distinguish *anthropos* from *aner,* although this seems to have made no difference to the Greeks' view of what humanity involves.
3. Aristotle, *Politics,* 3, 1277b20 f.; see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1360b39 ff.
4. Annas 1981, pp. 181 ff.; cf. Lesser 1979.
5. *Musonius Rufus,* O. Hense (ed.) (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908), p. 13 f. I owe this reference to Dr Gillian Clark.
6. Martin Luther, 'Lectures on Genesis chs. 1–5', *Works,* J. Pelikan (ed.) (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), vol. 1, p. 204.
7. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 8. 1162a27 f.
8. Mulgan 1979; see Fortenbaugh 1979.
9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 7.1148b32, 1150b15 f.
10. Gould 1980, p. 44; see Pomeroy 1975 pp. 60 ff.
11. Cartledge (1981) shows how far Spartan society was from any genuine feminist concern. C. Seltman's claim that 'at no time in the world's history can women have been so contented, so healthy and so happy as they were in ancient Sparta' (Seltman 1956, p. 58) is a product solely of his own imaginings.
12. See Horowitz 1976; Morsink 1979.
13. Aristotle, *Politics,* 3.1277b24 f.; see Xenophon (1925), *Oeconomicus,* 3.15.
14. Aristotle, *Politics,* 1.1259b30 f. and see 3.1277b20.
15. Lysias, 1.7: see Dover 1974, pp. 95 ff. for details of Greek attitudes to women's virtue.
16. Schaps 1979, p. 38.
17. Devereux 1967; Slater 1968.
18. Isaeus, 10.10; Schaps 1979, p. 52
19. Seltman 1956, p. 68, drawing on Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus.*
20. See also Xenophon (1925), *Memorabilia,* II, 2.4 f.
21. Rose 1945, p. 14; Gould 1980, p. 57, seems more accurate: 'it emerges from an examination of the myth that male attitudes to women, and to themselves in relation to women, are marked by tension, anxiety and fear', though we should be careful not to go as far overboard in one direction as Seltman in the other!
22. See my *Aristotle's Man,* 1975, pp. 206 ff.
23. Dover 1978, pp.103 ff. Note that it is shameful for a boy to be too far assimilated to the female role.
24. *Ibid.,* 1.725b17 f.; see PS – Aristotle, *Problemata,* 4.30.
25. I developed these points further in *The Nature of the Beast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); see also my 'Sexual ontology and the group marriage': *Philosophy* 58. 1983.
26. Sophocles, *Antigone,* 905 ff; see Herodotus III. 119.

2 Slaves and citizens[1]

The uses of slavery

R. M. Hare has argued[2] that there are conceivable (though unlikely) circumstances in which it would be right not to abolish the institution of slavery: in the imaginary land of Juba established slave-plantations are managed by a benevolent elite for the good of all, no 'cruel or unusual' punishments are in use, and citizens of the neighbouring island of Camaica, 'free' but impoverished, regularly seek to become slaves. Hare adds that it is unlikely, given human nature, that 'masters' would treat 'slaves' humanely, and avoid a gradual corruption of their moral consciousness, which would cancel out any possible advantages of the system. Slavery is wrong, he argues, not because it violates 'fundamental human rights', but because it would in practice generally increase misery.

The history of domestication confirms Hare's suspicion that things would probably get worse. Animals were once included in human society, though at a lower level and on a variety of terms: some were almost friends, some servants and some prey. All of them have come to seem merely material for our human purposes, and any moral or superstitious hesitation that we might have felt about using them in ways that 'the original bargain' did not allow has been allowed to lapse. Once we begin to think of other creatures as being 'at our disposal', things for use and sale, it is not easy to avoid moral corruption. On the other hand, this same history suggests that Hare cannot rely on utilitarian calculation to give the answer he requires. Before abandoning talk of 'fundamental human rights' it would be as well to consider the fate of those creatures who have been held not to have them. In the absence of superstitious awe it is very difficult not to regard them merely as elements in a utilitarian calculation that will discount most of their experience. How much does it matter that our domesticated animals do not much enjoy life, or even suffer in our service? Those pains and losses, demonstrably, do not count for very much

with most of us when weighed against our pleasures and possible gains. An objective utilitarian, one who is really conscious of the quality of every affected creature's life and judges accordingly, *might* conclude that domestic servitude now involves far more loss than profit. My own feeling is that he/she would, though I am not so sure that such a utilitarian would go on to recommend vegetarianism, a ban on exploitative experiments and so on: the individual and social costs of such a policy would have to be weighed carefully (*pace* Singer 1977).[3] In the absence of such an objective utilitarian, the debate seems rather scholastic. Ordinary human beings who attempt to weigh up cost and profit inevitably count their own concerns, and those of creatures with whom they readily identify, as of more moment. It is admitted that dogs, cows and chickens may suffer, or lose enjoyments, in our service, but such costs do not weigh with us, because dogs, cows and chickens do not weigh with us. They do not count, because we have not for a long time thought of them as having anything like 'equal rights' with us. Even utilitarians who think such rights absurd are influenced in their calculations by the distancing of concern which is represented by their denial specifically to animals. Even if no one has rights, animals do not have them most of all, as Frey's book (1980) revealingly argues.

Correspondingly, it may well turn out that Hare's Juban slavery becomes unbearable precisely because 'rights' are not in question. Utilitarian calculation, as it will be performed by the masters, will automatically discount the interests of the slaves, even while the masters mouth aphorisms like 'a happy slave is a profitable slave'. The general interests of the slaves may be considered for a while: those interests which any human being has, for food and shelter and sufficient clothing. Their particular interests, for a supply of camomile, or Beethoven quartets, or a different job, are unlikely to enter the masters' calculations. When times are hard it will be their interests that are sacrificed to the masters'. The slaves, not the masters, will be reminded of 'the common good', and it will be the masters who define what that good is to be. We can, of course, continue the fantasy: as slavery becomes an obviously harder life, and slaves have less to gain by working hard, or identifying themselves with their masters' interests, greater force will be needed to control them. Casual sabotage will be the norm, even if open revolt is avoided. And on the neighbouring island of Camaica, free human beings – self-selected as those unwilling to trade freedom for supposed security – will have created a thriving capitalist economy. Or so, at any rate, Ludwig von Mises argues, on the straightforward ground that free labour is far more productive (von Mises 1978, p. 21): slave societies are inferior not because masters are always cruel but because the workers have no reason to exert themselves, and so the general level of production is low.

Like Hare, von Mises avoids any appeal to 'human rights' as a reason for deploring the existence of slave societies. Like Hare, he would doubt the likelihood

of Hare's initial postulate, that Juba could ever be a likelier economic proposition. Unlike Hare, he points out how far slaves or serfs themselves can be induced to believe the ideology of a slave society: namely, that they are incapable of free existence. His reply, that free labour is more fruitful, depends upon the denial of that ideology. People may be unequal in their talents, but all are capable of managing their own lives, and will do so to better effect than any imaginable human master. In the words of Jefferson's first Inaugural speech:

> Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he then be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him?[4]

So utilitarian argument, calculation of likely costs and profits, suggests (if anything) that it is better to act as if there were human rights, particularly the fundamental right of self-determination. If a human creature is not to determine his/her own future, but to wait for a careful calculation to be performed by the elite, it may be taken for granted both that his/her interests will count for correspondingly less even than (by objective calculation) they should, and that the level of production will fall (since no particular member of the servant classes has much to gain from exertion).

It would be useful if people thought that there were good reasons, over and above any current calculation of the utilitarian odds, for not enslaving others. It has similarly been argued (Harris 1974) that Hindu respect for sacred cows preserves peasant farmers from the dangers of erroneous calculation of future profit. It is almost always better *not* to kill the cow who will provide milk, and fuel, and traction, even though she seems an expensive luxury to ignorant Westerners, and may be a temptation to a peasant on hard times. Similarly it is almost always better *not* to trade freedom for security, *not* to enslave people who might instead be free partners. Utilitarians who reflect on these things have good reason to instil motives of respect and awe in the general mass of humanity, since it is these motives which will (perhaps) preserve the greater good against biased calculations.

If such a utilitarian were our controller, she would have to face a certain paradoxicality in her efforts: for it is better, on the one hand, *not* to treat people as if they were one's tools and *not* to determine their futures for them; and on the other hand, that is what she is doing. All the remarks about the fallibility of human calculation, the readiness to think that those for whom we calculate have no serious interests or plans of their own, would apply to her with force redoubled. No one who was not absolute controller would be able to instil such motives where they were not before. No one who was absolute controller would be very likely to be an objective utilitarian, or to allow very much strength to the opinions of those whom

she controlled. Fortunately, it seems likely that the job has already been done for us, not by any human agency, but by the invisible hand of mammalian evolution. The capacity to feel respect and awe for our fellows has been built into us because creatures with those motives have left more descendants than those that did not. It has been profitable not to interfere with the doings of others, not to snatch what is 'theirs', not to regard them as merely material for our own purposes, not to regard their dead bodies as merely rubbish or as merely meat, not to disregard their discomfort and annoyance. These complex motives, some of which govern our behaviour to animals other than the human, lie at the base of our recognition of 'rights'. Those who sought to dominate all their surroundings, who made no difference between what was free-for-all and what was already claimed by another, who made no difference between infants and adults, or were not especially aware of those creatures on whose lives and good will they depended, left few descendants. The characteristics we now have are those that were selected in our evolutionary past: not that they are the best characters that they could be for the good of the 'species', but simply that they were more successful in replicating themselves than the available rivals.

The point of these last remarks (some of which I have defended elsewhere)[5] is to suggest that the motives that ground our moral and political behaviour may have been written into us by an invisible hand in a way that mimics (though it does not quite match) the efforts of an imaginary utilitarian controller. That imagined autocrat does not need to instil motives of respect in us: they are already there. We are already prone to finding something sacred in the bodies and purposes of most other human, and some non-human, creatures. The gap that utilitarians find difficult to accommodate, between act and omission, is for us an obvious emotional truth – it is one thing to be unwilling to kill or hurt another, and quite another thing to give positive assistance, though the result of not doing so may be the other's hurt. We are not very ready to perform large-scale utilitarian calculations about their and our interests, and then act upon them. We act out of other, more immediate motives than these, and build our ideologies out of what we are programmed to feel. Nothing in all this, by the way, denies either that our programming may go wrong, or that there is a place for more global calculations.

So perhaps it is worth considering that we object to slavery not because we have performed some complex and unreliable calculation of the kind that Hare requires, but because it does violate one of our fundamental views. Slavery is wrong because it violates the right of self-determination, and that 'right' is the projection, whatever else it may be, of our recognition that here is another creature with whom there are more profitable modes of companionship. We are equipped to share another creature's viewpoint, to find that creature significant, to be friends or at least to be friendly. These feelings do not rest upon any conscious calculation of the greater good, nor can they always be expected to serve such a good. Sometimes they may make it impossible (or at least very difficult) for us to reach

what might, in the abstract, be a better solution. 'Violating rights' is a matter of going against these fundamental responses, and we do not do so willingly (or at all) merely because reason tells us of a happy land far, far away which can be reached by so doing. This is partly, no doubt, because we have good reason to disbelieve such prophecies, but also because our conduct is not wholly governed by such global calculation of interests. Similarly, non-human animals can be induced to do things which do not serve the long-range interests of their kind because they respond to immediate features of their situation in accordance with established emotional patterns. This is not a sign of stupidity, but of the difference between their goals and our abstract calculation of what would be their greater good. We daily demonstrate that our motivations are similarly local and immediate. Not only are we unable and unwilling to conduct ourselves by global calculation of the unforeseeable, we do not even much relish the idea of being controlled by any such global calculator who will treat us merely as elements in her overall plan.

The point of these remarks is simply to suggest that the institution of slavery is not, in the first instance, to be rejected either because it increases misery (as Hare alleges) or because it fails to secure as great a profit as would free labour (as von Mises alleges). Our rejection of the master–slave relationship rests more securely on our understanding that this is an inappropriate or disrespectful one. To enslave others is to violate their rights, even if only in the sense that it violates the natural relationship between creatures capable of companionship.

Domination and domestication

How can this be true? Aristotle was the first political philosopher known to us openly to assert that domination was a natural form, and that there were people who were natural slaves, destined to be manipulated or commanded by the naturally free.[6] But there is good reason to suspect that he was not the first to have this convenient belief. People have had slaves for millennia, and readily convinced themselves that slavery was an appropriate condition for them. More recently, ideologues have argued from the existence of dominance relationships amongst other animals to the naturalness, or at least the inevitability, of similar relationships amongst human beings.[7] That anyone should be a slave, strictly so called, is thought a little too outrageous, but the thought that most people can expect only to be obedient, that there are those especially suited to be rulers (and our problem how to make sure that they, who will take control in any case, have some slight concern for their subjects) seems axiomatic. 'State-kept schoolmen', like ourselves, should always be conscious that the intellectual's historical function has been to provide a show of argument for the *status quo* – or else, of course, to construct imaginary alternatives that will provide the subject population with its dreams!

Aristotle, as well as more modern ideologues, saw that one animal might dominate another, and thence concluded that this relationship could not be

denounced as 'against nature'. More exact inquiry reveals that dominants, so called, do not give orders, nor even lead, their subordinates. A dominant monkey is 'on top' in the sense that he or she is recognised by the others as likely to win first place in any dispute. Instead of 'scrambling' for a scarce resource, the animals rely upon a previously established 'peck order'. Sometimes the established dominant will lend assistance to others, either because they are generally his or her relatives, or because they serve to assist the dominant against his/her nearest rival and chief threat. There are some things that dominants will forbid others to do (more or less successfully): male dominants will be likely (though not certain) to monopolise the breeding females. What dominants do not do, as a rule, is give a lead, nor do they issue any positive instructions. Leaders, in the sense of those who initiate new movements or devise new tricks, are very often subordinate members of the group. Amongst mammals, the mothers do act as both dominant and leader to their offspring, until they are grown, and sometimes continue to show concern for them even after that. Dominance and territorial behaviour are very similar: any territorial animal is dominant within its own territory; any dominant carries its own territory around with it. We misperceive the situation if we think that all or most dominants are anything like human masters. One particular misperception, by the way, is to suppose that male dominants exert any mastery over females. Females usually have their own hierarchies, and are largely unaffected by the males' disputes. Lions do not have real harems; lionesses, as I suggested earlier, do adopt real pets!

Aristotle's conviction that there were natural slaves is not well supported by appeals to ethological data. But we should not dismiss them so abruptly as custom dictates, with bland declarations that 'of course there are no natural slaves in the world'.[8] A natural slave, by Aristotle's account, is a person who cannot live his/her life in accordance with a rational plan, who can understand but cannot initiate rational discussion, who can obey but not internalise the law, who will (whatever the social situation) in fact be manipulated and controlled by others. Some of them, governed by immediate desires, will be dangerous enough to require that we seek to control them; others, whose desires are milder, will at least have no objection to being planned and provided for. It is not obvious to me that there are no people like that, though I would be more hesitant than Aristotle in labelling their condition natural or innate, and in expecting any usable criteria for picking them out from the mass of the population: being strong and thick-skinned, for example, will hardly do! Of course, it is very likely that Aristotle (and other philosophers) were unconsciously moved by the thought that civilised life could not be maintained without a supply of labourers without wills of their own, and therefore convinced themselves that a benevolent nature would provide such a supply. In much the same way, if you will forgive my harping on the subject, modern thinkers who

suppose that civilisation can only be maintained by exploiting animals readily convince themselves that animals are not of a kind to mind the experience, or to matter if they do.

But ideology and ethological error apart, there were two other reasons for Aristotle's belief in the appropriateness of slavery for certain sorts of people, its inappropriateness for other sorts. The first lay in his theory of mind: there were for him two sources of voluntary action, two ways in which one might behave 'willingly', namely desire and decision. To act out of desire, merely because one wanted to, was the behaviour of non-human animals and slaves (and also, when their passions overcame them, women and acratic men).[9] To act on decision was to do something as being the right thing to do, because one reckoned it good. Strictly speaking there was no true act at all, no praxis, unless it issued from deliberate decision, but there was voluntary behaviour. Neither animals nor slaves were zombies, but they did not strictly act out their own decisions. Human slaves (I speak of 'natural slaves') differed from animals, or most animals, in being able to understand and obey the instructions of others. That there were such 'natural slaves' was a possibility created by this analysis of human behaviour. We know what it is to do what we want, and what it is to do what we think we should. The weak-willed (and women) sometimes do the former though they know the latter. Slaves do the former, though they can, if properly controlled, be induced to do what they should, for the wrong motive. Slaves obey the law not because it embodies what the decent man would choose to do anyway, but because they are afraid of punishment or desire the immediate rewards of virtue. Such people, Aristotle held, are slaves in nature even if they are called 'free'.

The second reason for Aristotle's view is to be found in his understanding of the great empires. The spectacle of despotic government amongst barbarians convinced Aristotle (if he needed convincing) that such barbarians must be of a slavish nature.[10] What free person, knowing him/herself to be capable of seeing and acting on the right, could endure to be ruled by such an absolute authority? Such hereditary despots did not fear a popular uprising (though they might fear their younger sons or rival nobility), because they ruled over a people who lacked the capacity to see beyond the immediate dangers of disobedience, or to envisage a better way of life. It is worth adding, though Aristotle himself may not quite have seen the significance of this remark, that barbarians also show their slavishness in treating women as mere slaves.[11] Not only are 'natural slaves' unable to plan their own lives, they cannot recognise others as motivated by anything other than immediate desire, nor find in them any other value than the crudely utilitarian. True friendship is only possible between those who can recognise each other as ends-in-themselves, valuable just for themselves and not only as means to pleasure or

profit.[12] To treat people as mere tools when they have their own projects and perception of the law is to reveal oneself to be a slavish spirit.

The subjects of the great empires, so Aristotle thought, were at the disposal of their rulers, unable to conceive any other mode of human companionship than that enshrined in master–slave relationships, unable to take responsibility for their own actions and futures, unable to internalise the law, unable to treat others as free partners and potential friends. Karl Wittfogel coined the expression, 'hydraulic despotism', to describe what he saw as a distinctive mode of social organisation created by the need to mobilise mass labour to irrigate and (later) to communicate (Wittfogel 1957). There have been even less plausible general theories, such as Jaynes's baroque hypothesis that kings and subjects alike were then wholly unselfconscious, dominated by the hallucinated voices of dead priest-kings resident in the right half of their brains (Jaynes 1976). Aristotle found the explanation for the extraordinary passivity of imperial subjects in their servile natures. If they had any real capacity for self-planning, for open friendships, for obedience to the law instead of to the arbitrary commands of government, they would surely have realised those capacities by now. As they had not, they gave evidence of being genuinely 'natural slaves', and therefore (conveniently) a decent source for Greek slave-traders. If they were going to be slaves anyway, surely even they would be better off as slaves of the naturally free? Since they were incapable of genuine friendship, there was no possibility of reaching any more companionable arrangement with them, nor could they be trusted not to attack the free world – whether from momentary passion or from servile obedience to the power lusts of their despots.

Aristotle probably misperceived the situation. There certainly seems no good reason to believe that the slave syndrome he describes is an inheritable condition, rather than a cultural malformation brought about by the needs of the 'hydraulic empire'. If there are genuinely natural slaves, it is improbable that there are whole populations of them. But the cultural or psychological form of slavery is still worth contemplating. People are slaves, in this radical sense, if they are at the absolute disposal of others, cannot participate in the decision-making of the community, cannot even make their own decisions, are swayed solely by desire and fear. The political form that suits their condition is despotism, and this may well be felt to be legitimate, simply because it is established. In slave cultures 'state-kept schoolmen' help to preserve the myths that will prevent any clear look at the culture, any realisation of the other human possibilities. Some slaves are trusties; some even reveal that they are not quite Aristotelian slaves by internalising at any rate the law

of their slave society, which is in fact directed by the inherited policies of the elite class, whether these be merely passionate or show signs of rationality.

So what is the alternative? Aristotle's love is given to the *polis,* considered as a community of free partners who share in the offices of their society and are brought up to seek what it is that the law, the mean, requires.[13] Conventional political philosophy, not wholly unreasonably, tends to equate such a *polis* with the liberal nation-state, and finds Aristotle's organisation not democratic enough. But there is an alternative approach that I think deserves more consideration. Hare's Juba, you will remember, was designed so as to look very like an ordinary liberal state, and the implication was that such a society might be as acceptable as ours. An institution that is implicitly accepted by its subjects, and provides a good deal of what they want even if no opportunity to run their own lives, cannot be all that bad. The resemblance between Juba and the modern nation-state, however, might carry a different weight of meaning. If Juba reveals what our states are like, perhaps they are all corrupt. Subjects of the modern state are already slaves, although they have forgotten what they are.

Aristotelian anarchy

Having crept up on the anti-statist position by this seemingly devious route, I perhaps owe it to my readers to make two remarks. The first, that I am not the only scholar to connect anti-statism, anarchism, with the Aristotelian tradition:

> The anarchists and communards have only reminded us of Aristotle's simple discovery: man is a political animal, a being whose natural association is governed by laws he himself has created and to which he has subjected himself.
>
> (Newton 1978, p. 165)

– though this is to neglect the importance for anti-statist thought of 'unmade law'. Machan has explicitly founded his libertarianism on a form of ethical egoism derived from Aristotle's eudaimonism.[14] Second, I shall not be expounding Aristotle as such in what follows: though he lies at the beginning of what was to become the anarchist tradition, there are a great many statist and illiberal elements in his thought that this is not the place to consider.

State power, as I shall be considering it, consists in the monopoly of force within a given region, directed towards the property and lives of its subjects. The rulers of Wittfogel's hydraulic empires called upon the labour of their subjects to construct the instruments of their oppression, and backed their power with terror and the perversion of religious feeling. All but the very lowest subjects could

doubtless feel some pride in the accomplishments of the empire, and a corresponding contempt for those still outside its clutches. This goes some way to answering Cohen's reasonable question:

> As a socio-political system the state permits greater inequity within its population than any known earlier form of association. Why do people give up, or why are they forced to give up, so much local and individual autonomy to become part of, and subordinate to, despotic, sometimes quite cruel forms of government?
>
> (Cohen and Service 1978, p. 1)

The eighteenth-century anti-federalist who pleaded that he 'had rather be a free citizen of the small republic of Massachusetts, than an oppressed subject of the great American empire' spoke for many,[15] but the gleam of empire, and the hope of ending up in the higher classes, is enough to persuade multitudes.

The standard, Hobbesian reply is of course that without a power strong enough to repress all other powers within a region people cannot be relied upon to keep their word, or their distance. Better one master than many. An unfortunate by-product of Leviathan's creation is that human groups of greatly increased powers now face each other, and fight to whatever conclusion they can. It is not obvious, historically, that wars between states have been less destructive than the quarrels that it is alleged would have occurred in their absence:

> Governments are the principal violators of men's rights. They make thieves, murderers and rapists look saintly by comparison. Government and government alone foments wars, sends men to death camps and labour camps, devises and uses nuclear bombs, arrests individuals in the middle of the night and takes them to where they are never heard of again, and – most frequently of all – systematically plunders them of what they have laboured to earn.
>
> (Hospers 1971, p. 60)

The indictment is clearly correct in general, even though well-to-do subjects of a moderately decent state are understandably inclined to count these acts as perversions of a basically worthy institution. Surely we are all beneficiaries of the state, owing our security, our welfare, our salaries to its organisation of the commonwealth? The task of reformers must be to control the brutalities of state power, and use its wealth and strength for good ends (those we think are good). Some states, we say, are indeed despotic, but the solution is to place the ultimate controls in the hands of the people, with the aid of the secret ballot, exercised

periodically to elect our representatives. It is one of the most characteristic of reformist foibles to suppose that they are alone in the land, that no one else will use the powers they claim!

What if this reformist, liberal position be the ideology of slaves, eagerly convincing themselves that there is no real alternative to secure slavery, and thanking their masters for such small concessions to natural justice as they are inclined to make? If slavery is a wrongful institution because it violates fundamental human rights, denies the response we naturally make to potential friends and partners, then maybe state power is similarly wrong:

> Lawmakers…can add nothing to [justice, the supreme law] nor take anything from it. Therefore all the laws of their own making have no colour of authority or obligation....To say that any or all other men may rightfully compel [an individual] to obey any or all such other laws as they may see fit to make, is to say that he has no rights of his own, but is their subject, their property and their slave.[16]

Spooner's supreme law is, I suspect, identical with what another anarchist called 'the laws of free will, the rules (as the hobbits said) both ancient and just'.[17] No one is to enslave anyone, nor coerce anyone except to prevent such enslavement or absolute coercion. No one, in particular, is to force another to do what he/she does not him/herself consider right: that is, to treat another source of action merely as material. The rejection of state power does not rest, as it does in Rupert Paul Wolff's case, on the demands of autonomy as such (that one never do what one is told, merely because another requires it), but on the 'natural right' to be left alone to determine one's own life.[18] State power is born in conquest, not in free contract, and has no more right to its prey than any other robber band.

In the interest of rendering this conclusion more obvious, consider the following political fable, which owes something to Spencer's 'Story of the Slave'.[19] There was once a band of brigands, living as predators rather than producers.[20] The brigands formed some friendships with each other, but their relationships were mostly those of dominance and submission. One winter it occurred to them that instead of taking food away from the productive villagers down in the valley they could simply take up residence there. This they did, killing such of the villagers as openly opposed them and telling the rest that they were now their protectors against any (other) robber bands. The villagers, who had hitherto organised their affairs by the laws of free will, were slowly forced into a sly submission. The robbers took the village women, reared children and grew old. Their descendants might have been peacefully absorbed, but it occurred to that same brigand genius

to enlist youngsters in his military elite. At first only their own descendants became nobles, but likely-looking villagers were also taken up. After a few hundred years the common people were even allowed some limited say in the question of who should reach the nobility, though it was always understood that no one who advocated any radical change in the organisation of the village would be welcome. These elections were held in adversarial rather than consensus style, and power to manipulate 'the people's choice' and determine the event notoriously lay with cabals. All villagers were heavily taxed, and encouraged to accept the situation by being told that some of these moneys would be dispensed on projects of their own choice. It rarely occurred to anyone to note that if Group A and Group B agreed to support each other's projects then the whole community would be paying for both A and B, though no one very much wanted either of them, and either group could probably have afforded its own project were it not also paying for the other. The villagers were always subject to confiscation of their property, to press-gangs (or conscription) and continual propaganda to the effect that they were incapable of governing themselves within their own natural communities. The Spencerian question is, of course: when did these conquered villagers retrieve their freedom? And the answer comes: not yet:

> While nominally extended by the giving of votes the freedom of the individual has been in many ways actually diminished; both by the restrictions which ever-multiplying officials are appointed to insist on, and by the forcible taking of money to secure for him or for others at his expense, benefits previously left to be secured by each for himself.[21]

But this will seem like romantic individualism, 'the petty bourgeoisie's aversion to discipline' (Mao 1967, p. 163), unless we can show that there is a feasible alternative. How was the village in my fable ordered before the brigands came? The popular picture of an anarchist is of a bomb-throwing lover of disorder, incapable of organising even an assassination. The anti-statist reply is that 'Anarchy is order: government is civil war', and that 'liberty is the mother of order, not its daughter'.[22] The belief that order can be achieved only by submission to the state is ill-founded:

> The maintenance of law and order, the dispensing of justice, the provision of welfare and economic sustenance – all that we expect the state to provide today – were carried out in the old kingdoms by local corporate bodies.
>
> (Navari 1981, p. 17)

And more eminent testimony:

> The great part of the order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It has its origins in the principles of society and the natural constitution of men....Common interest regulates their concerns and forms their law; and the laws which common usage ordains have a greater influence than the laws of government.[23]

The anti-statist position rests upon the claim that there is a form of social life whose laws arise 'naturally' from the communion of free and responsible agents. Such free agents may sometimes act merely out of friendly obedience to another, but they do so in the conviction that this is the right thing for them to do. They recognise each other as equals and as potential friends, and would not seek to make mere tools of each other. Anarchists have differed in their emphases: some would wish to allow each individual person territory wholly of his/her own, and have looked to the forces of the market economy to help disentangle individual interests. Josiah Warren, indeed, carried this so far as to attempt to put his 6-year-old daughter on a business footing, working in the house for an agreed number of hours in exchange for her board and upkeep.[24] Other anarchists have pointed out the difficulty of disentangling individual contributions to the commonwealth, and denounced state law precisely for denying people their rightful property:

> Laws on property are not made to guarantee either to the individual or to society the enjoyment of the produce of their own labour. When the law establishes Mr So and So's right to a house, it is not establishing his right to a cottage he has built for himself, or to a house he has erected with the help of some of his friends. In that case no one would have disputed his right. The law is establishing his right to what belongs to everybody in general and to nobody in particular. The same house built in Siberia would not have the value it possesses in a large town.
>
> (Kropotkin 1976, p. 39)

It is not only difficult in practice to disentangle individual contributions to the common wealth: it is, from the point of view of anti-statist Aristotelianism, undesirable in theory. That social form which is merely a market alliance allows people to regard each other as mere tools, 'friends for use or pleasure':[25] the form of life that allows for equal friendship also involves mutual concern and frequent joint decision. Even the pure market model requires some shared concept of honour and mutual forbearance, but we have the chance of richer friendships than that.

But if this is so, if we are right to live within genuine communities that must reach joint decisions, and if much of the wealth we enjoy has to be supposed a *common* wealth, what becomes of anti-statism? Will not such a community precisely

be a state? Must not its members make their bow to Leviathan and hope to conciliate the brute? To this riposte there are two replies: first, that we do need to disentangle different levels of organisation if freedom is to flourish; second, that not all common decisions need be made in the adversarial mode to which we have become accustomed.

On the first point:

> True progress lies in the direction of decentralisation, both territorial and functional, in the development of the spirit of local and personal initiative, and of free federation from the simple to the compound.
>
> (Kropotkin 1976, p. 110)

Kropotkin was, arguably, the greatest of 'left-wing' or communistic anarchists, and more insistent than many on the importance, to himself and the community, of an individual's own inner strength and freedom, but he was not alone in advocating a society of interlocking groups:

> Each individual, each association, commune, or province, each region and nation, has the absolute right to determine its own fate, to associate with whomever it will, or break any alliance, without regard to so-called historical claims or the convenience of its neighbours.[26]

> It is by subdividing these republics from the great National one down thr' all its subordinations, until it ends in the administration of every man's farm and affairs by himself; by placing under every one what his own eye may superintend, that all will be done for the best.[27]

The first quotation is from Bakunin, an anarchist admirer of Jeffersonian federalism; the second from Jefferson himself, who named the foundation of republican government as 'the equal right of every citizen in his person and property',[28] but also held that the earth belonged only in usufruct to the living,[29] and that the existence in any country of uncultivated land and unemployed poor proved that 'the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right':

> If, for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated we must take care that other employment be permitted to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed.[30]

It is by ensuring that decisions are taken by the smallest practicable grouping, within the framework of the commonwealth, that each agent is given the chance of freedom.

The mode of organisation, through all these interlocking companies and regional groupings, might very well have the same despotic character as the state itself. But the crucial feature of anarchic organisation – and my second point – makes a difference. Whether it is accomplished through economic exchange, or through open discussion, the object of the exercise is to leave everyone satisfied. Mary Parker Follett, not openly an anarchist, spelt out the three main techniques of resolving conflict: domination, compromise and integration.[31] In the first case one party effectively enslaves the other, and the fact that the other may some day return the compliment does not alter the nature of the relationship. In the second case both parties abandon some of their hopes or accept that the other's plans (which may not be ones they welcome) are also fulfilled. Follett's third, preferred technique, which is still advocated in management studies, is to seek a solution that will wholly satisfy the underlying aims of all concerned. Conflict is an opportunity, not an evil:

> A business should be so organized that full opportunity is given in any conflict, in any coming together of different desires, for the whole field of desire to be viewed.
>
> (Follett 1941, p. 39)

It may reasonably be doubted that we can know *a priori* that there will always be a possible integration of apparently opposing plans but it is clear that there is one more often than we suppose, conditioned as we are to expect that society is a zero-sum game, and our major problem to make sure that we are on the winning side. The system of interlocking groups that Follett and others advocated is not of the usual branching kind (where each sub-group reports with others of the same category to a more powerful group), but one where circles of membership overlap and report to each other. Attempts to implement this pattern, one must admit, almost always lapse again into the authoritarian mode, but we need not believe that this is a necessary truth. Some commentators, perhaps unfairly, have suspected that it is we in the developed West who are out of step:

> The non-western political pattern of decision-making is an intensive and time-taking consultative process in which different views are argued until consensus emerges, and this is confirmed in a final vote.
>
> (Burton 1968, p. 23)

These decision-making transactions amount to discoveries of deeper unities, wider identities. It is because this sort of thing is possible that even anarcho-capitalism is not the simple-minded pursuit of self-interest that some suppose, and certainly not the unconstructive advocacy of bad manners and petty crime that is to be

found amongst some modern pamphleteers. Freedom, of the kind which is denied in slave societies, does not rest merely in the absence of external human impediment (so that Robinson Crusoe was free before Friday), but in the form of social exchange and personal development that enables all to meet as friends (see Collier 1977, p. 36).

> The free individual was always defined [by Emerson] in the context of a society made up of other free individuals – or ultimately in a universe – which curbed his personal individualism by reference to the basic right of all others to become free.
>
> (Mead 1963, p. 100)

Even to speak of one's individualism being 'curbed' by society is perhaps misleading: in a genuinely *political* society my identity as an individual is of a piece with my social relationships, and my welfare is not that of a self-sufficient monad, but of a person, with family and friends and the great globe itself to help define me. What I decide is not independent of what 'we' decide – whatever the 'we' is that I find myself a member of.

Government and the state are institutions that permit some people to impose their will upon all those within the boundaries fixed by historical accident to mark the limits of one state's power against another's. Relatively decent governments both take account of large-scale demands on the part of the subject population, and allow some latitude to individual and local action. Even decent governments disapprove of loyalties that transcend state boundaries; even decent governments have an interest in convincing their subjects that they are incapable of managing their own lives, or that it would be impractical to turn again to the local, corporate and voluntary fellowships that have in the past accomplished what we need. Even decent governments have an interest in spreading the falsehood that 'the state' is simply the total body of citizens, working together for the common good – though it is obvious that there is no such well-defined body with a common, freely worked out purpose. Their claims, obviously, are not wholly implausible. But if, as also seems plausible, it is possible to live as free and social beings, negotiating and integrating our plans as allies and potential friends, we must consider seriously whether governments are anything more than partly reformed brigands, and all the efforts of political philosophers to offer an abstract justification of the institution only rationalisations of despotism.

If slavery, which is the use of people merely as tools, is an offence to that form of shared life that we are evolved to seek, enjoy and admire, state slavery is no less. On the island of Camaica no one is a slave, and all can find an Aristotelian happiness in the shared enterprise of political and contemplative life.

Notes

1. 'Slaves and citizens', *Philosophy* 60.1985, pp. 27–46.
2. Hare (1978) understands slavery as a legal condition such that the victim's 'rights', if any, are defined solely by laws she has no part in making, and such that she has herself no right of appeal against her 'owner'. The Camaican regime, in his account, is the product of inefficient government rather than anarchist principle.
3. This is not to say that I do not advocate these reforms!
4. Cited in Mead 1963, p. 82.
5. See my *The Nature of the Beast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
6. Aristotle, *Politics* I, 1254a24 f.
7. See Tiger and Fox 1971; P.J Wilson 1975.
8. Fortenbaugh 1977, p. 135. See my *Aristotle's Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).
9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, 1148b32 f.
10. Aristotle, *Politics* III, 1285a18 f.
11. Aristotle, *Politics* I, 1252b4 f.
12. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII, 1156a6 ff.
13. Aristotle, *Politics* III, 1287b4 f.
14. Machan 1975, p. 71; see also Rasmussen 1982, p. 37.
15. 1787: Borden 1965, p. 2.
16. L. Spooner to Grover Cleveland: Spooner 1972, p. 3 (originally written 1886).
17. Tolkien 1954, vol. 1, p. 18; see also Tolkien 1981, p. 64: 'The most improper job of any man, even saints, is bossing other men.'
18. See Machan 1975, p. 143: this is not to say that it would be best to remain solitary all one's life.
19. Spencer 1960, p. 41; Nozick 1974, p. 290.
20. See Rothbard 1982, p. 187, after A. J. Nock 1970.
21. Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology,* I, 575, cited in Wiltshire 1978, p. 106.
22. A. Bellegarigue, cited in Woodcock 1975, p. 258; see Goldman 1924, p. 153.
23. T. Paine, *Rights of Man,* Dublin, 1792, vol. II, p. 1; Ostergaard 1981, p. 83.
24. Martin 1970, p. 4; Warren was very concerned for the right of children to independence; see also Moss 1974, p. 1.
25. Aristotle, *Politics,* III, 1280a25 ff.
26. Bakunin: cited in Guerin 1970, p. 67. Amoralism is an infection that gravely damaged Benjamin Tucker, another great libertarian, as well. Anarchists who draw their inspiration from Spooner or Kropotkin are less confused.
27. T. Jefferson to Cabell, 1816: cited in Koch 1943, p. 163 (reissued 1961, see Koch 1961a).
28. Jefferson: cited in Koch 1961b, p. 29.
29. Jefferson: *Writings,* vol. V, p. 116: cited in Brown 1954, p. 12.
30. Jefferson to Madison, 1785: cited in Brown 1954, p. 51.
31. Follett 1941, p. 30; see also Thayer 1973.

3 Is humanity a natural kind?[1]

Preface

The idea that humanity is a natural kind is implicit in a good deal of modern moral and political practice, and in anthropological and archaeological inquiry. I argue in the first section that biological species are not natural kinds, and in the second that we therefore cannot rely upon the claim that 'humankind is all one species' to validate our political or anthropological assumptions. The third section suggests that two possibilities are open to us. Either we must acknowledge that we are individual organisms having largely unpredictable similarities with or differences from other creatures, that we cannot take it for granted that all toolmakers or all artists will also have other familiar 'human' or 'personal' characteristics, and that there is no essential or puzzling difference between (say) 'domestication' and 'slavery'. Alternatively, we must insist that the natural kind of 'persons' is a Platonic Form, and not to be identified with the biological taxon of 'human beings'.

Folk taxonomy and scientific taxa

There was a time for most of us when adult male humans and teddy bears were all teddies, and 'ka' signified any furry quadruped. As we learnt our mother tongues, we also learnt a folk taxonomy that lives in us still: English speakers have no usual doubts that there are weeds, flowers, dogs, trees, fish, animals and birds and creepy-crawlies, mushrooms, toadstools, germs – and, of course, human beings. Greater learning will reveal to us that there are many kinds of tree or mushroom, but we remain happily confident that the larger generic kinds are real. Naively, we may believe that all (say) weeds are alike in having perceptible properties that together amount to weediness: properties that are the necessary and sufficient conditions of being a weed. If something looks just like a weed, it is one. Greater sophistication may suggest first that there is no set of properties such that all weeds have them, and that the most we can expect is that all weeds resemble each other, but not necessarily by virtue of their all having a particular property. It further suggests that what makes them all weeds may not be something directly perceptible. Maybe they are weeds because they compete with our food crops – because 'we' no

longer eat Good King Henry, it is a weed. Even then it will take an effort to remember that calling something a weed tells us very little about its own being, and to sympathise with linguistic communities for which our weeds are useful herbs, or which have no single slot for the class we so characterise.

Of course, no-one seriously supposes that weeds constitute a natural kind, that the failure to count something as a weed, or a germ, amounts to scientific ignorance or moral error, though even Linnaeus included such orders as 'beasts of burden' ('*jumenta*') in his taxonomy (Oldroyd 1980, p. 15). We are more convinced of the reality of trees and fish even if we modify our account of them:

> Fish, sb.:I. 1. In popular language, any animal living exclusively in the water; primarily denoting vertebrate animals provided with fins and destitute of limbs; but extended to include various cetaceans, crustaceans, molluscs, etc. In modern scientific language (to which popular usage now tends to approximate) restricted to a class of vertebrate animals, provided with gills throughout life, and cold-blooded; the limbs, if present, being modified into fins, and supplemented by unpaired median fins.
>
> (*Compact Oxford English Dictionary* 1971, vol. I, p. 1008)

Yet more exact analysis will show that even the second, more restricted usage (*pace* Quine 1969, p. 21) is too large. Chondrichthyes (fish with cartilaginous skeletons), osteichthyes (fish with bony skeletons) and agnatha (fish without jaws) are all 'fish', but constitute distinct taxonomic groups whose members resemble each other through convergent evolution – as do dolphins and ichthyosaurs. Similarly, it turns out that daisies, cacti and oak trees are all angiosperms (flowering plants), related more closely than any are to pine trees (gymnosperms). 'Tree' is not a scientific taxon (see Dupré 1981). This is not simply to say that daisies and oak trees have more similarities than do pines and oaks: for most ordinary purposes they do not. 'By primitive standards the marsupial mouse is more similar to the ordinary mouse than to the kangaroo; by theoretical standards the reverse is true' (Quine 1969, p. 15) – but calling kangaroos and marsupial mice 'more similar' is not quite the point. Their similarities are not more extensive, but more significant: they are signs of common ancestry.

The differences between folk taxonomy (the discriminations learnt with our mother tongue) and scientific taxonomy go deeper still. A creature lying on a

fishmonger's slab, gutted and gill-less, is no less a fish because it has no gills, fins or guts, and is not in the water. We call it a fish because it would, in nature, have these things: without them, if it were still living, it would be maimed. If it had never had them, it would be diseased or deformed. In folk taxonomy things are almost perfect exemplars of their class, by their possession of those features that they would 'in nature' be expected to have, apart from accidental defect or disaster. Seals, by Aristotle's guess, are deformed quadrupeds. The modern scientific taxon, by contrast, has no perfect type: there is not, nor could there be, a perfect osteichthys by comparison with which one could measure the failure of all other osteichthyes. The folk taxon includes all those creatures that have, or would have, a sufficient number of the taxon's defining characteristics, and each such taxon bears along with it the image of a perfect type. The scientific taxon consists of historically, genealogically related individuals that do not necessarily resemble each other much more than they do other unrelated individuals: such a taxon has no perfect type, no criteria of deformity. 'Typical forms' may be invoked, largely for heuristic and mnemonic purposes (see Baker 1974, pp. 121 ff.), but the 'atypical' is not necessarily degenerate, deformed or even a later development from the ancestral stock. 'Types' are invoked as well, to serve as the standard exemplars of such and such a species, family or class: but such types need not be typical, never mind perfect (see Baker 1974, p. 67). Quine's attempt to identify a biological kind with the set of all things 'to which [the paradigm] *a* is more similar than *a* is to [the foil] *b*' (Quine 1969, p. 9) is not in line with biological practice, unless a very strained sense is given to the term 'similar'. 'Those specimens that are types are merely those that happen to have had names based upon them;…the type of a name, falling within the range of variation of a taxon, may stand at one extreme of that taxon' (Jeffrey 1973, p. 18), and may therefore be more similar (phenomenologically and genetically) to many things outside the taxon than to those inside.

Folk taxa are not foolish inventions: they are related to the uses we would make of things. For landscaping or woodworking purposes oak and pine alike are trees, and equally unlike daisies. Whether seabirds are fish or fowl may matter a lot to priests and dieticians. If a particular cow is behaving in a manner quite unlike the others, or has an abnormal growth or a crumpled horn, we do well to check her health. Nor are folk taxa merely phenomenologically grouped classes of the sort that anyone might invent: they embody, in somewhat distorted form, a variety of ancient philosophical opinions. What we suppose to be common sense was once a radical invention (usually Plato's or Aristotle's). It is clear that folk taxa, however obvious they seem to us, and whatever philosophical insights they sometimes embody, need not be mirrored in a scientific taxonomy, and even when they are, the scientific taxon need not have the properties of the folk taxon. There are, in fact, at least six significant differences.

First, the folk taxon embodies an *a priori* concept of normality by comparison with which individuals or events are judged to be more or less abnormal or defective; thus 'our modern conceptions of health and disease and our notion of normality as something other than a statistical average enshrine Aristotle's model' (Sober 1980, p. 363). But in the scientific view nothing that happens is more or less 'natural': every creature of a given taxon is just as much a member of that taxon, however 'atypical' it is. Some taxa are remarkably homogeneous, their members homozygous at most genetic loci, and their populations polymorphic only for a few characters: *Rattus rattus* is an example. However, most individuals are heterozygotic, and most populations polymorphic for up to 80 per cent of their taxon's characters (White 1978, pp. 27 f.). 'For example, individuals of the ground-finch *Geospiza fortis* are so variable in beak that they were for a long time considered to belong to at least two, and by some authorities to three or more separate species' (Lack 1947, p. 12).

Second, whereas in our folk taxonomy a thing is a tree if enough speakers of our language say so, membership of a scientific taxon depends on real genealogical connection, whatever we say about it. In folk taxonomy a tree is, crudely, a tree because it is judged by the standards appropriate in our linguistic community to be a large perennial plant having a single woody stem. Bonsai (Japanese miniaturised trees) and lightning-shattered oaks are trees because we choose to treat them so, because they have enough shared properties to make that classification useful. They are trees because they have (or in nature would have) single woody trunks: but they have such trunks because they share a particular ancestry, and it is because they do that they are counted as members of particular genealogical taxa. 'Members of a taxon are similar because they share a common heritage; they do not belong to the taxon because they are similar' (Mayr 1969, pp. 65 ff.). Similarly, vegetables are (primarily) any plants 'whose root or fruit or leaf is [in the judgement of English speakers] (a) savoury, and (b) edible by human beings. The set of all vegetables has as its subsets some but not all species of the *Cruciferae* family, some but not all of the *Leguminosae* family etc. etc.' (Wiggins 1980, p. 172). They are not savoury or edible because they are vegetables, any more than a man is unmarried because he is a bachelor

Third, if all presently existing members of the folk taxon 'tree' perished without descendants, but cowslips at last evolved a woody trunk, there would (if English had survived) be trees again. However, the scientifically isolated taxa would have gone for good: neo-pterodactyls, to use Hull's (1978) example, would not be the same species, genus or family as the old pterosaurs, even if they were, for our purposes, indistinguishable. ' "*Homo sapiens*"…is a name, a proper name for a discrete, spatio-temporally bounded particular thing' (Rosenberg 1980, p. 120).

Classes of the kind with which Quine and others have identified biological taxa do not begin and end with the birth or extinction of their members (Slote 1974, pp. 84 f.).

A fourth difference between a biological kind and even a sophisticated version of our folk taxonomy has confused some recent commentators. Members of the folk taxon may not look alike, but may still be understood to share an underlying nature. Biological kinds are not even to be defined by their members' possession of a common genetic nature, something that would issue in perceptible similarity if all had gone well with the organisms' growth. Some commentators have admitted that the existence of sibling species such as *Drosophila pseudoobscura* and *Drosophila persimilis* demonstrates that the scientifically defined species of an individual is not a function of its outward appearance, but have gone on to claim that the 'real', natural kind of an individual is that set of creatures who share its nature (i.e. whose appearance and behaviour are caused by the same underlying principles): 'for the name to stand for a natural kind, everything depends on whether there is some nomological grounding for what it is to be of the kind' (Wiggins 1980, p. 80, after Putnam 1970). Unfortunately, whereas this doctrine serves well enough for the chemical elements, it does not meet with biological approval (see Dupré 1981). The physical stuffs we categorise as 'golden' constitute a natural kind, because there is a stuff (namely aggregates of atoms with a specific atomic number and structure) whose presence in greater or smaller proportion in the stuff we began with explains the phenomenal properties. Even atomic number is a vaguer and more probabilistic concept than optimistic systematisers once hoped (see Sober 1980), and biological kinds lack even that much 'underlying unity'. Even if we agree that there is a scientifically discoverable taxon (e.g. *Rattus rattus*), we do not thereby admit that there is any stuff (even an aggregate of DNA molecules) whose presence, however diluted, in all the members of that taxon explains the phenomenal features by which we (and for that matter, they) recognise a rat. Even if there were a stretch of DNA that is duplicated in every rat, that stretch would not be what guarantees their membership of the taxon (see Hull 1974b). Each rat does indeed have a genetic nature, and rats are (as it happens) very uniform, but there is no need to suppose that there is one element of that nature by virtue of which any rat is a member of the taxon. On the contrary, it is (in sexually reproducing species) precisely because all individuals do not have the same genetic nature that there is a species at all. The notional 'gene-pool' to which all members of a species contribute (and non-members hardly at all) is not (*pace* Trigg 1982, p. 96) what determines the natures of the individual organisms: some species have very heterogeneous pools and others have rather homogeneous ones, but both sorts are species.

Fifth, in folk taxonomy a creature that is of one kind cannot also be of another, but the boundaries of scientifically defined taxa are not merely elastic (see Wiggins 1980, p. 32, after Sommerhof 1950), but vague. For the folk taxonomist a deformed

dog is still a dog, and will never be a seal: it survives at all only because there is an underlying structure that would, in nature and barring accidents, have produced a proper dog. If Growltiger is of one and the same kind as Rumpelteazer, and Rumpelteazer of the same kind as Macavity, then Growltiger and Macavity are also conspecifics, and share an underlying nature. But the existence of ring-species, or *Formenkreis* (Beckner 1959, pp. 61 ff., see Baker 1974, pp. 82 ff.) shows that this need not be so. 'Having the same nature as x' is a transitive relation; 'being of the same scientific taxon as x' is not. Were this not the case, evolution (in the Darwinian sense of descent with modification) could not have occurred.

Sixth, the view that modern taxonomists frequently and with culpable inaccuracy (see Lloyd 1983, pp. 7–57) revile as Aristotelian is represented better as Platonic. Aristotle himself explained the character of a biological individual not by recourse to species-essences defined *per genus et differentiam,* but by the effect of the father's form upon the mother's material (see Balme 1980). However, according to the Platonic account there are real 'Forms' of living creatures, having the power to influence the birth and development of physical organisms. No tangible life form is identical with the Form, or Ideal, to which it approximates, and the Form is not dependent for its existence on its having exemplars or copies. Whereas the taxon of *Tyrannosaurus rex* is irrecoverably extinct, the Form of that beast is an eternal verity that later life forms might 'resemble' to a greater or lesser degree. The Form of Vertebrate-at-Sea, for example, is regularly rediscovered (by osteichthyes, chrondichthyes, agnatha, ichthyosaurs, cetacea,…). On this account scientific investigation aims to find the Platonic essences, never perfectly embodied, which are the asymptotes of the hyperbolae traced by physical evolution. This Platonism, it seems to me, is still a serious option: certainly those taxonomists who sneer at it give no adequate reason for their scorn. Even the more sympathetic Oldroyd entirely mistakes the Platonic (and the Aristotelian) methods in describing them as 'talking round a problem until an acceptable "essential" definition of a thing or concept had been reached' (Oldroyd 1980, p. 261). But such Platonic Forms are not to be identified with actual genotypes, and their existence does not guarantee that what we now call, for example, the human species is really, and uniquely, guided by one such ideal.

Those who believe that there are 'natural kinds' in the biological as well as in the chemical realm sometimes suggest that the alternative is to succumb to the Nietzschean view of 'truth' as a mobile army of metaphors' (Wiggins 1980, p. 81, see Oldroyd 1980, pp. 262 ff.). All of our classes would then be indefinitely revisable, and founded only on how particular items happened to strike us, so that 'being a pygmy chimpanzee' would be as ineradicably tied to language and current fashion as 'being a vegetable, or a weed'. Humble realists who believe that there are truths

to be found out, not just invented, then take comfort from the truism that there are real species of living creatures, and seek to interpret the thought typologically. But the implied contrast (Nietzsche versus Plato) is unfounded, and Trigg's conclusion (1982, p. 82) that those who disbelieve in species as natural kinds must be nominalists is false. There may be real universals, even real genetic factors shared by all or most or many members of a given species. There are, indeed, real species, 'groups of interbreeding natural populations that are reproductively isolated [though not necessarily absolutely so] from other such groups' (Mayr 1969, p. 25). Such genuinely interbreeding stocks are what Kant called *Realgattungen,* to distinguish them from morphological species, *Arten,* whether those latter were defined by surface similarity or subtler similarities of causal nature: 'Academic classification extends to classes, which it divides according to resemblances, while natural classification divides according to relationships, by taking reproduction into account' (Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 2, pp. 427 ff., cited in Baker 1974, pp. 81 f.). We can guess that members of *Realgattungen* will resemble each other in a variety of ways, but their membership is not contingent on their resemblance at either the phenomenal or the causal level.

Realgattungen, as Kant suspected and as most of us believe, develop out of older stocks. Speciation, that is the development of barriers (social, geographical or physiological) to successful interbreeding, occurs both when a single interbreeding population is thereby divided (kladogenetic evolution) and when an ancestral population has so far changed its character as to lead us to suppose that ancestors and descendants could not now interbreed if they were in a position to do so (anagenetic or adastogenetic evolution). Some palaeontologists have concluded that they are operating with a distinctive concept of species, a 'palaeospecies', such that *Homo habilis, erectus* and *sapiens* are distinct species even though, so far as we know, there were no rival descendants of their immediate ancestors. Like Beckner (1959, p. 59), I doubt if any different concept is required: what we have is an inductive guess that these successive populations would not successfully interbreed, though particular members of the populations might. What the palaeospecies concept does do is bring to our attention the fact that even the most rigorously xenophobic of contemporary species are, once we bring their past to mind, merely *Rassen* (varieties) of a single *Formenkreis,* or ring-species. 'It is not possible', to adapt Otto Kleinschmidt, 'to distinguish sharply between good species and mere geographical races, because good species may often be geographical [or temporal] representatives of one another' (cited in Baker 1974, p. 82). Burma exaggerates the problem in claiming that 'a species is no more than an arbitrarily set-off segment of a continuous phyletic line' (Burma 1976, cited in Trigg 1982, p. 81), since the segments need not be arbitrarily set off. However, the divisions are not absolute.

Classes and biological taxa, accordingly, are not the same sort of thing, and the natural kinds that are perhaps to be found in chemistry should not necessarily be expected in biology. No-one can deny that there is an analogy between genetic code and atomic number: what the atomic structure is to the surface phenomena of samples of gold or water, the genetic structure is to the surface phenomena of Macavity or Growltiger. However, whereas samples of gold, to be true samples, must all have the same atomic structure, it is not true that even domestic cats (who are a lot more homogeneous than dogs) must all have the same genetic structure to be true cats. There will be genetic resemblances, as there are phenomenal ones, but a genealogical, historical classification does not rely on those resemblances: where they exist, it explains them. We must distinguish *Arten* (morphospecies), *Realgattungen* (breeding stocks) and metaphysical, regulative Forms.

The unity of humankind

The body of social scientists and biologists who were called, in 1949, to lend their authority to UNESCO's moral and political ideals, declared firmly that 'man-kind is one: all men [i.e. all humans] belong to the same species' (cited in Baker 1974, p. 65). The dictum, like an earlier declaration that 'all men are created equal', can be disputed, but my first concern is to understand it. Is it not also true (but who would bother to say so) that 'mammalkind (primatekind, hominoidea) is one: all mammals (primates, hominoids) belong to the same class (order, super-family)'? To be human at all is to be a member of a certain taxon, currently labelled '*Homo sapiens*': creatures who did not belong would not be human, though they might resemble many of us very closely. If mankind (i.e. humanity) exists as a distinguishable kind at all, it must be one (i.e. one species, genus or family), but it does not follow that 'humankind' could not name a higher taxon than the single species. Our guesses about *Homo neanderthalensis* shift with changing archaeological fashion: if that does name a separate species, then there were once other hominids that buried their dead and worshipped. If '*Homo habilis*' names the same species (the same breeding stock) as '*Homo sapiens*', then there were humans of our species who perhaps lacked some or most of our cultural capacities. It is likely or even certain that there still are.

Clearly enough, we are faced by terminological confusion. The UNESCO savants, in the wake of a crass and horrible denial of our common nature, were concerned simply to say that all creatures born of woman must be expected to have much the same fundamental wants and talents. Thus, the statement 'all members of our species are human' implies that they all need food, drink, shelter, culture and companionship if they are to be happy, and that all can contribute to the ongoing enterprise of human life. We are not to suppose that obvious physiological and cultural differences will render any member of our species alien, or undeserving.

Creatures not of our species, by implicit contrast, lie beyond the pale: all human persons are to think that any conspecific is of more worth than any creature from another *Realgattung,* even if particular members of our species are not very different in outward show, or inner genetic nature, from the aliens.

In folk taxonomy humankind must embrace that set of creatures who have a common nature, namely humanity. That nature need not always be actualised: physical and chemical injuries alike may leave their victim dumb or deformed, but it is axiomatic that the victim would have joined the human game, were it not for the injury. What is 'natural' to a given kind is what members of that kind would do, under 'normal' or 'ideal' circumstances. Those circumstances, in turn, are to be defined as the ones in which members of the kind would realise their natures. If a creature's nature is its genetic code, then there will be some born into our species whose nature is irrevocably unhuman, such that it was never an open possibility that they should grow up to be language-using, cultural, God-fearing mammals. To believe that, but for fortune, they, too, would have been like us is only reasonable if we think that they are really immortal souls, housed (to their cost) in damaged instruments – and souls, moreover, of one simple sort, the transcendental self that is, effectively, the Platonic Form of Humanity (see Merlan 1963). This belief may be useful practically: if we think that there is a 'real human' inside the apparent vegetable, we may expect (and so get) more of him/her, and treat him/her more as we would wish to be treated. It may also be a dangerous belief, encouraging the folk-taxonomic feeling that unusual creatures are defective. Seals are not merely deformed quadrupeds (though Aristotle was not wrong to see a relationship); our human-born monsters also have their own discoverable natures, their own contribution to the species pool (see Hull 1978, p. 358).

Where the folk taxonomist supposes that all humans have a common causal nature, whether that is genetic or Platonic or both, the biologist speaks rather of 'one great breeding system through which genes flow and mix in each generation' (Wilson 1978, p. 50). Wilson himself goes on to interpret this gene pool as constituting a shared human nature, illustrating the fourth confusion mentioned above. What is widely, though not universally, shared is simply the property of drawing from, and usually being able to contribute to the pool, and this property does not necessarily rest on any particular shared gene. It may be true, as I am inclined to think, that the nature of most present and probable members of our species is such that, as Wilson says, 'the qualities that we recognise as most distinctively mammalian – and human – make…a transition [to a permanent slave society] impossible....Slaves under great stress insist on behaving like human beings instead of slave ants, gibbons, mandrills, or any other species' (Wilson 1978, p. 81, and see p. 199). However, Wilson knows well that these qualities are not

necessarily possessed by all of our conspecifics, and might have noticed that some slave societies have been very long-lived. The qualities that make such slave societies unlikely to hold all humankind in thrall for ever are also possessed by many of our fellow mammals. They do not constitute a human essence of the sort preferred by folk taxonomists. In so far as our genes influence our lives, and are therefore – as Putnam (1970) claimed – rather like atomic structures, we are influenced by a nature we do not share with all humans, and do share with many non-humans. Humankind is not that sort of natural kind.

The unity of humankind (the biological taxon) does not rest in the possession of a common nature, but in being a breeding population such that my ancestors and my descendants alike may be yours as well. Not every imaginable human pair can expect viable offspring, but we are all embedded in a lineage such that any pair might reasonably expect to be able to share great-grandchildren or the like. This may result in the continued existence of widely shared qualities, but it does not always have to; nor can we be absolutely confident that past conspecifics were altogether like us. Wilson notes that 'human nature is just one hodgepodge out of many conceivable' (Wilson 1978, p. 23), although he also expresses an extraordinary confidence that 'if even a small fraction of the diagnostic human traits were stripped away, the result would probably be a disabling chaos'. Those traits, which are merely ones that 'have been recorded in every culture known to history and ethnography', might (for all that Wilson shows) be simply what they seem – cultural traits that, when described with sufficient vagueness, turn out for whatever reason to have been very common up to now. To suppose that such a list in any way limits our future is as futile as the cognate arguments that the forms of locomotion known by 1700 exhausted the possibilities, or that the presence of slaves in every human society till then – always excepting a few hunter–gatherer societies – shows that we cannot outlaw slavery. Without some evidence that 'age-grading, athletic sports, bodily adornment, calendar, cleanliness training,…trade, visiting, weaving and weather control' (Wilson 1978, p. 22, after G.P. Murdock) constitute an abiding syndrome, we must conclude that our genes have so far allowed these social forms, and may have predetermined them, but that we do not know which will drop from sight in some future culture, nor what other forms a changing gene pool may allow or require. 'Maybe all triangles must have three angles, but not all reptiles must have a three-chambered heart, though in point of fact they might' (Hull 1974a, p. 79). Wilson correctly observes that maps of chimpanzee tool-making…might be placed without notice into a chapter on primitive culture in an anthropology textbook' (Wilson 1978, p. 31) – so eroding the barrier between human and non-human (see Foley 1984). The notional barrier between human and post-human (so to speak) is just as porous. We cannot fix the future progress of a *Realgattung,* any more than our forebears, when they were *Homo habilis,* could have precluded

the possibility of their line's becoming *Homo sapiens,* and thereby having on average somewhat different blood groups, physiognomies and behavioural preferences:

> Since species evolve…they should be treated not as classes whose members satisfy some fixed set of conditions – not even a vague cluster of them – but as lineages, lines of descent, strings of imperfect copies of predecessors, among which there may not even be the manifestation of a set of central and distinctive, let alone necessary and sufficient, common properties.
>
> (Rosenberg 1980, pp. 122 f.)

The Kantian or neo-Darwinian perspective has some ethical merit (see Hull 1978, *pace* Trigg 1982, p. 93). Once we realise that human variety is not an error, that there is no one sort of human being that is 'what a human being should be', and that we must expect our species always to be variegated, we can begin to think again about constructing social orders that will provide a place for all. It is because we have convinced ourselves that only avoidable accidents produce 'monsters' that we have designed our society around the free and healthy adult. We must instead begin to budget for a future where we shall always have 'monsters' – who are, of course, not monstrous at all, but merely variations within the range currently occupied by our *Realgattung.* We need a society that will have places – I do not mean asylums – for the aphasic, 'deformed', 'disturbed' and 'eccentric'. Variation is not a dysfunction of sexual reproduction, it is what sex is for (Sober 1980).

If individual members of our taxon may be without those properties that we have considered essential to humanity (a capacity to speak, to laugh, to make tools and to worship), might not whole populations? Rousseau and Monboddo thought it possible that there were human tribes that had not yet learned language, as there were others that had not learned to write or to use the wheel (Baker 1974, pp. 22 f.). If speech and the other arts of life are not 'natural' to humankind, 'it is impossible we can refuse [orang-utans] the appellation of men'. Monboddo intended this dictum to have the humane effect that orang-utans and the like be treated respectfully, as being 'of our kind'. But once the ties between 'being of our species' and being 'human' (in the customary sense of 'language-using, time-binding, cultural, etc.') were loosened, what reason was there to treat even our conspecifics well? 'If the essence of humanity was defined as consisting in some specific quality, then it followed that any man who did not display that quality was subhuman, semi-animal' (Thomas 1983, p. 41). Kant himself following a long and pernicious tradition, had decreed that only rational agents were of moral worth; their being of our *Realgattung* was not to the point. Some creatures of another species might turn out to be 'human' in the morally significant sense; many of our species might turn out to be 'subhuman'.

It is one of the minor ironies of history that 'Enlightenment thinkers', who are popularly supposed to have released us from ethnocentric obscurantism, were very much readier than orthodox theologians to believe that chimpanzees were 'human', and negroes not. The belief that humankind was monophyletic – of one common descent – was preserved by orthodox believers. Contrast Voltaire on Hottentots (Baker 1974, p. 20), and Herder on the unity of humankind: 'Neither the *Pongo* nor the *Longimanus* is your brother; but truly the American and the Negro are' (Herder, in Baker 1974, p. 22). The conflict between those who are ready to see genetic differences within the human species, and those who emphasise the 'unity' of humankind still rages. If our conspecifics do not share a common nature, and if there is nothing to prevent the birth of atypical humans, then it may be that the nature of the Yanomamo or the Tibetan is not entirely ours. If we are bound to treat only those creatures well that 'share our nature', then we may find that some human tribes lie beyond the moral pale, as do particular individuals within our own tribe. The claim that Yanomamo or Tibetan are unlike 'us' is, of course, debatable. One of the oddest, and most disagreeable, features of Baker's learned and informative book is the way he appears to be retailing the horrors of the court of King Chaka (Baker 1974, pp. 389 ff.) or the Aztecs (pp. 524 ff.) in order to show what 'Negrids' or 'Zentralids' are like – as though 'Europids' had never behaved as badly. Sadly, the evidence that Zulus and Aztecs are just like us is precisely that they behaved, on historical occasions, with appalling cruelty and greed. Baker's reliance on nineteenth-century explorers and missionaries for his 'first-hand' information on African tribes (no modern social anthropologist features in his extensive bibliography) produces a wildly distorted account of native character and achievement. A similar historical ignorance pervades more recent, sociobiological work – as though none but Yanomamo males ever beat their wives, and none but Tibetans practised polyandry.

The recurrent fashion for discovering the 'unhuman' in other sections of humankind can be plausibly rebutted with evidence that all human groups so far discovered turn out to be very like the rest of us, and to contain much the same spread of characters and abilities. This may be less a discovery than a stipulation – groups that are not 'very like us' are simply not identified as human. We do not wait to see whether the populations could interbreed, or even ask whether they might not be able to understand each other well enough without the benefit of assertoric speech. 'Being human', in fact, remains a concept of folk taxonomy: to identify a creature as human is to stipulate that it be judged and treated according to the standards appropriate, within our linguistic community, to that sort of entity. Those standards include the requirement that we do not patronise a genuinely human being by supposing that he could do no other than he does. We treat

people 'like animals' when we seek to control them merely by fear (or by desire), expect them to have no interests beyond the crudely physical, and do not ask them for an opinion.

The moral and political effects of allowing it to be thought that any biologically human population is less than 'human' have been so bad that it is understandable that liberals now insist upon Herder's thesis, and sneer at any purported evidence either that the biologically non-human could demonstrate any distinctively 'human' capacities, or that the biologically human could be without the characters and talents necessary for life in the liberal West. The price of this laudable insistence on moral humanism is a profound unease, even among those who are professionally committed to neo-Darwinian theory and scientific materialism (which are not, of course, the same thing), about any attempt to treat the characters and talents of human populations as explicable in something like the way that we might explain the behaviour of baboons or horses. It is asserted, in advance of any evidence worth mentioning, that our species has somehow escaped from the nexus of evolutionary selection, and become pure mind, governed only by the laws of reason and the purposes of conscious individuals. This was a rational and consistent position as long as we believed that the human soul, the Form of Humanity, was infused into our merely animal ancestry at some one point in time (as individual souls are, perhaps, infused in the developing embryo). It depended, in turn, on the judgement that those distinctively 'human' capacities were linked, and unanalysable. If as seems both likely and in accordance with the profession of neo-Darwinism, such capacities are to be understood as piecemeal developments of earlier traits (see *The Nature of the Beast,* Clark 1982), we lack any definite reason to believe in a once-and-for-all infusion of Real Humanity. In fact, it may still be true that no human population has been isolated from others for sufficiently long to be permanently cut off from the human gene pool. Any character may turn up anywhere. However, the proportion of those characters in any given population may vary, and the nature of our descendants will not necessarily be ours (any more than birds are very much like dinosaurs). The genetic landscape, as it were, can no longer be conceived as an archipelago of isolated islets: it is a land of hills and valleys, where populations cluster around hilltops and spill down the slopes (some steep, some gentle). Where one kind ends and another begins, in the valley between the adaptive peaks, is a matter of some indifference. The reality is the whole continent, Lifekind (*From Athens to Jerusalem,* Clark 1984).

'All men of good will', according to Eccles (1970, p. 1), 'would subscribe to the concept that we must strive to foster and develop the fullest possible life for mankind, not just here and now, but indefinitely into the future.' If 'mankind' here means the biological taxon of humankind, why should we make the 'well-being'

(whatever it consists in) of that continuing taxon (which will perhaps one day be a family or even an order) our sole or major criterion of moral judgement? The words of another scientific savant are more to my own moral taste: 'The grand design of nature perceived broadly in four dimensions to include the forces that move the universe and created man, with special emphasis on evolution in our own biosphere, is something intrinsically good that it is right to preserve and enhance, and wrong to destroy or degrade' (Sperry 1983, p. 22). It is unfortunate that Sperry shows little sign of having thought through the moral implications of thus conceiving himself as the servant of being (Sprigge 1984, after Heidegger), but the moral thesis does have considerable resonance. Why bother only about our species, when we might instead concern ourselves with our order, or with the whole biosphere of which we are a part?

If, conversely, 'mankind' stands for all of those, of whatever descent and lineage, who display a devotion to the values that we serve – civility and rational debate, for example – we have to face the fact that not all biologically human beings can be expected to do so, and some biologically non-human ones might, at least in some degree. The problem, notoriously, is that the harder we make it to meet the qualifications of 'real humanity' (so as to exclude dolphins, chimpanzees, squids and honeybees), the more creatures of clearly human descent we also push beyond the pale. In the end either only the wise are worth troubling about (and they, so far, are found only among the biologically human) or any individual with feelings and purposes of its own is a proper moral object. Either most human beings may rightly be treated 'like animals', when we deal with them at a practical level, and when we try to explain their behaviour; or a good many animals should not be treated like that either.

Humans in context, and transcendent selves

If humankind (the biological taxon) is at most only an accidental unity, and if humanity (the nominal essence which serves us well enough at the level of liberal political theory) is only a collection of those traits which we expect to see in those whom we choose to judge according to human standards, then the UNESCO insistence on 'the unity of humankind' can only be a moral and political programme, not a report upon a relatively unknown species. Whether pygmy chimpanzees should be included in *Pan paniscus* or not matters hardly at all, and can be settled easily enough, so far as the vagueness of the concept of 'conspecificity' allows. Whether Neanderthals should be considered a distinct species or subspecies also matters little. To wonder whether Bushmen ('Sanids') and Caucasians ('Europids') might be of different species or subspecies, of which the former is characterised by a greater degree of paidomorphosis even than the typical 'human' (see Baker 1974,

pp. 307 ff.), is politically dangerous. My suspicion is that this rests on two factors. It depends first, on the fact that we do have an increased concern for creatures with whom we may imaginably or probably share descendants as well as ancestors; second, that we mistakenly and even unconsciously assume that 'to be of a different species' is to be possessed of a different and probably inferior nature. It has been my main concern so far to dispose of the idea that biological species are natural kinds in that sense. Our concern for those creatures who might plausibly be co-parents or co-ancestors of our descendants should not be forgotten in any analysis of morality, or in any moral programme, but it can hardly be our sole concern. On the contrary, a wish to have descendants rather like ourselves, and a corresponding care for those who might helpfully contribute to our lineage, rests upon a desire that what we now value should still be valued in the future. Sociobiological analysis of our system of values has things quite the wrong way round: we do not value what we do in order to have lots of descendants (as though that were our prime objective, no matter what they were like), but desire heirs in order to preserve the life or lives we value. A better understanding of how life is preserved should then lead to an increased concern for all those beings who share the world with us: if the land does not live, nothing that we value will (see 'Hume, animals and the objectivity of morals', *Philosophical Quarterly* 25, 1985, pp. 117–33).

This second point – that we are dependent on the land and its creatures – has a further, and directly anthropological, implication: that the correct context of explanation is the whole ecosystem, not merely the notionally demarcated species. To clarify this point we need to consider what explanation is. The traditional humanist has sought explanations for cultural innovation and historical episode within the network of human discourse. To explain why Tibetans practise polyandry, or why Cro-Magnons painted upon walls, it was necessary to ask them, or to imagine what they (or we) might offer as an explanation. Such humanistic explanations have been seen as inappropriate to the lives of chimpanzees or wolves: not only could we get no answer from them if we asked, but we could not (it was said) suppose them capable even of offering themselves an explanation. 'If a lion could speak', so it has been said, 'we could not understand it' – a remark made, so far as can be seen, in total ignorance of what lions were like, but tending to support the ancient prejudice that non-humans, because they could not speak a human tongue, could not even be said to think or feel. Scientific materialists, having learnt to 'explain' animal behaviour with non-intentional categories, without any need to wonder what sort of explanation the animals would give, then began to doubt that the 'explanations' that human beings give were any more than folk-psychological hypotheses. Individual and social behaviour must be explained 'objectively', without recourse to mythical entities like hopes, desires, intentions or beliefs. If we

retain the habit of intentional analysis, it can only be in the spirit with which we retain Ptolemaic language about dawn and sunset. 'Real' explanations are to be found in sociobiological analyses of the statistical effects upon the gene pool of particular forms of behaviour. That this view is wholly destructive of intellectual endeavour, including that of the enquiring biologist, seems to be impossible for some commentators to grasp.

Scientific materialism can be retained a little longer if we change the unit of explanation: the cause of the biologist's theorising must, on pain of total incoherence, at least include the world concerning which he/she theorises. He/she cannot be offering a particular theory simply because to do so gives his/her genes the best chance of appearing in subsequent generations. Part of the cause must be that it is likely to be true, and that she believes this because the world is what it is. Any satisfactory theory of knowledge or justified belief must include the proviso that one believes what one does because it is true, or because something else is true which would be improbable on any other hypothesis. In brief, a decent theory is one that is caused by features of the world we theorise about, one that we would be much more likely to have if it were true than if it were not.

From this it follows that good explanations of the events that we initially characterise as elements of human culture should not be internal to the species: they should link those events to the whole world-segment to which the events themselves are responses. If it is unfashionable to seek intentional explanation, and certainly very difficult when we deal with entities that cannot directly answer our probing questions, it is simply unsound to seek explanations of what 'people' do or did as if they were alone in the world. 'The explanation' of a cultural event, if it is not to be simply intentional, must deal with the whole 'ecological community, which will include creatures of many species' and kinds. Past humanists could, not wholly unreasonably, explain the Lapps' treatment of reindeer simply by asking what the Lapps meant to do with them, and tacitly assuming that the reindeer had no relevant 'intentions'. Once the absence of any distinct 'natural kind' is recognised, we may acknowledge: first, that reindeer, too, may have simple purposes; second, that their behaviour and that of the Lapps alike may be explained objectively through sociobiological analysis; and, finally, that those creatures we demarcate as humans or as deer are only two subsets of all of the creatures there are in the relevant ecosystem. A properly materialist explanation of this or any other cultural form will reveal that 'human artefacts' are as much a product of the whole system as termite hills or the Everglades: no one being, perhaps, intended the result, and no one lineage necessarily profits from it.

If humankind is not a natural kind, but an assembly of interbreeding populations like any other species, existing within a series of ecosystems that are the proper

units of explanation, then a number of traditional categories must be judged merely artificial. If oxygen is a natural kind, then so is oxygenation: if drink is not (being entirely relative to the needs and preferences of the speaker), then 'having a drink' is not. Correspondingly, if humankind is only a *Realgattung,* or even (taking its prehistoric past into account) a *Formenkreis,* and not a natural kind, then what becomes of slavery (as distinct from domestication), or cannibalism (as distinct from flesh-eating), or murder? European explorers, burdened or blessed with a folk taxonomy that laid emphasis on the moral and political unity of humankind, found it necessary to invent special explanations for such social categories as 'sacred cow' or family pig, and to think the natives simply mistaken in not 'seeing' the one human form in every normal adult of our species. Once we have acknowledged that a species is not a natural kind – not a set of individuals who share a common, underlying and causative nature – we can afford to allow that other linguistic communities have other views on who are 'people' (i.e. respected members of their community), just as they have other views about edible vegetables or trees. Either there is a natural kind of person, which is not to be identified with the biological taxon *Homo sapiens,* or there is only a nominal, evaluative grouping. Either way we cannot merely dismiss other communities' taxonomies as 'biologically ignorant', as if they had just never noticed that deer were not human beings. The question is not why have so many human societies failed to see the difference between domesticating, killing and eating animals and enslaving, murdering and cannibalising humans? It is rather, why do we make so much of any differences there are?

The answer – and the reason why so many contemporary liberals think it necessary to identify our species with a genuine natural kind – is that we in the West are the heirs to a metaphysical and religious tradition that was dogmatically certain that all those born of woman housed immortal souls that were equipped to share God's life. Every member of our species was also a member or potential member of the spiritual Israel. Everything in the world belonged to God, and to those whom God appointed as His friends. Such a transcendent soul could not be given in material generation, although it must, while still embodied, rely upon the body formed through ancestral ages. It is one further oddity that those moderns who regularly seek to dissociate themselves from these older doctrines of the soul (which they characterise as dualist or Cartesian, though there were dualists long before Descartes) still wish to maintain the moral divisions that only made sense upon the assumption of a distinctively human soul. If there is no such soul and if each creature's character is fixed by its individual genetic inheritance and social experience, then there is no reason to distinguish sharply and generally between domestication and slavery, flesh-eating and cannibalism, the killing of an ox and the slaying of a man. Liberal humanists need to believe in the myth of a common

human nature, but have abandoned belief in the human soul, and so equate that imagined natural kind with the human species. They should think again.

Essentialist accounts of humankind are still very popular, in scientific as well as political contexts. Efforts to define humans as tool-making animals, or language-users, or food-sharers, or time-binders and 'promising primates' (P.J. Wilson 1975, see Gowlett 1984) or the like all rest upon an unconscious assumption that there is some one feature that distinguishes 'human beings' from 'non-human beings'. Aristotle knew better than that: generic kinds, such as birds, fishes, quadrupeds and humans, were characterised not by some one essential property, but by complexes of resemblances and homologous structures (the wings of an eagle and a penguin are homologous, those of an eagle and a bat only analogous). Such large-scale kinds play no explanatory part in Aristotle's biological theory, which rests instead upon the reproductive mechanisms of particular mating couples. As we advance upon the Aristotelian road, and come to treat morpho-species, generic kinds, *Arten,* as heuristic and expository conveniences, we have steadily less excuse for believing that the presence of our biological species can be detected simply by discovering instances of tool-making, food-sharing, exogamic structures or verbal activity. All of these may precede our species; any of them may, in theory, be absent from a given human population, although we may agree that if Monboddo had been right to identify orang-utans as humans, even as a distinctive subspecies, then there would be a large hybrid population by now.

There seem to me to be two ways which the decent explorer could pursue. The first is to accept the main tenor of this chapter: we live in a world of mutually dependent and competitive organisms, such that there are relatively enclosed gene pools, and relatively stable species-forms within the *Realgattungen* that together make up the network of biological nature. We cannot assume that all 'human' communities should be explained one way, and all 'non-human' communities another, as if chimpanzees and whales were more like worms or amoebae than they were like humans, and all human groups more like each other than any of them are like baboons or chimpanzees. We cannot equate evidence of tool-making or even of ceremonial observance with evidence of some unique, shared nature such that we can then deduce what other properties the toolmakers and the like would have. We should not assume that slavery or cannibalism needs some special explanation, different from the sort of explanation we give for domestication or flesh-eating, nor yet that any of these institutions are somehow 'natural' ones (in anything but the banal sense that they frequently 'happen).

However, there is at least one other way of coping with our material: to take the ancient 'Platonic' viewpoint more seriously. Species are not themselves natural kinds that properly embody distinct Platonic Forms, but it may still be true that

there are such Forms, and that they eternally influence what happens in this world of becoming. Our belief in the powers of speculative reason to see behind the phenomena and grasp real truths is hardly intelligible on any but the Platonic hypothesis. Our belief that we ourselves are genuine individuals, not merely momentary effects of particular biochemical conditions, seems to require that there are transcendent souls, bearing much the same relation to these bodies of ours, as particular instances of Living-Being-at-Sea bear to that eternal Form. That Stephen should have been of any other parents than he was, or even have been reared in any other culture than he was, is impossible: Stephen could not imaginably be James or Elizabeth, let alone Washoe or Moby Dick, and all moral or epistemological projects that rest upon my ability to think what it would be like to be someone or something else rest upon an absurdity – unless it is admitted that, although Stephen could not have been James and the rest, *I* could have been.

My ability to imagine myself in other forms than this seems to require that I am not quite identical with this bodily organism (see Vendler 1984). Finally, our recognition of moral and epistemological obligation seems, as Kant insisted, to require the postulate of moral freedom, that our eternal Selves choose the whole world-system within which particular bodily events (our actions and assents) then seem to be necessary.

This metaphysical system has many merits, and is certainly not refuted by the scorn of those who have not troubled to understand it. If it is true, then real explanations lie at a higher level than we can easily reach. What does not seem to me to follow from it – and Plato himself did not suppose that it did – is the claim that all and only human beings (members of our species) embody such transcendent souls. Nor is this a biblical doctrine, nor one that non-literate societies usually accept: other creatures than the biologically human might be persons, might share a transcendent nature, even if 'being human' were 'being of a certain natural kind' (which it is not). For Plato, human beings were only the highest of a hierarchy of embodied souls: highest in that it was open to souls so embodied to remember who and what they were, immortal companions lost for a while in fantasy. Modern humanism is the tattered heir of Platonism: it is surely time that we chose whether to be honest Platonists or to accept the consequences of straightforwardly evolutionary thought.

Note

1.T. Ingold (ed.) *What is an Animal?* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 17–34.

4 Children and the mammalian order[1]

Marginal cases

The following argument can be constructed to suggest that children are marginal people:

4.1 They do not, or do not yet, exercise the distinctively human capacities of rational debate and decision-making;
4.2 therefore, no sane adult decision-maker would take a child as her exemplar, or think a child's life-plans (such as they are) a serious option for herself;
4.3 therefore, they cannot, as children, play any part in the processes whereby the rules of the Great Game are settled, or particular moves made;
4.4 therefore, those who do decide upon the rules do not need to take any account of what children, as such, would want;
4.5 therefore, any account that is taken of the welfare or expressed preferences of children must be merely sentimental;
4.6 therefore, good liberals, whose political programme excludes legislation that imposes any special sentimental or moral ideals on their fellow citizens, should have particular difficulty with child-welfare legislation.

That children below 'the age of reason' have no rights in their own right is a necessary consequence of any doctrine that limits the class of rights holders to the class of recognisably and actually rational entities, entities whose deliberate co-operation is needed if any corporate action is to be undertaken, and whose forbearance can only be purchased by reciprocal forbearance. If there were, as Hume remarked, a race of creatures intermingled with ours that could never make us feel the impact of their displeasure, and could never be expected to keep any bargain that we thought to strike, we should not owe them justice, even if we owed them compassion (Hume 1902, p. 190: *Principles of Morals* 3.1.152). It would be

pointless to require that we use them justly, in accordance with such rules of fair-dealing as we might be able to reason out together, for, like children, they cannot play the game on such terms.

Hume placed no necessary restrictions on the sort of laws a legislative body might enact: on his terms, child-welfare legislation or even laws protecting a child's purported 'rights' (or the rights that would be hers when she was grown) would be perfectly proper. What mattered was the 'usefulness' of such laws from the point of view of the general utility. Good 'liberals', on the other hand, often believe or find it useful to imagine that the authority of the state is drawn from some form of social contract, real or (more probably) notional. Adult inhabitants of the region over which the state claims authority either do understand or rationally should understand that they all stand to gain if necessary communal decisions can be made without undue violence, and therefore agree (or should agree, or must be presumed to have agreed) that they will submit to state authority lest worse befall. 'In nature', before any such agreement, no one does wrong by seeking to maintain her own existence and prosperity, at whatever expense to others. Each such adult individual only has a reason to do or refrain from doing anything if she can see such a reason, if there are goals of her own that require such action or inaction. 'Social contract theorists', ever since Democritus (see Cole 1967), have argued that the dangers and difficulties of such a 'natural' life are such that every rational adult would soon see the advantages of forming a social group, even if there were occasions when he/she lost some particular argument within the group.

We can only reasonably assume that every adult individual would only agree to such a compact if it seemed likely that her interests and preferences would, in general, be given sufficient weight to rule out the possibility of finding that she was, in effect, a slave, required to do what she was told without ever having the chance to object, to tell others what to do in her turn, or to participate in the processes of decision-making. That is all that we can assume people are bound to have agreed to, if they thought about it at all. Accordingly, the laws of our particular state must always be such as can be accepted, in the abstract, by such self-seeking individuals. In nature, people may do whatever they please to preserve their lives and livelihood. That absolute right must be abandoned on our entry into civil society, but we would not thereby abandon all our 'rights', all that we would be at liberty to do in nature. It would be absurd of any individuals to put themselves wholly at the disposal of others so that they had no privacy, no region within which their decisions were final. Others may disapprove or despise or loathe, but they have no agreed right to interfere – because it would not be rational for individuals in the state of nature to allow such a right to their chance-met companions. We establish Leviathan precisely to safeguard our lives and livelihood,

and only allow it such authority as is needed to settle genuine conflicts that might otherwise escalate into outright war and the dissolution of the state.

Purely liberal or libertarian theory allows only a minimal state, charged with the duty of preventing, and punishing, the violation of right. The law has no business between a person and his/her morals, so long as he/she violates no other individual's rights of life, liberty and the enjoyment of lawfully acquired property. What we do in 'the privacy of our own homes' or to those that are 'our property' is for us to say. We may get drunk, break up the furniture, kick the dog or batter the baby without violating any other adult person's rights. Nor do we violate anyone's rights by withholding our charity; civil society exists to protect our lawful enjoyments, not to demand of us that we forgo such enjoyments in order to assist others. All taxation that goes beyond the minimal administrative charge for maintaining police, courts and army is therefore unjust.

Most commentators, even those who regard themselves as liberals, are made uneasy by such a prospect. There is a great deal of existing legislation, even in impeccably 'liberal' states, that is concerned with non-humans. We are no longer permitted to beat 'our' dog to death on the public highway, nor 'in the privacy of our own home'. We are required to fund, through progressive taxation, all manner of 'socially valuable schemes' that go far beyond a simple protection of rights. Those liberals who wish still to insist that states exist only to protect rights, but wish to forbid cruelty to animals or require contributions to medical and other care of their fellow citizens, have to speak of the rights of animals, or of welfare rights, in addition to the simple 'liberty rights' of original liberalism. Whereas the older liberals supposed that no contracting individual could be supposed to consent to any authority beyond what was needed to preserve her own life and liberty, the modern liberal suggests that we would all rationally agree to such authority as is needed to promote the general welfare as it is defined by majority opinion. Citizens may therefore find themselves funding an enterprise that seems to them to be unprofitable, or even immoral, and may be required or forbidden to do all manner of things that they had hitherto regarded as their own business.

Voluntary associations to provide work, pensions, medical care, library facilities or annual paid holidays on the Black Sea would all, of course, be legitimate even under old-style liberal rules: the disagreement lies only with the question of whether any state has a right to compel people to pay for facilities they would rather not have or rather not provide *gratis*. Individuals have a duty not to injure others because that is the duty we must all be supposed to have taken on with a view to our own security. Must we also be supposed to have positive duties to help others to do whatever they want to do? The more such duties we impose on everyone the less they are at liberty, but it seems likely that we might rationally trade. It seems no

more obviously rational, a welfare liberal could say, that we should agree to a merely protective state authority, than that we should agree to a more positively helpful one.

The problem is that although it is no more rational, it is also no less: one group of people might prefer one arrangement, others another. In the absence of a real, historical agreement, social contract theorists must always appeal to what we must be supposed to have agreed, what any rational creature would agree to. But there seems to be no such defined set of rules that we would be bound to accept merely in the abstract. This is especially true since the opposing pressures are resolved in obviously arbitrary ways: once it is agreed that we owe a positive debt to our fellows to behave in one way and not another, to subsidise their plans of life and not merely allow them the liberty of living without our interference, where should we, must we, draw the line? If we may not enjoy the malicious pleasure of, say, shouting racial abuse (because it seriously upsets the hearers), why is it obvious that we must never be forbidden to indulge our sexual pleasures (even though it seriously upsets the witnesses)? There is no solution in such slogans as 'So act as to maximize the number of genuinely autonomous and "human" agents', or 'satisfy as many desires as possible': either these give no one answer at all, or else the answer they are said to give is really founded on prior commitments to particular moral and other values. It is because we, the pontificating classes, approve of certain forms of life that we approve of a certain, otherwise quite arbitrary, interference in the liberties of our fellows while continuing to use old-style liberal slogans to resist their interference in our lifestyles. I do not say that we are wrong to do so: what is doubtful is that liberal ideology gives us any good ground for our discriminations.

Liberal ideology is also in a weak position with regard to supposedly non-contracting inhabitants of a region. If rights and duties in the state depend upon a real or notional consent, what of those who cannot give their consent, or can give it (eventually) only if they are treated in a certain way before they have done so? Only those with whom we, all of 'us', have good reason to come to an agreement lest worse befall (i.e. only those who could fight us if we drove them beyond endurance) are granted the 'right' to treat their own as they please unless they violate the real rights of others. Once again, we may have a real, voluntary compact to be nice to the 'marginal people', but we cannot complain if others do not share our sentimental attachment to babies or wild flowers. We would not hire such people as our baby-sitters, no doubt, any more than we would hire someone who hated flowers as a florist or a park-keeper. But moral ideals that go beyond the minimum requirements of state security must, from a liberal viewpoint, be reckoned voluntary, not to be enforced on all. If baby-haters attempt to hurt my child, it is my property rights that are violated; if they hurt their own, it is only my moral conscience that is outraged – as it might be by outrageous lies, dissipation, cowardice, conceit

or greed of a kind that I none the less have no right to prevent or punish. Once the propriety of 'laws of manners' has been admitted, then liberalism, as ordinarily understood, is in decline.

Classical liberalism is the doctrine that 'the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others' (Mill 1962, p. 135: 'On liberty', Chapter 1). In fact, the restriction is even tighter: the harm done to others must be a direct and unambiguous harm, accepted as such by its victims. Those who have no will in the matter, or are in no position to exercise any such will, have no such protection. Mill expressly allows that children may be required to do all manner of things 'for their own good', as that is assessed by their licensed guardians. He would certainly have opposed any such guardianship that amounted, in his view, to domestic tyranny, but it is not clear that strict liberal principles can rightly discriminate between a tyrannical use of children and a decent paternalism. If children are to be beneficiaries of the liberal rule that it be their decision that is final in all matters affecting only their own welfare, then they must have all the same rights as adults – as some libertarians propose. If, on the other hand, they are recognisably without the power, and hence the right, of rational judgement, it is not up to them to say whether they are harmed by any parental act or policy. Who then decides? What counts as harm will depend on what we suppose to be the child's destiny, her nature as a social mammal or a child of God. Generations of legislators have believed that the general welfare, and that of each particular child, is best promoted by beatings, moral exhortation, forced attendance at public executions and the like. The goal is a society kept as law-abiding as may be and the salvation of each child's soul. Liberal commentators now decree instead that the 'hedonic' rather than the 'agonistic' mode of control is to be preferred, and that the child's welfare is to be measured by her eventual success as an adult member of a liberal society, free of prejudice, superstition and, generally, 'illiberal attitudes'. These techniques and goals may well be laudable ones, but it is far from obvious that they are rationally agreeable to all parties, or such as would be adopted 'in the abstract' before we knew what our beliefs and attitudes were. Liberalism that gets its strength from the appearance of value-neutrality, the suggestion that good laws are only those laws that would be accepted by just anyone with a will in the matter, all too often stands revealed as the pontificating classes' own superstition. 'I am not aware', said Mill *à propos* of a proposed 'civilisade' against Mormonite polygamy, 'that any community has a right to force another to be civilised' (Mill 1962, p. 224: 'On liberty', Chapter 4). It is the identifying mark of an ideologue that he/she does not

realise that he/she has an ideology, but supposes that his/her views are simple truths that no one but a fool or knave would dispute. Ideology is nowhere more obvious than in our treatment of children, and in the (mostly dreadful) advice offered to parents by generations of self-styled experts (see Hardyment 1983).

Those political theories, of which Mill's is indeed a good example (Mill 1962, p. 136: 'On liberty', Chapter 1), that rest upon considerations of the general welfare rather than on any presumed 'rights' that restrict communal efforts towards such a general good fare no better. If we should so act, and so legislate, as to promote the general welfare, we cannot rely upon what our view of such welfare would be in the abstract, irrespective of our culture, our upbringing or our beliefs. Citizens would not, here and now, much care for bands of free-living children in the streets or piles of dying babies – though both have existed in the past – and may therefore argue for welfare legislation of some kind from merely self-interested motives. But what satisfies us as a life well lived is dependent on what we have been brought to believe is a life well lived. So we cannot assess child-rearing and educational practices as more or less successful in the abstract enterprise of promoting the general welfare. Those brought up one way will be happy in a different way from those brought up in another: who is happier or who spreads more happiness can only be settled if we know what happiness consists in. It is easy for us here and now to think that at the very least such happiness requires food, shelter, medical attention, friendship and an acquaintance with the manifold life possibilities of our society. Can we perhaps rightly enforce at least that much uniformity of practice and forbid child-rearing techniques that starve, neglect and brutalise the child? I share the concerns of those who propose this much, but we cannot claim that the programme is in any real sense a value-neutral one, that it implies no tendentious judgements about the real destiny of the child, the guardian, or the world, that the programme is independent of the form of society into which the child may one day be initiated as an adult member. Members of child-gangs or self-supporting 5-year-olds may have many virtues denied to more domesticated youngsters (see Holt 1975, p. 20). What to us is brutality may in another culture or another age be a necessary rite of passage, such that to 'rescue' the child from his/her oppressor is as stupid as, we think, it would be to prevent him/her from having a painful, 'medically necessary' or 'socially important' operation. What counts as painful, or as importantly painful, depends in large measure on these larger views.

It is overwhelmingly difficult for most of us, no doubt, to imagine that a solitary, sick, malnourished, nervous child is in any sense 'better off' or 'has better prospects' than a sociable, cheerful, healthy, well-fed child. But treatment that would now be regarded as obvious child abuse has in the past been reckoned a necessary stage in the soul's salvation and the future citizen's socialisation. Swaddling clothes (so that the baby cannot move and is reduced to a state of torpor (see Hardyment 1983, p. 3), beatings, mutilations and bogey-tales more terrifying even than modern

video nasties (because seriously told to frighten the child into obedience) have all been part of the – genuinely – caring parent's armoury. 'Hardly anyone will deny', said Mill, 'that it is one of the most sacred duties of the parents, after summoning a human being into the world, to give to that being an education fitting him to perform his part well in life towards others and towards himself' (Mill 1962, pp. 238–9: 'On liberty', Chapter 5). But what is that part to be? The techniques just mentioned are rational ones, in the sense that they do not subvert the agent's ends. The ends they reveal may be irrational or monstrous in a larger sense, like J.B. Watson's goal of the wholly self-reliant, physically undemonstrative child, to be achieved by a resolute refusal ever to cuddle, caress or smile upon the infant (Hardyment 1983, pp. 172–6). But to disapprove of these ends – as I do – is certainly to intrude subjective values in the sense resisted, for example, by Freeman (1983, p. 55). Either we accept that this intrusion is inevitable, or we must allow even such practices as must repel the liberal conscience.

In short: both contractual liberalism and welfare liberalism can have little to say about children's rights. Children, on those accounts, are marginal people who have no rights in their own right and whose welfare is determined entirely by decisions taken by others.

The roots of decency

This view of children – and equivalently of other supposedly non-rational creatures – goes back at least to Stoic theory, where the outer boundaries of justice are set by the rational capacities of human beings: those who cannot deliberate, who have no rational will, have no claims in justice, own nothing, and can make no bargains. It might be admitted that good people treat the irrational with compassion, but the latter have no rights to violate, and nothing that they could mind about is much worth the wise man's concern. Children might be charming, and such as to awaken a heart-breaking affection – 'who isn't tempted', Epictetus said (*Discourses,* 2.24.18), 'by attractive and wideawake children to join their sports and crawl on all fours and talk baby talk?' But no sensible person could want to be like a child, or to take the child's irrational and passing goals at all seriously. The city of the wise, which is the ideal human community, is a city that expressly excludes all those who cannot or do not live in obedience to the common law, of reason. Stoic thinkers were more consistent than most liberals in that they acknowledged that even adult human beings might be slavish or criminal, and hence no true citizens of the cosmos, to whom was owed no fair share of the world's resources nor any veto on what was to be done to them.

But although ancient opinion did generally restrict the class of rights- holders

(those who would be directly wronged by enslavement, imprisonment, dispossession) to the rational adult (usually male) population, the relationship of parents and children was not a marginal one. On the contrary, 'parental affection is the germ of that social community of the human race to which we afterwards attain' (Cicero 1967, *De Finibus,* 3.62).

> In the whole moral sphere (*in omni honesto*) there is nothing more glorious nor of a wider range than the solidarity of mankind, that species of alliance and partnership of interests and that actual affection which exists between man and man, which coming into being immediately upon our birth, owing to the fact that children are loved by their parents and the family as a whole, is bound together by the ties of marriage and parenthood, gradually spreads its influence beyond the home, first by blood relationships, then by connections through marriage, later by friendships, afterwards by the bonds of neighbourhood, then to fellow citizens and political allies and friends, and lastly by embracing the whole of the human race.
>
> (*Ibid.,* 5.65)

I am therefore within an ancient tradition in suggesting that we might profitably turn current political theory on its head. The relationship with children is not a marginal one, and children are not marginal cases. They are what the civil community is for, and the bond of parental care is the beginning of society. 'The first duty of a revolutionary is to build a society geared to children' (Adams 1971, p. 53). Although the one Stoic theme of rational contract leads to the marginalisation of 'non-rational' beings and of future generations, there is another Stoic theme that makes care for our world and our posterity the centre of moral action.

> As we feel it wicked and inhuman for men to declare…that they care not if when they themselves are dead, the universal conflagration ensues, it is undoubtedly true that we are bound to study the interest of posterity also for its own sake.
>
> (Cicero, 1967, *De Finibus,* 3.64)

Our duties are defined for us by what it would be wicked and inhuman to do or not to do. While liberal theorists, for good historical reasons, have sought to limit the field of enforceable duty to what we have, or rationally should have, agreed to do, the more ancient tradition precisely allowed that there were duties over and above those of voluntary association, such that (*in extremis*) anyone who violated his duties must be reckoned an enemy of God and humanity. Vervet monkeys, so it appears, can recognise whose cub it is that is crying, and expect that cub's mother to respond. The special gift of humankind is that we can (and usually do) enforce

on others the demands of nature, to care for our offspring and the social bond. This gift, in its turn, is forced on us by the fact that there are those who would otherwise fail to live up to the demands of natural law. And that last fact is created, we may suspect, just by the complexity and strength of the social bond. Briefly: the more we care for others, the wider the circles of our carefulness, the greater the chance that free-loaders will be benefited by our care, and the greater the need to invent further social and cultural constraints on individual behaviour. Creatures who care only for their offspring will have offspring that care for theirs (in so far as there is a genetically transmittable base for the behaviour); creatures that care also for cuckoos, or even for their own remoter cousins, will soon have to reinforce the merely 'natural' pressures to caring behaviour by cultural and legal means.

The point of those last remarks is to emphasise that there is a natural error that commentators sometimes commit, of supposing that because we do in fact have laws about the proper treatment of children, we must lack a merely natural commitment to their care. There are no laws commanding people to take care of themselves – we can take it for granted that everyone will do just that; there are laws to control drunkenness or drug addiction, because we know that people are not safeguarded from such socially dangerous lapses by mere nature. If there are laws against incest, child-beating and murder, it is because we might otherwise commit such acts. True enough, although perhaps the point is not so much that we prevent what would otherwise occur as give a meaning to what now might: but it does not follow that we would always do so, or that the laws in question do not reinforce natural commitments. Few people refrain from murdering their friends because there is a law against it: the law is a reminder, the more useful when we live in a society of relative strangers. Few people, similarly, care for their children only because the magistrate will fine them if they don't, or with the deliberate aim of having supporters in their old age (one may doubt if children reared solely with this aim would actually feel much inclination to carry it out). Laws that too gravely contradict the natural law bring all law into disrepute. If we can reasonably demand that parents look after their young, it is precisely because they usually will, though by making the demand we also give parents a reason, sometimes, to defy it.

The whole model of rationally self-serving individuals, who enter society and bind themselves to a policy of mutual forbearance only *faut de mieux,* is obviously flawed. The bonds of society precede legal institutions. There seems indeed no way (except by divine intervention) that genuinely autochthonous individuals could have the cognitive and emotional apparatus to negotiate such deals, or abide by them once made. How could we be social creatures at all if affection for our own children were not natural (Epictetus 1.23.3)? Even the Hobbesian state of nature included groups bound together by the 'natural lusts and affections'. Impulses to mutual aid, enjoyment of each other's company, and shared interests

in offspring are the context within which a concept of oneself develops. Why, then, should we seek to restrict ourselves to a consideration of what rationally self-serving individuals 'would' have decided, when we know perfectly well that such individuals are a late and maverick development? Why construct a duty to care for children on the strained supposition that such individuals would, if they did not know whether once past 'the veil of ignorance' they would themselves be in need of care and attention from parental figures, elect to impose some such duty on appropriate members of society (Blustein 1982, pp. 123 ff., after Rawls 1971, p. 249)? Being what we are, we already have a natural commitment to preserve and nourish more things than ourselves.

So what is it that we are? There is a long tradition to the effect that rationality is in some way linked to social affection: 'the more intelligent, the more socially minded' (see Aristotle, *Historia Animalium,* 8.589a 1 ff., *De Generatione Animalium,* 3.758 ff.). But even the belief that rationality cannot develop except in a social species does not show that rationality requires child care on the level that human beings generally approve. Maybe we are rational because we care for our children: it does not follow that we care for our children because we are rational! On the contrary, that is a law that 'nature has taught all animals' (Justinian *Institutes* (1937, trans. J.B. Moyle), 1.2). Pigs, so Xenophon tells us (Xenophon, *Cynegeticus,* 10.23), are fiercest in defence of their litters. Even amongst wild beasts, conceived as 'solitary carnivores', mothers die for their young (Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics,* 7.1235a34).

The bond of mother and children is widely perceived as natural. That bond by itself is enough to disprove the Diodoran thesis, adopted by Rousseau, that our human or hominid ancestors were ever solitary and brutish individuals (Diodorus, 1.6). But my point is a wider one: it is not only mothers that care for the young, nor even only parents. The evidence from studies of hamadryas baboons is that we are not even the only primate species to find the young fascinating: young males regularly abduct youngsters to rear as their own; cubs are seized to act as buffers in disputes with more dominant baboons; single females, ethologically known as 'aunts', seek to take a share in child-rearing even if mother – and young – strenuously object! None of this is to say that baboons – or all humans – necessarily have any sound altruistic purpose. The independent welfare of the cub is not what marauding adults desire (see also Holt 1975, pp. 78–82). But the fact remains that it is the young who are the bonds of baboon society. It is they who mute the disputes between quarrelling adults and give them an extra reason to stick together.

It is often the young who are the innovators. Too much popularised ethology has given the impression that the dominant males are the leaders of animal society. Better observation suggests that such domi nants are merely those who could be expected to win any dispute over territory or possession. They do not necessarily

'lead'. On the contrary, it may often be the youngest of the group who literally leads, or works out the innovative tactic: the young chimpanzee who clatters empty oil-drums round the clearing to attract attentive deference; the young macaque who learns to separate sand and grain by tossing handfuls into the water. Curious and playful behaviour, conciliatory tactics in lieu of confrontational, distancing manoeuvres, are the province of the young (see my *The Nature of the Beast,* 1982, pp. 52, 92). Because there are such creatures, who control their protectors by being 'charming' and desirable and their environment by locating new techniques that are not needed by the dominant few, the tribe (and species) of which they are a part can survive as a sociable and innovative one. 'Which is the essential dragonfly – the long-lived crawling larva, or the ephemeral winged imago?': the species could equally be represented by the child, the adult being dismissed as the degenerate modification in the later part of life to reproduce and do the necessary work (Gibson 1966, p. 438). Gibson's consciously exaggerated dictum emphasises what political theorists seem to have forgotten: as social mammals we are crucially and irreversibly marked not simply as beings that care for their young, but as beings that can extort that care. Instead of thinking of our young as marginal to the real interests and concerns and habitual practices of adult society, it is worth noticing the extent to which the rest of our society is centred on the needs and delights of the young. We are mistaken if we think that even infants are merely passive: parents, whatever self-styled experts may say, are well aware that their young have characters and purposes of their own, that it is their style that dominates the household.

It is certainly true that the young are physically at the mercy of their adults, that they are often mishandled and abused. But it does not follow that they are not, in general, in control. We 'grown-ups' attend too much to what we do, and too little to the net result of what is done. Could we not instead consider the possibility that it is the young who compel us, by example and conciliation, game and grace? Is it obvious that these 'hedonic' techniques are less effective than the 'agonistic' (see Chance 1975) or less worth choosing?

It is, obviously, not only children that can elicit the supportive love and mute the fury of their elders. 'Infantile' courting behaviour and submissive gestures towards the dominant can be seen as ways of manipulating those who are physically stronger. They work, so far as they do, because we are the sort of creatures that respond to the signals of our young. Civil communities, in short, exist as extensions of the necessary relationship of young and old. We do not seek our own individual triumph at whatever cost to our victims because even when defeated they can have recourse to infantile submission. We can be obliged to look after the weak or

the poor for just the same reason: they awaken in us the same sort of parental or quasi-parental affection. The fallacy of classical liberalism is to suppose that these restraints on human behaviour must be created by cultural agreement in order to suppress the self-seeking propensities of Diodorus's solitaries. It is, on the contrary, from these habits of care and affection that civil society takes its beginning.

The construction of civil society

That there was never any need to construct civil society out of a pack of chance-met solitaries is obvious. It should also be obvious that there is nothing intrinsically rational about 'looking after number one', nor anything irrational about wishing others well, liking their company and finding many of our enjoyments in their service. The creature typing these words, like the creature that is reading them, can only perform those actions as an integral part of the physical and social universe. To suppose that either of us has an existence, let alone a welfare, utterly dissociated from the existence and welfare of our fellow creatures is just silly. Even if I were like a hamadryas 'aunt', and quite unable to ask myself whether the cub I wanted to cuddle actually wanted to be cuddled by me (and to modify my impulse accordingly), I should still need happy and healthy cubs if I were ever to be prosperous. I have an overwhelming interest in the welfare of creatures that classical liberals have judged none of my business.

Once all this is admitted, it is possible to return to the attempt to isolate what counts as a strict right. As long as we had it in mind that rational adults were the central members of society, that they were the primary rights-holders, we could answer the question 'What rights do such rights-holders have?' by the simple expedient of working out what could within reason be demanded from each of them on behalf of them all. Welfare liberals, alarmed by the thought of naked *laissez-faire,* have tended to play down the primary claim of classical liberalism, that no one be required by law to act in ways they would not choose that everyone should act. Positive legal requirements have been added to the merely negative requirements (e.g. that one not kill or rob or threaten others) of classical liberalism. At the same time, some modern liberal thinkers have regretted 'paternalism' even in those areas where classical liberals demanded it. Whereas Mill denied any right of self-determination to those who could not be expected to exercise it rationally, some liberals (e.g. Holt 1975) have suspected that the inability of children to be self-determining is as much a cultural artefact as the once-upon-a-time imbecility of women. Even those liberals who do not go so far as to deny the validity of school-attendance laws, or to allow children the right to divorce their parents, tend to be much exercised by fear of cultural indoctrination – which is to say, by a secret wish that children be indoctrinated with the liberal ideology. Consider for a moment the irredeemably fatuous remark attributed to one schoolteacher, that he 'does not

mind what a child believes when he leaves school, as long as he believes it by being true to himself' (*The Times,* 25 March 1987: 'Yes, I know he sells heroin, beats his common-law wife, tortures cats for fun and profit, betrays his country and cheats at cards – but he's very sincere').

But we cannot simultaneously extend the class of proper rights-holders to include children and decree that they therefore have all the rights that adults are supposed to have, any more than we can equip animals with all the natural rights that humans are supposed to have. When the set of rights-holders is enlarged, the nature of the set of compossible rights is also altered (as I argued back in 1987: see *Animals and their Moral Standing*). Maybe adult strangers could have absolute rights of independent action, without any corresponding rights to care. Once we acknowledge that rights take shape within the real nexus of parental and other obligations, it is clear that the rights 'we' all have are not simply those of Diodoran solitaries.

Social contract theory, in all its forms, implicitly assumes that adolescents and young adults lie at the core of society, people who can form their voluntary associations and be bound only as long as they choose to be. But such unions are the truly marginal ones – almost as marginal, indeed, as the bands of young male baboons forced out to the literal fringes of baboon society until they can make their way back to the magical centre of obligation and compelled affection. That centre is the complex network of properly adult servants or friends of the young. The right to govern one's own life as one pleases, so long as one positively offends no one else's (negative) right, is a temporary liberty, a minor compensation for being ousted from the centre. What central members of society enjoy is not that supposed right, but the more positive right and duty to participate in the growth and development of the tribe. To do so is only possible for those who submit to the law of the tribe – the law of all possible tribes – in the service of that network of relationships as it grows conscious of itself.

The notion that children, of all people, have only secondary rights was always paradoxical. Child murderers are characteristically hated and abused even by violent criminals who have themselves violated the rights of adults. The acknowledged duty of any relevantly competent citizen is to protect and save a child in distress, a duty sometimes invoked by state officials to excuse what turns out to be a clear violation of parental – and children's – rights in the name of some supposedly expert theory about the rearing of children.

These real and natural duties – of care and forbearance on the one hand and loving manipulation on the other – are mostly experienced as compulsions, cued in ways that also govern the behaviour of our non-human kin. Parental authority, as Locke argued (1965, p. 348: *Second Treatise of Government,* Chapter 6), derives from parental duty, and is forfeited when those duties are not faithfully discharged

(see Nozick 1974, pp. 288–90; Blustein 1982, p. 114). The good society is not the one 'we', or our adolescents, would have chosen from a position of uncultured ignorance, but the society that we and our kindred have been choosing and refining for millions of years. It is the network of historical and evolutionary rights and duties that we must work within. Children are not injured by being trained to occupy their proper roles in any one of the societies that are allowed by natural law; nor are adults injured by being required by law to do what they would generally do naturally (even if, on occasion, ineptly or sinfully). Where we are injured is in being denied the chance to take responsibility for any young, even by well-meaning liberal officials who imagine that it takes experts to rear a child. Where we are injured, even as children, is by being reared without any regard to our eventual wish and need to take responsibility for others.

Three problems remain, one theoretical and the others practical. The first is constituted simply by the popular belief that 'the naturalistic fallacy' is committed by any attempt to ground our duties on what may naturally be expected of us. Surely, it is said, what we ought to do, what as morally rational beings we would do, cannot be deduced simply from what we and our kindred generally do do? Perhaps it cannot, but there is no reason at all to think that the only proper ground for a given belief must be simply deductive. I do not strictly 'deduce' that we have duties towards our children, and our children corresponding duties and privileges in our regard, simply from the existence of the natural ties the Stoics identified. It may be imaginable that we have no such duties. It is also imaginable that nothing that we see is real: our visual perceptions can only ever be evidence of the truth of this or that dictum, never demonstrative proof. Indeed, those perceptions can only be evidence at all on the non-empirically grounded supposition that the world is such as to allow us to form true beliefs about it. The compulsions and natural habits of humankind are similarly evidence of what is morally required: what an irrational place the world would be (and how far from comprehensible) if we were systematically encouraged by our given natures to misperceive the moral law! In my account, the natural law is evidence, as it was for Locke, of what God wills (see my *The Nature of the Beast,* 1982, pp. 103–4). If, however, there is no such objective law, it would seem only sensible to take as our law what we will mostly do anyway. There is, at any rate, no fallacy in so doing, least of all the 'naturalistic fallacy' defined by Moore (on which see my 'Morals, Moore and Macintyre', *Inquiry* 26.1984, pp. 425–45).

The second, more practical issue is this: by making the adult–child relationship the central social form, and relegating the supposedly free adolescent to the outskirts, I may seem to be committing the same error of taste and manners as some

marriage counsellors, who make it appear that the unmarried are the unsaved, that a fruitful marriage is the main human sacrament. But responsibility, even for children, comes in many forms. What is central to my claim is the notion that we have the rights we need to meet our responsibilities, and that those responsibilities include securing those same rights for others. The child–adult bond is central, but not all such bonds are straightforwardly parental, and even the wholly childless can and often do occupy important slots in society.

A third criticism is related to the second: am I not being as complacent, even as offensive as David Hume in his remarks on women?

> In many nations, the female sex are reduced to slavery, and are rendered incapable of all property, in opposition to their lordly masters. But though the males, when united, have in all countries bodily force sufficient to maintain this severe tyranny, yet such are the insinuation, address and charms of their fair companions, that women are commonly able to break the confederacy, and share with the other sex in all the rights and privileges of society.
>
> (Hume 1902, p. 191, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* 3.1.152)

Such, it is easy to suppose, are the wiles of slaves, and doubtless often as unsuccessful as other slavish policies. Free women do not need to charm and insinuate; would free children? Deliberate cuteness is incompatible with dignity. What children (and all of us) require is not patronising affection, but respectful friendship.

But the case can be redescribed: even in a society that formally acknowledged the equality of male and female, or of adult and child, and thereby reduced the amount of cute and insinuating behaviour that was necessary, there would be much to learn from the relationships of male and female, adult and child and adolescent. Children revert to childish modes of conduct when their adults deny them the right to converse on an 'adult' level, as a technique of control (see Holt 1975, pp. 93–9; Davies 1982, pp. 118–21). But they do not therefore approve of free-wheeling *laissez-aller* society: freedom, adult-to-adult relationships, for them is not the adolescent departure to the edge of things, but the promise that their hopes and fears will play a part in determining social order, that friendships are possible across all social boundaries. In so far as we have failed to make a society entirely fit for children, we have failed in making the liberal dream reality. For that dream, in the end, was not one of isolated, existentially unfettered adolescents, but a world where we could respond without fear to conciliatory gestures and acknowledge that all power worth having grows from the respectful response of others. Eminently sane people, after all, can make the real, self-moving, and attentive child their pattern.

In sum: children indubitably influence and manipulate their adults, and have always done so. The efforts of 'free ephebes' and of rationalising sages to escape the net have never wholly eliminated the control exercised by the young. The young may not be rationally autonomous in whatever sense is required by political theorists, but it is their presence, and the use of similar techniques as theirs by others, that secures something like civil peace in many human, primate or mammalian communities. Those who insist that only rationally autonomous beings can be effective agents are blinding themselves to the manipulative success of children. Just societies must acknowledge their centrality, and the laws of those lands must be geared to reinforcing those same natural cues as normally allow the young their place and fortune. There are no abstract individuals to 'contract in' on such minimal terms as they see fit. What there is is the network of familial and friendly relationship over all the world, from which irresponsible adolescents may on occasion temporarily 'contract out'. The risk we presently run is that too many such adolescents and their functional equivalents will fail to regain responsibilities, and prefer instead those merely infantile, manipulative ways that put a burden on the working adults. In denying them the right of responsible authority, we make them outlaws or untimely dependants. In paradoxically insisting that such deracinated unfortunates are the 'real' human beings, we neglect our real situation, as well as the innovatory, conciliatory, maddening and controlling presences of our children.

Note

1. G. Scarre (ed.) *Children, Parents and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 115–32.

5 Anarchists against the revolution[1]

Taking anarchism seriously

The popular image of an anarchist is such that it may seem wilfully paradoxical to suggest that any sort of anarchist is against any sort of revolution. Anarchists are supposed to be old-fashioned nihilists and random revolutionaries, who hold that power grows out of the mouth of a gun and aim to terrorise conventional and law-abiding society into submission to their own half-baked schemes. Only their supposed inefficiency saves them from being the most hated of terrorists, for whereas other such military groups aim (however foolishly or wickedly) at the restoration of civil peace and orderly justice after a dishonourable peace and systematic injustice have been dismantled, anarchistical revolutionaries are supposed to have no further ideas about 'what comes after' the downfall of established order. Mere destruction is their métier.

That there are some such people I would not presume to deny, nor that they sometimes call themselves 'anarchists'. But three things need to be made clear from the start. First, the rejection of *all* authority that is attributed to anarchists is actually the professed doctrine of almost all modernist political philosophers. If I have no obligations at all save those to which I myself freely consent (which is to say, if nothing is sacred), then I have no obligation to obey at any rate my own government (though, paradoxically, I may on occasion owe such an obligation to the US government), nor any duties either of care or forbearance to any but my freely chosen friends – and even those duties must be renewed from moment to moment if they are to remain real. The image of the careless revolutionary is a fantasy of what the modernist would do if she only dared. Second, while only *some* anarchists have advocated military violence to overthrow the state, all modern

archists (*sic*) countenance such violence to maintain the state. As Hobbes pointed out: if people do not keep the peace out of respect for the magistrate, in obedience to laws not of their own making, then the magistrate must rule through fear. Such a social condition is not peace, but only 'a cessation of arms for fear of one another': such men 'live as it were in the precincts of battle continually'.[2] Third, anarchists do generally acknowledge an 'unchosen authority'.

Anarchism is not, as the *Private Eye* cartoonists would have us believe, the creed of envious incompetents, shouting 'Disorder, gentlemen, disorder!' Anarchy, as the desired form of society, is not lack of *order* (which would, etymologically, be *ataxia*) nor even of authority or law, but lack of *government,* of a ruling class or caste or office distinct from ordinary members of society. Anarchists, it has often been said, are unafraid Jeffersonian democrats, convinced, with Thomas Paine, that

> the great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It has its origins in the principles of society and the natural constitution of men....Common interest regulates their concerns and forms their laws; and the laws which common usage ordains, have a greater influence than the laws of government.[3]

What exactly those common laws and interests exactly are is, of course, a matter of some debate. Paine himself is usually associated with the Enlightenment rejection of merely local norms and customs, and that rationalism has played a part in subsequent anarchist theory. But another strand of anarchism has instead opposed the rationalist tradition, seeing that it may end up as the tool of despots eager to destroy the hard-won liberties and values of the people. On which subject, I will have more to say below.

Modern archists (*sic*) attempt to think of nation-states and their centralising governments as the free creation of co-operating individuals. Older, or more conservative, archists saw them as the proper expression and embodiment of moral value. 'The pre nineteenth century state did not serve nations; it did not even serve communities. It served God, the Heavenly Mandate, the Law of Allah.'[4] This aphorism somewhat exaggerates the number of divinely mandated governments, but it is fair to say that those governments that did claim such a mandate had at least a much more limited role in society than modern politicians claim with less excuse. Anarchists tend to think of governments as the heirs of robber lords, more or less humanised. As Hobbes remarked long before Khomeyni, not a government in the world has any clear historical title to its authority. All governing elites have either seized power by military force, or inherit powers first seized by military force, or retain powers first conceded to them so as to organise resistance to military

force. In days gone by, whether in Rome or Israel, war leaders were nominated by acclamation, for the duration of the defence, and then went home to their farms and businesses. Now governments and their associated schoolmen relish the thought that the spirit evoked in present danger may be carried over into the 'peace.' Such a national purpose, of course, is not well liked by modernists when it leads the population to resist the rational order that they prefer. Its absence, as people revert to living in families, clubs, churches, craft-guilds and neighbourhoods, is liked even less. 'The law's origin', said Kropotkin,

> is the desire of the ruling class to give permanence to customs imposed by themselves for their own advantage. Its character is the skilful commingling of customs useful to society, customs which have no need of law to ensure respect, with other customs useful only to rulers, injurious to the mass of the people and maintained only by the fear of punishment.[5]

But of course that quotation may give substance to the suspicion that anarchists are a little naive. Even if people were convinced that anarchists did not love disorder and destruction, they would insist that what anarchists confessedly desire – the end of government – would actually lead to disorder and widespread destruction, or else to the entrenchment of local customs of a thoroughly bad kind. Liberals may prefer the word 'unprogressive' to the blunt 'thoroughly bad'. The condition of the Lebanon when I wrote the first version of this chapter, and of the former Yugoslavia when I wrote one of the latest, reveal one danger: rules of non-interference between nation-states, which exist within an international 'anarchistical' society (see Bull 1977) and are thus enabled to deal iniquitously with their subjects, reveal another. 'Government' (which is to say, oppression) may appear at any level of social organisation, from patriarchal household to commune to village to slave-owning confederacy, and the next higher level of organisation may intervene to save the oppressed even if it also engages in oppression. Giving up state government may merely legitimate older forms of tyranny. It may be true, in Mazor's words, that 'there is more to be feared from a malefactor armed with law, a court, a police force, or an army than from the same person limited to the use of bare hands',[6] but domestic tyrants, village patriarchs, charismatic cult-leaders (all of whom might relish the absence of the state) have more than their bare hands to use. It is one thing to agree that 'although law has been depicted as the great equaliser, more often it serves as the means of multiplying advantage',[7] quite another to resolve the problem by abolishing the law.

In short, the anarchists' historically accurate account of how state governments emerge, and their reasonable disinclination to give any present government much moral credit, cannot be taken seriously as a reason for rejecting state law unless

they have something to say about how we might instead preserve a decent civil peace. Actually, they do, and despite the many and expectable disagreements between different schools and traditions, there are also real, and deep, agreements: all distinguish between the military and the civil means, sometimes calling the former 'the political' and the latter 'the economic' means.

Understandings of the civil means

It is possible, or at least imaginable, that there are forms of human life such that every adult human being (and civil adulthood may come well before biological 'maturity') can make or obtain everything she needs without needing to deal with any other human. Such a person, Aristotle thought, must either be a wild beast or a god.[8] Certainly her life can be of little immediate interest to us. All of us need many things that only other people can supply, from food, shelter, clothing and companionship to transport, books, computers and health care. Once we are in this situation we can obtain what we need in only two ways: by 'voluntary' or 'involuntary' transaction.[9] In other words we must either take them from an unwilling producer, or accept them from a willing donor. If we choose the path of coercion we shall in the end require an army (literally) of helpers who will 'persuade' producers to 'give' us the goods. Brigands and hunters alike are predators, but those who would hunt humans would quickly find that the prey can be very dangerous. Just as hunters can become pastoralists or farmers (while their prey accepts an increasingly rigid control of their movements, feeding and reproduction (Ingold 1974)), so brigands may become feudal lords and governors. If a king claims to be 'Shepherd of the People,' it is worth recalling what shepherds want from sheep. Such lords have never yet succeeded, unlike farmers, in breeding a docile subject population, though they have sought to do so by enlisting those of the subject population who might otherwise oppose them into their own ranks. My own suspicion is that even a rigorously enforced breeding and selection programme never completely works – though maybe the earliest programme worked (on which thought see a later chapter). There are some societies where dissent seems to have been fairly thoroughly dampened. When this has (almost) happened even the masters seem like slaves (as Aristotle saw). But most governors, unlike farmers, still need to coerce unwilling subjects with the sword, or bribe them with the heady delights of power, or cause them to believe that the government is owed the loyalty that is often given to a nation or fellowship.

But there was always an alternative, namely to rely on voluntary transactions. Economic exchange begins in mutual gift-giving: if I have more pumpkins than I know what to do with, and you are similarly endowed with beetroot, we may both stand to gain by a swap. Neither of us needs to be coerced. Such face-to-face transactions between friends (or friends of friends) can even be spread out over time. I may 'give' on the assumption that you will 'give' in return. I may even 'give'

without expecting a direct return from you, so long as there are enough gifts floating in the system that I do stand to gain by continuing the flow. Grasping accumulation of what I can neither use nor choose to give away is an anomaly: either the supply of gifts will dry up, or some mech anism is introduced to free the jam. Accumulators, in 'non-civilised' societies, have periodic feasts or massive gift-giving sessions or pot-smashing ceremonies to restore the flow (Sahlins 1972). Even very distant communities, say on a scattered island chain, may be united by the passage of ceremonial 'gifts' along the line.

Aristotle – as Karl Polanyi has pointed out – was close enough to the origins of strictly economic exchange to see how it might be (and was being) perverted by the invention of markets, middle-men, and money, when 'wealth accumulates and men decay' (Polanyi *et al.* 1957). It is at this point that the various schools of anarchism begin to divide, though all retain the idea that 'voluntary transaction' is the only permissible kind of acquisition from another.

Anarcho-communists (which is what most people now understand by 'anarchists') look back to the experience of family, village and, generally, 'gift-giving' life, maintained by a sense of kinship and long-term advantage. In the absence of a centralised authority with a monopoly of military force, people would and should subside into naturally occurring communes, cantons, ceremonial chains. Such local or occasionally emergent groups would make the necessary decisions by the free exchange of ideas and gifts. The general preference would be for genuinely consensus decisions, reached over a lengthy exploratory process.

Anarcho-communists also tend to object to 'private property,' the notion that any of us can have an absolute right to use, destroy, embellish, exchange or limit others' use of anything whatsoever, having no regard to the common wealth and interest of our manifold societies. In Proudhon's words, 'property is theft'. The first person to put a marker on a piece of land or ancestral mathom and say 'this is mine' was the first owner of capital, the first thief, the first magician. In anarcho-communist utopias people keep things as long as it is their turn to use them, and greet with incomprehension the suggestion that anything could 'belong' to anyone in particular: does the sunlight? 'The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on',[10] and no one can dictate the terms on which any portion of that common inheritance is to be used.

Anarcho-capitalists (or libertarians), on the other hand, found their case precisely upon 'private property'. In Proudhon's words, 'property is liberty'. The first person to work a piece of land by planting and gardening it so 'mixed her labour' with it that it was 'hers'. Individuals can only be genuinely free, and free of coercive power, if they are protected in the cultivation and enjoyment of their own. If what I make can be taken from me, with general approval, then my powers are not my own: I am as much a slave as I would be if admitted brigands treated me as prey.

Private property and the commercial spirit are always being denounced by would-be despots, who pretend that we would all be happier if we knew our place: Napoleon, Hitler (and Gandhi) were agreed on that! Where there is no room for me to work by and for myself my 'liberty' is nugatory. A genuinely free society must therefore make it possible for all of us to have and keep 'our own'. Unfree societies rest on the pretence of giving the citizen a chance to share in collective decision-making, but take from her effective control over what most immediately concerns her. Like Herbert Spencer's slave, the citizen is induced to accept her lot by the appearance of a chance to share the dangerous delights of telling others what to do (Spencer 1960) though nothing that she individually says ever makes any difference. In anarcho-capitalist utopias every individual has an absolute authority over her own body and the products of her will – saving only that she concedes an equal liberty to all – and greets the suggestion that anyone else should rule her with incomprehension. 'It is said', said Jefferson, 'that men are not able to govern themselves: have we found angels in the shape of kings to govern them?' If human beings cannot rule themselves, how can they rule others? 'The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen, in his person and property.'[11]

Put like this it may seem obvious that 'anarchists' and 'libertarians' are radically different breeds, united only in their dislike of current arrangements and a wish to 'run their own lives' whether as individuals or as communists. There are certainly deep-seated differences of temperament at work, easily revealed through a simple thought experiment. Suppose some children are squabbling over a flute, and you are the only adult around. One child made the flute; another is the best flute-player; a third is lonely and depressed and would get enormous pleasure from possessing the theory; and a fourth is the strongest of the group. What (if anything) do you do? Right-thinking liberal parents of my acquaintance generally reply that they would confiscate the flute, and then return it with an instruction that it must be shared. Social Darwinists, I suppose, must let the fourth child have it. Speaking personally, I think the maker should be helped to repossess it, even if one adds a gentle encouragement to sharing or to renting it out for hire. Others again suggest that everyone gets together to learn how to make flutes. There are distinct differences, in short, between the degree of authority that adults claim, the criteria by which they assess desert and the ideal form of relationship they seek to inculcate. Those differences identify some adults as certainly not anarchists of either type, but even the anarchically inclined may regard each other with suspicion. Anarchists and libertarians regularly read each other out of the tradition, but 'the differences between individualist and socialist anarchism, though important, should not be exaggerated'.[12] Witness the following quotations, noted in an earlier chapter.

> (1) Each individual, each association, commune or province, each region and nation has the absolute right to determine its own fate, to associate with

> others or not, to ally itself with whoever it will, or break any alliance, without regard to so-called historical claims or the convenience of its neighbors.[13]
>
> (2) It is by dividing and subdividing the republics from the National One down thro' all its subordinations, until it ends in the administration of every man's farm and affairs by himself; by placing under everyone what his own eye may superintend, that all will be done for the best.[14]

The first is from Bakunin, anarcho-communist and revolutionary, who thereby espoused as extreme a rejection of the laws of contract and historical association as any modern individualist, while emphasising the importance of putting power in the hands of those who suffer its effects. The second is from Thomas Jefferson, and a reminder that Proudhon, who accepted the title 'anarchist', actually played with the idea of saying 'federalist' (by which he meant Jeffersonian, not Hamiltonian) instead. He was perhaps put off by the appropriation of that term by the founders of federal power in the United States. A proper federalism allows and protects the unfettered emergence of consensus and dissent at all levels. On the one side Kropotkin, most sympathetic and intelligent of anarcho-communists, denounced what he called 'state-capitalism' and 'collectivism' as tending to demoralise and dehumanise the recipient of bureaucratic 'charity'.[15] On the other Lysander Spooner, who founded his doctrine on individual natural right, denounced government precisely for the damage it did to the land:

> it is by the monopoly of land, and the monopoly of money, that more than a thousand millions of the earth's inhabitants – as savages, barbarians and wage laborers – are kept in a state of destitution, or on the verge of destitution.[16]

The difference between the two sorts of anarchist mostly turn upon their understanding of the proper civil means, and of personal freedom. Libertarians emphasise the freedom that 'money in your pocket' gives, the chance of surviving among strangers whom one does not want to owe, nor yet to own as friends. Money makes all social exchanges 'clean,' uncluttered by emotional blackmail, unpaid debts or any uncertainties about what is due. Josiah Warren, a sometime supporter of Robert Owen's New Harmony, even attempted to put his 7-year-old daughter on a business footing, so that she paid for her keep by labour, and was paid a proper wage for all she did above that fixed amount. However comic (and probably impermanent) the arrangement, it was a serious attempt to respect the feelings and autonomy of a child. Payment need not literally be made in cash, but all transactions should aim to leave 'the books balanced'. Anarcho-communists have remembered more clearly that not all human relationships are clear and external

ones. 'The free individual (is) always defined in the context of a society made up of other free individuals – or ultimately in a Universe – which curb(s) his personal individualism by the basic right of all others to become free.'[17] The thought is Emerson's but also Bakunin's: 'man can fulfil his free individuality only by complementing it through all the individuals around him, and only through work and the collective force of society'.[18] What's the point of being free if there is nothing I can actually do? Swaraj requires the eradication of poverty: positive, not only negative, freedom.[19] And however 'clean' the cash transactions may be, they speedily become instruments of oppression in their own right, as 'wealth accumulates' and people learn to sell what they had hitherto regarded as their own inalienable being, to be shared with friends not handed out to strangers. There is no cash sum by which I could buy off my wife's or my children's just claims on me, even if the courts invent one. I am not convinced that Gandhi was right to think that English merchants enslaved India, but commerce is not always liberal. Contrariwise, the constant appeal to 'human feeling', 'sympathy' and social identity can become as a great a barrier to freedom as any brigand's gun. As Kamienski pointed out in 1854 (*sic*) the Russian village commune was based on serfdom and was peculiarly helpful to autocracy.[20] I have similar reservations about Gandhi's proposal for federated villages and cantons in which each 'individual is always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages',[21] and everyone restricts his/her desires to the range of what is currently available. This ideal is of course very like Jefferson's, but Jefferson had a much stronger conception of personal autonomy than Gandhi seems to have been prepared to grant. It is not easy to maintain the necessary blend of sociality and liberality that defines the free citizen: people can be induced to 'choose' all manner of oppressive options. Government by consensus can often amount to gang-rule, even to gang-rape.

In sum: 'far from being a speculative vision of a future society, anarchist society is a description of mode of organisation, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the deviant authoritarian trend of our society' (Ward 1973). But that mode may either be the normal familial one, or else the normal economic one, modelled on unlimited and friendly sharing or else on definite and quantifiable exchange. Both are probably necessary; either may go appallingly astray; neither should be blamed for all the evils of Soviet Russia or the Capitalist West. 'True communism was never attempted in Russia, unless one considers thirty-three categories of pay, different food rations, privileges to some and indifference to the great mass Communism.'[22] And Capitalism is an unknown, untried ideal.[23]

Matters of high concern

According to one opponent of the new US Constitution, and especially of its standing army, 'it is much too early to set down for a fact that mankind cannot be governed except by Force'.[24] The anarchist tradition, as I have sketched it, is an expression of that conviction: mankind can be governed – or rather humankind, through multiple free exchanges and friendly associations, can in effect govern itself, without military intervention. The order thus emerging may not be one that any mortal being had in mind before: it is not imposed *a priori* on a struggling mass, but grows out of the unfettered, unforced life of humanity. Once the actual and imagined brigands have been swept aside the 'organisation of the civil or economic means' will operate in peace.

Unfortunately, the brigands show no sign of being swept aside, and even 'opponents of big government' always seem to leave office having extended the power of central government into yet further regions and cut back not at all on its previous claims. Rudyard Kipling, in his only extant works of what came to be called 'science fiction', imagines a future where the single, limited global authority has only the task of keeping the lines of transport and communication open, and everyone else has retreated to the eminently proper task of minding their own business. In this world the idea of letting your actions be decided by majority vote or by obedience to dictatorial whim are alike insane. A mixture of clan loyalty and commercial exchange serves well enough to keep the peace.

But Kipling did put that future on the far side of a global war, culminating in the desperate revolt commemorated in *MacDonough's Song*:

> Whether the State can loose and bind
> in Heaven as well as on Earth;
> if it be wiser to kill mankind
> before or after the birth –
> these are matters of high concern
> whose state-kept schoolmen are;
> but Holy State (we have lived to learn)
> endeth in Holy War.
>
> Whether the People be led by the Lord
> or lured by the loudest throat:
> if it be quicker to die by the sword
> or cheaper to die by vote –
> these are the things we have dealt with once,
> (and they will not rise from their grave)
> for Holy People, however it runs,
> endeth in wholly Slave.

> Whatsoever, for any cause,
> seeketh to take or give,
> power above or beyond the Laws,
> suffer it not to live!
> Holy State or Holy King –
> or Holy People's Will –
> Have no truck with the senseless thing.
> Order the guns and kill!
>
> Saying after me:
> Once there was the People – Terror gave it birth!
> Once there was the People and it made a Hell of Earth!
> Once there was the People – Listen, o ye slain –
> Once there was the People: it shall never be again![25]

That fierce rejection of the claims of a notional, oppressive, national or other unity is, of course, of a piece with Kipling's denunciation of 'the old King, under any name', and the Law to which he refers is that battery of guarded liberties 'wrenched, inch and ell and all, slowly from the King', and by no gentle means.

So is the anarchist's only hope to organise a grand revolt against brigands, and against brigandage? Or else at least to get the revolutionary cells ready for the grand revolt that 'surely' must erupt as the contradictions of imperial power grow more unbearable? All attempts to rule by mere force require increasing effort as hostility and suspicion grow: empires collapse because so much manpower is diverted from productive life into the governmental services. The temporary solution of past empires, to conciliate the masses with free services stolen from outsiders and enlist those most likely to rebel into the hierarchy, was easier when the empires were smaller, when there was an 'outside' to ravage and when they could leave most of ordinary civil life untouched. Nowadays governments have taken on enormous responsibilities, abandoned any claim to rule by right of high moral purpose or divine mandate, cannot indefinitely push their costs on to 'the Third World' and can neither rule by fear nor without it. Tax evasion and the black economy swell, and government makes itself indispensable by summoning our fears of enemies across the borders. 'Whoever says State, says a State, and affirms by that the existence of several States, and whoever says several States, says: competition, jealousy, timeless and endless war.'[26] War is the health of the state, but also its destruction.

The poet Yeats was deeply, and not unreasonably, troubled by the thoughts that words of his had encouraged into armed rebellion young Irish men who were then executed. I have no wish at all to share that kind of guilt, and luckily I do not think I need – partly, of course, because I am not a great poet!

'Mr. Jefferson said that if a centralisation of power were ever effected at Washington, the US would have the most corrupt government on earth. Comparisons are difficult, but I believe', so A. J. Nock declared:

> it has one that is thoroughly corrupt, flagitious, tyrannical, oppressive. Yet if it were in my power to pull down its structure overnight and set up another of my own devising – to abolish the State out of hand, and replace it by an organisation of the economic means – I would not do it, for the minds of Americans are far from fitted to any such great change as this, and the effect would be only to lay open the way for the worse enormities of usurpation – possibly, who knows, with myself as the usurper!'[27]

Nock's distrust of himself and of his fellow Americans may seem to embody just that attitude which Jefferson called 'Tory': 'the sickly, weakly, timid man fears the people, and is a Tory by nature [whereas] the healthy, strong and bold cherishes them, and is formed a Whig by nature.'[28] But what, as Yeats enquired, is Whiggery?

> A levelling, rancorous, rational sort of mind
> that never looked out of the eye of a saint
> or out of a drunkard's eye.[29]

What Jefferson, Yeats and Nock all praise and look to under different names is the common, custom-led civilities of ordinary life. What all oppose is the imposition of a 'rational order' decided upon by a self-styled elite. It is because Nock rejects that kind of imposition that he also rejects even the fantasy of a new revolutionary order, the temptation that Tolkien symbolised in the 'One Ring to rule them all.'

> Reason and experience alike tell us that the governments now existing in the world were established by bayonet-point, by force. None of the monarchies or governments that we see in the world are based on justice or on a correct foundation that is acceptable to reason. Their foundations are rotten, being nothing but coercion and force.[30]

Right on: but when I point out that this is a quotation from the Ayatollah Khomeyni, one can be forgiven for being doubtful about the value of armed revolution and the imposition of a truly 'rational' order. 'The ills of rebellion are certain, but the event doubtful', as Berkeley advised the potential rebels of an earlier day.[31] Even if a car is being very badly driven, it is usually madness for a passenger to wrench the wheel away, and not necessarily much benefit to other passengers if he/she succeeds.

People who believe that there is a rationally discernible 'right' order suppose

that just anyone who would have any view on the matter will reach the same, correct result unless they are deceived by vanity and false philosophy. It is unusual to remember that one might oneself be in that dire position. Rationalists are therefore usually indistinguishable from dogmatists: what I believe is both correct and the only really rational opinion, and I need pay no heed – indeed I should not pay such heed – to any unreasonable person who, influenced by superstition and immediate passion, does not think the same. It hardly matters whether such rationalists admire a god made in their image, humanity or reason or the self itself. Their objection to an actual government will only be an objection to that transient government, and not to the very principle of institutional control, mobilised against the enemies of rational order. Notoriously, Randian 'objectivism' leads on to as fierce a contempt for 'altruists' and 'non-objectivists' as ever Khomeyni shows for nationalists or corrupt Westerners.

Non-coercive anarchism (which is to say, just anarchism) rests instead upon a method of civil association, not on a perceived goal. That method, the organisation of the civil means, has no one obvious outcome, and to that extent the critics are correct to see that anarchists have no definite political goal, no 'good society' the far side of catastrophe. Certain possible futures are rejected (as imperial consolidation, bureaucratic world state, military nationalism), but the anarchist methodology is compatible with as many more, including the free market, communitarian federalism and even 'fractured feudalism' (an idealised version of the mediaeval European experiment, where the existence of many structures of authority precluded any absolute control by priest or baron). Maybe, with a little nudging, British society might end up as obviously anarchic, merely because our monarch can give no orders at all, and there are still very many independent centres of authority and power, ready to ignore 'the state'.

That final, unexpected, possibility – of a civil order that emerges to contain the brigands without recourse to some yet stronger brigand – allows me to introduce the rules developed in that mediaeval period for the conduct of war. These rules – however ill-observed they have been in this century – still constitute our strongest evidence of an international, anarchical authority. Two sources of their power in the mediaeval period can be identified: the threat of excommunication, and the threat from mercenary soldiers, who would not long lend their support to princes who involved them in too dangerous or unprofitable wars.

The rules of war require that war only be fought: (1) on proper authority; (2) for a just cause; (3) with right intent; (4) for the sake of peace; (5) when all other methods of resolving the dispute have failed; (6) without direct injury to non-combatants; (7) without cruel or unusual weapons; (8) with a sense of proportion or discrimination in the means used.[32] In sum, a war is fought justly when it approximates to the action of a decent police force or protection agency, when it is

something that people used to civil peace could cautiously endorse. Obviously the 'justice' of the cause is likely to be moot, and it has generally been identified solely with 'self-defence'. In Islamic terms: *Jihad,* war to spread the Islamic laws throughout the world, can be initiated only by an Imam, one with the clear Mandate of Heaven, whereas *Defa,* to defend one's liberty to obey those laws, is a universal right.[33] There have been plenty of people to think they had Heaven's Mandate – including Genghis Khan[34] – but it is difficult not to doubt their credentials. A just war should leave people at liberty: which is to say, one should not claim the right to dictate their condition. If the only defensible war is a war, as Chesterton said, of self-defence, then one must expect to return home 'battered and bleeding and only boasting that one is not dead', or that those one had a responsibility to protect aren't dead.

But even if we have no Imam, so just war theory says, we need an acknowledged prince to order us to war. Must this not be an element of the theory that anarchists reckon superfluous? No prince can make an action right that would not have been right anyway, for despotism exactly is 'that principle in performance of which the state arbitrarily puts into effect laws which it has itself made'.[35] Laws of the law-maker's own making 'have no color of authority or obligation'.[36] So why might I not initiate military violence in defence of myself, my friends, my dependants, if anyone may?

But in a society ruled by emergent order (*nomos,* and not *thesmos*), and diffused authority, any such military action runs the risk of stepping past its bounds. 'If [a police agency] commit an act of invasion against someone that someone had better turn out to deserve it, otherwise they are the criminals.'[37] That is reason enough for me not to run the risk except in the most obvious and immediate of cases, and cause enough to ensure that I shall not have the wherewithal to do so. Who would assist me in the enterprise unless they trusted my judgement of what was a wrong, and unless they believed that I would accept responsibility if I turned out to be mistaken? How, in turn, could I accept responsibility for what my assistants did unless I could trust them not to go too far? A military action cannot be, and cannot be taken to have been, a simple aggregate of individuals' actions. It must be a campaign, a corporate act, for which responsibility must be variously assigned. Unless someone has the resources to compensate those who are unjustly injured in the fight (and even non-culpable injuries deserve some damages); unless someone has the resources to track down the injuries and the invaders that are his/her excuse for war; unless someone can earn the respect and voluntary obedience of his/her troops – there can be no proper authority for such an act, and those who none the less resort to violence do so at their own risk – a risk which might leave them paying restitution to their intended and accidental victims for all their natural

lives. That defines the nature of a 'prince' in an anarchical society: one who has the resources, and respect, to enlist assistants, and to pay up for their errors, and her own. Despite the precedent of Nuremberg, it is noticeable that current rulers do not accept responsibility for what they order done. It seems indeed to be accepted practice that fallen tyrants are expected to live out their lives in comfortable exile, and only their least henchmen suffer punishment (let alone make restitution for their crimes). It is the mark of a slavish nature to avoid responsibility, the mark of a slave to enslave others if she can: twice over, such tyrants are slaves.

The rules of war reveal, yet again, that existing state authorities have no moral authority: they do not accept responsibility as princes should, and plan such actions as outrage the rules of war. Those leaders who unleash a nuclear war (and all their assistants) would – if the survivors managed to get hold of them – be justly tried for genocide, except that there could be no adequate revenge. But by the same token revolutionary leaders who abuse their followers' trust by organising car bombings, assassination of fathers before their children's eyes, necklace-murders and the like have also no good right to be considered more than brigands. From the anarchist perspective there is no intrinsic difference between a state government and a revolutionary gang: both claim a right to deploy military force against their enemies in defence of what they mind about; both reject external claims to judgement on their doings; both tend to justify themselves either by direct reference to a divine or 'moral' mandate, or to the more-or-less forced consent of 'their' people.

Just revolutions, in sum, are theoretically possible, on the same terms as just wars. But there is very strong reason to be suspicious of any candidates for that high status. Certainly neither war nor revolution can be just that does not revert as soon as possible to the civil means, to peace. Certainly the very establishment of a war machine will almost always make that return less likely. The *means* constitute and modify the end, as Gandhi saw. All would-be revolutionaries need to ask themselves which programme is likelier to succeed: armed revolution, with its ensuing injuries to innocents, its incitement of established brigands to yet harsher measures, its creation of another brigand power, or else some unsung, unrebellious organisation of the civil and economic means alongside or out of the way of politics? Even the temptation to engage in 'non-violent disobedience' may not really be the best idea, nor really be 'non-violent': inciting others to violence, even against oneself, in the hope that they will gradually lose heart, is not altogether an anarchical ideal. Gandhi's *satyagraha* is often cited as the proper method for a decently anarchistical revolution. But if you suppose that Gandhi defeated Britain by genuinely non-violent means, you have a good many deaths to explain away. He advised violence in defence of 'India's honour' even while he added that 'non-

violence' was the higher path. He may have wanted only to compel a *moral* response by the mere force of truth, but he must have known, did know, that his acts were coercive (because his death in any fast-to-death would have signalled a blood bath), incited violence and led the way to appalling massacres of Muslims and Hindus. His occasional retreats from the political scene when his followers engaged in riot and murder can be understood as a repentant wish to cool things down (and sometimes he succeeded): they can also be seen as a refusal to accept personal responsibility for the actual and predicted consequences of his actions. Exasperated British officials who saw him as a sanctimonious troublemaker did, unfortunately, have a point. Nothing I said just then, of course, was intended as an excuse for the atrocious conduct of some British in India; nor is it an excuse to observe that generations of the British wrecked their health and lost their lives to make it possible for Indians to live a little more at liberty. 'India' may not have been free (after all: *India* had never before existed), but perhaps more Indians were free than ever before. Oppression, as I said before, can come in many forms, and be relieved at one level even as it reappears elsewhere. Later Indian governments have a lot to explain away as well: if the British Raj was an offence to civilised humanity, why isn't the Indian? Because 'Indians' now govern themselves? Is that not a merely factitious unity?

Anarcho-conservatives and the other danger

Anarchists will often be against the revolution precisely because they distrust the political or military means, because they see the possibility of organising through the civil or economic means, and gradually letting the state wither. The subjugated English did not need to rebel against their Norman despots: they outlasted them, living in ways the Normans could not be bothered with, of trade and civic virtue and the common tongue. Perhaps it was a device the English had borrowed from the Welsh, the older British: why isn't Welsh a Romance language, like French or Spanish? Is it that the British were too deeply enslaved even to learn the Roman tongue, or is it that they waited the Romans out, and thereafter remembered them only as a distant Emperor whom the British, in fantasy, defeated? The British do like to fantasise about empire, but the great mass of them are very ill-disposed to bother about running such a thing. The betrayed and dispossessed inhabitants of the American continent could similarly make no serious fight of it against a tyrant state, and had better keep their customs quietly and engage in private, economic means.

All such anarchistically inclined peoples, in fact, are best called anarcho-conservatives. Their hearts are given to gradually developed 'laws of liberty', that do not grate against us because their edges have been worn smooth. The fault of anarcho-conservatives, from Burke to the Agrarians, is often that they take the

oppressive features of their present world for granted, and take an altogether too relaxed view of the need for any change. But Burke was right to think that the French would have done better to build gradually from the past, and even the Agrarians were right to think that the problems of the South could not be solved by federal fiat and moralising disapproval.

But anarcho-conservatives do need patience, and that may be easiest for those who can trust in God. If the God of justice will bring the Empire down, and we, God's people, will be there to see it fall (even if I, in this mortal body, never do), we can afford to wait, and not attempt to rule the world by force. Anarchists have often, and understandably, been anti-clerical, and seen 'God' as only the excuse that tyrants give for tyranny. That rebellious atheism may often be the better kind of faith: instead of the state, they give their worship to a form of life half-glimpsed in the friendly association of those who don't seek dominance. The problem arises when they forget that this form of life can indeed survive and grow and triumph over the big battalions, when they begin to organise their own battalions to defend the god.

True Aristotelian anarchism rests on loyalty and faith in that half-hidden god, a faith that requires me to remember that my brother may be given quite different orders, that the whole world is not given up to me, nor to any group that I might join. This is justice: to mind your own business! Sometimes, and so rarely that we forget it happens, we may find ourselves inarguably with God's Mandate 'if the enemy [have] explicitly refused to accept the duties of the minimal moral law incumbent upon all human beings' and required to organise ourselves for war.[38] When we do so, we fight under God's banner and by those minimal laws. Brigands come and go, and the meek outlast them all – but state governments are not the only evils. The example I have already hinted at, of Gandhi's war against the British Raj, is a reminder that emergent order and the 'civil' means are not always what good anarchists had in mind. What Gandhi wanted was Hind Swaraj, Ramraj, the Holy Land – not 'independence' but moral autonomy. 'Real swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.'[39] What comes 'naturally' to humankind is caste hierarchy, laws of pollution, patriarchal tyranny and the loss of self in what the West has called accidie, but some Hindus have called enlightenment. The violence in the Punjab epitomised in the Amritsar massacre cost Britain an empire: those who now govern the Punjab would find it difficult to be altogether convincing in their condemnation of General Dyer.

So my praise of anarchism ends a little oddly. Rational anarchists sometimes forget that the civil and economic means they trust are an historical construction, not what all humans 'naturally' seek and do. Maybe after all we did need those half-domesticated brigand chiefs to hold the line while we learned new ways, and

also needed much more of old fashioned, and Abrahamic, faith than Paine, or Jefferson supposed.

Notes

1. M. Warner and R. Crisp (eds) *Terrorism, Protest and Power* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990), pp. 123–37.
2. Hobbes 1981, II.18.
3. T. Paine 1992 [1792], 1; see Ostergaard 1981, p. 183.
4. Navari 1981, p. 13.
5. Kropotkin 1976, p. 34.
6. Mazor 1978, p. 155.
7. Mazor, 1978, p. 152.
8. Aristotle, *Politics,* 1.1253a29.
9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 5.
10. T. Jefferson cited in Koch 1961b, p. 28.
11. T. Jefferson cited in Koch 1961a, p. 28.
12. Ostergaard 1981, p. 183.
13. Bakunin cited in Geurin 1970, p. 67.
14. T. Jefferson cited in Koch 1961a, p. 163.
15. Kropotkin 1976 pp. 106 f.
16. Spooner 1972.
17. Emerson cited in Mead 1963, p. 100.
18. Bakunin cited in Guerin 1970, p. 33.
19. Gandhi 1924 cited in Jesudasan 1984.
20. Walicki 1982, p. 192.
21. Walicki 1982, p. 125.
22. E. Goldman 1924 cited in Krimerman and Perry 1966, p. 103.
23. Rand 1967, p. 32.
24. 1787: Borden 1965, p. 77.
25. Kipling, original 1912; 1923, p. 546.
26. Bakunin cited in Krimmerman and Perry 1966, p. 84.
27. Nock 1970, p. 143.
28. Jefferson to Lafayette, 1823, cited in Koch 1961a, p. 123 (original 1943, reissued 1961).
29. *The Seven Sages*: Yeats 1950, p. 272 f.
30. A. Khomeyni, *Kashf Asras,* 221, cited in Rajaee 1983, p. 76.
31. Berkeley 1948, vol. vi, p. 55.
32. Johnson 1975, pp. 72 f.
33. Rajaee 1983, p. 89.
34. See Voegelin 1952, p. 57.
35. Kant, 'Perpetual Peace' in Kant 1970.
36. Spooner 1972, p. 3.
37. Rothbard 1982, p. 82.
38. See Eisendrath 1968, p. 69.
39. Gandhi 1925, cited in Jesudasan 1984, p. 57.

6 Bioregional environmentalism and the humanistic culture[1]

National and environmental feeling

The topic of 'nationalism and the environment' may seem a surprising one. Environmentalism tends to have a global perspective, especially in its 'deeper' forms, and nationalism has a poor enough press even in less environmentally conscious circles. Stanley Benn's article on nationalism in *Edwards' Encyclopedia,* though he allows a certain charm, or even moral strength, to 'nationalistic' liberation movements, concludes that nationalism rapidly turns into an aggressive assertiveness, a rhetoric of 'blood and soil', that merits no 'serious rational criticism' (Benn 1967). Benn's article has, of course, been superseded by more generous, and perhaps more self-aware, discussions. 'Internationalism' is sometimes a name for old-fashioned imperialism, and if nationalists are often 'aggressive' this might have something to do with the behaviour of their supposedly 'supra-national' opponents. Even 'blood and soil', however soiled that image now may be, once meant 'the link between those who held and farmed the land and whose generations of blood, sweat and tears had made the soil a part of their being, and their being integral to the soil'[2] – which is not necessarily an unworthy notion.

Nations (i.e. groups of people subjectively united in the possession of a common ancestry, tradition, language and deeply embedded in a particular landscape and history) have played a vital, and even a terrible, role in human history (sometimes under the label 'Democracy', rule by The People). I do not have to approve of any particular national struggle, nor of the methods adopted in such struggles, to think that nationalism deserves more than a scornful gesture. It is at least odd that 'national liberation movements' should be fêted, but 'nationalism' scorned.

There is a range of environmentalist argument that turns upon a people's sense of its own continuity and place. There are also considerable problems consequent on there being more than one world hewed from the natural universe by diverse tribes. It is not true only of isolated, 'primitive' tribes that exile is a

forcible deracination, so that the Kikuyu were appalled by their eviction, or the Masai carried the *names* of hills and rivers with them in a desperate attempt to keep themselves together.[3] Too catastrophic an alteration in the landscape, even without eviction, can be a profoundly disorienting experience. One's mental map is suddenly quite inappropriate: not only does one not know *where* one is, one hardly knows *who* one is. For the Arunta 'every detail of the countryside is a cue for some myth',[4] and not for them alone, whether the 'myth' is an identifying tribal story, a family legend or a personal memory. The motives of historical conservation societies, directed to the built or landscaped environment, are not that unlike those of wildlife or woodland preservation societies: the ideological division between the desert and the sown is neither absolute nor all-important.

The land we live in embodies a story of who we are, and that is, by itself, often a very good reason to preserve it in good health and order, and to offer similar protection to the lands of other historical communities. Even if a particular landscape offer us no story, we know that it may be the context of another tribe. So we may move from valuing only *our* land, to valuing the land of other communities, because we value them. Wildlife preservation societies and those organisations like Survival International, who aim to protect the welfare and identity of relatively powerless or 'primitive' societies, also have a lot in common. Helping Indian tribes to maintain themselves in beauty, and in their land, is a project that good liberals endorse: they are not always so eager to endorse what they can call 'nationalistic' or 'atavistic' impulses. But why should an Amerindian tribe be entitled to demand respect for its historical identity and involvement with its land, and a European nation not be? Why are Amerindians entitled to resist the approaches of missionaries or immigrant farmers, and European nationals not so entitled to preserve their being? In both cases there may be cause for conflict, since the 'same' land may be the home, and embody the story, of quite different tribes. In both cases a concern for our own homeland may branch out into a disdain for all other lands, or into a renewed appreciation of those 'other' lands. Dismissing such deeply held feelings for 'blood and soil' as unworthy of rational concern is not only a failure to live a properly examined life: it actually lends support to those who would have all lands emptied of their 'sacred and historic value' so as to be able to possess them perfectly.

The Nazi association

But of course Benn's comment, and the wider disinclination to take nationalism seriously (except anomalously, in the presence of anti-colonialists or small 'primitive' tribes), has a clear historical root. We have experienced the ill-effects of nationalism, and especially of a nationalism rooted in rhetoric about 'ancestral lands', resistance to alien ways, the evils of rootlessness and so forth. This association must be taken seriously, especially because a close examination especially of Nazi rhetoric and argument reveals how close some modern environmentalists are to endorsing just what Hitler and his allies said. I hope I do not really need to emphasise that my association of environmentalism and Nazism is not intended as an argument against environmentalism.

> National Socialist ideologues were in no small way concerned that man, or at least some men, live in harmony with the environment and, appreciating the fact that this is obviously necessary, we must recognise that just because something happens to have been emphasised by people as despicable as the Nazis does not make it wrong.[5]

The sort of harmony we envisage makes a difference, and the methods we choose to achieve it. But I think it is vital to face up to what Nazi philosophy actually was, and to learn from their appalling errors. It does us no good at all to dismiss Nazism as an insane aberration, something that none of 'us', decent and intelligent people, could ever come to indulge ourselves in: the Nazis actually did what many respected and influential Anglophone thinkers had said or suggested would be a good idea. Nor does it do any good to dismiss the association of environmentalism and Nazism out of hand. There are simply too many cross-connections. If we can think it right to warn laboratory scientists that far too much of their argument and practice has Nazi overtones (and I do), it is only fair to acknowledge the force of the counter charge.

So what are the more-or-less alarming associations between recent environmentalism and National Socialism? Hitler, of course, was a – sort of – vegetarian (as all vegetarians are very quickly reminded), but wasn't that simply faddishness? How could we possibly suppose that the Nazis were concerned about non-human life and the land we share? Isn't real environmentalism – to return to the suggestion voiced at the beginning of this chapter – a concern for the objective well-being of the whole earth, not a concern for Lebensraum and purity of blood? Can't we dismiss the connection as a merely accidental and unmeaning one? Unfortunately, no.

Consider the following thirteen points of contact between Nazi ideology and current environmentalism: not all the theses can be attributed to all environmentalists; you may well suspect that one or two of them can only be attributed to me! Let that be a reminder that I am engaged in self-criticism. Some of the theses were part of a general movement of thought in which Nazis were involved, but of which they were not always the leaders; others are very much what Nazism stood for.

6.1 Concern for the environment, and perhaps especially for animals, leads to a lack of concern for the human: a laudable respect for the 'web of life' may coexist, as Neuhaus (1971) says, with a remarkable readiness to tear apart the flimsy web of human sociality.

6.2 This is no accident: those who assimilate the human to the non-human, inevitably downgrade specifically 'humanistic' concerns. Minding about what 'animals' mind about we lose our grip on what only matters to people (on which see my *Animals and their Moral Standing,* 1997).

6.3 Denying that the division between 'human' and 'non-human' is either clear or of overriding ethical significance, we discover the possibility of many little divisions, between sub-species or grades of ability. If it no longer matters much that we are all *human,* perhaps it matters a lot more that we are of different groups or grades.

6.4 We exist, like every other living thing, within an overarching whole, the Living Earth, whose survival needs no particular individual, nor individual species. Humanism has no higher moral ground than egoism, tribalism, chauvinism, and is like them in its divisive fantasies.

6.5 The workings of Nature, or the Living Earth, are 'innocent', and uncontaminated, and humankind may prove to be a bacterial infection soon to be controlled, or eradicated, by global fever. 'There is no inorganic nature, there is no dead, mechanical earth. The Great Mother has been won back to life'.[6]

6.6 Until that cleansing future we must live within historical communities, carried beyond our transient mortalities by identifying with tribal or national honour: 'universalism', or abstract humanism, is an intellectual's denial of our particular places in the living earth.

6.7 Capitalism, in so far as that requires an international money-market and the service of the deracinated, also leads us away from primary allegiances to our local soil and to the whole living earth. All such capitalist-industrialism denies the sacredness of Nature, and tramples down the sturdy peasant.

6.8 State-power, considered as military–political rule, can only be a temporary expedient. What we need to awaken in us is a religious spirit, worshipping the living earth and those who serve it without humanistic pride. Existing laws, formulated by arbitrary governments, have no moral force. Only natural law can bind, and that to action for the sake of the whole earth.

6.9 In withdrawing from political ideals we may recognise the distinctive natural and familial contribution of women, who should not seek to ape male power but consolidate their position as the mothers of a coming age. Nor should they aim to imitate 'male logic'. Post-modern feminists seem to endorse all the old stereotypes invoked by Nazis, with the proviso that women are 'right'!

6.10 Scientific 'objectivity' is a myth, a construct by deracinated intellectuals in the service of world capitalism: the true science is one that embodies racial and natural values.

6.11 There is indeed no single truth about the world that can be grasped without contradiction. We cannot achieve, nor should we wish to achieve, a single theory. Instead, let us abandon the law of non-contradiction and embrace whatever local theory or practice works here–now.

6.12 The catastrophic impact of capitalism, humanism, monotheism, internationalism can all be traced to the influence of the Jews, and of those Christians who have neglected our 'true Celtic or Indo-Germanic heritage'.

6.13 The whole living earth in all its innocence and majesty will one day be engulfed in fire or ice: the universe at large cares nothing for our humanistic ideals of altruism or scientific objectivity, and nothing even for the more 'natural' values of homestead and organic life. The only possible pose for a truly 'modern' man is the courage of unalterable despair. 'Dread of reality is the spiritual weakness of the "late" men of the higher civilizations',[7] strength lies in 'the tragic view of life'.

As I said, not all these theses are to be found in all environmentalists and animal liberationists. They are all, however, alarmingly familiar theses, especially in less academic circles, and every one has been endorsed, or strongly implied, by respected free-thinkers. It ought to be especially alarming that environmentalist rhetoric continues – despite frequent rebuttal and against all the historical evidence – to blame the Jews for the damage done to the natural environment.[8] But of course hatred of the Jews was never – as we too easily suppose – a merely personal, psychopathic foible on Hitler's part. Hatred of the Jews really was hatred of that community through whom notions of human equality before the law and freedom from merely political and local ties, had entered the historical scene; that same community existed across historical and national boundaries, and had made unequalled contributions to the growth of rational understanding of the world, society and ourselves. Hitler was quite right to see that Israel was his chief enemy, even though – like other rhetoricians – he was quite wrong to think that Judaism embodied a disdain for animal and global life.

Hitler asked Felix Kirsten:

How can you find any pleasure in shooting behind cover at poor creatures browsing on the edge of a wood, innocent, defenceless and unsuspecting? Properly considered, it's pure murder....Nature is so marvellously beautiful and every animal has a right to live....You will find this respect for animals in all Indo-Germanic peoples.[9]

Contrary to popular accounts, the Nazis did not treat Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals as 'animals' but as bacterial infections in the guise of prop erly natural

beings – an image that continues to crop up in Anglo-American science fiction. Himmler especially wrote – if one can bear to read it – movingly, about the plight of SS men forced to carry out 'a necessary delousing operation' at enormous cost to their own sensibilities. They confirmed themselves in their conviction that Jews were not *real* by noting the detachment, isolation and abject submission they had themselves *induced* in their victims.[10] 'The National Socialists had succeeded in creating that which they knew existed all along. Through degradation, humiliation, torture and total dehumanisation they had created the non-human, in fact non-natural Jewish enemy, seemingly incapable of feeling those normal, human emotions that were characteristic of those decent folk engaged in annihilating them.'[11]

No modern environmentalist would ever say – or do – such a thing? I hope not. But environmentalists do blame the Jews, and do employ metaphors of bacterial or cancerous infection. An often quoted article by Alan Gregg hypothesises that the living earth is an organism like 'the federation or community of interdependent organs and tissues that go to make up (a physician's) patient', and that man is an unrestrained growth or cancer (Gregg 1955). It would not take much for those two theses to merge, especially for people who look upon the international money market – which is identified with 'Jews' – with fear and hatred, and especially for people who also distance themselves from older, 'dualist' conceptions: I have yet to see why modern physicalists think it right to retain any respect for an intentionality they deny.

Those who will not learn from history are condemned to repeat it. We may hope that just by bringing these associated ideas into the light of day they will lose their demonic strength. But of course it remains true that there are some truths, some reasonable ideas, mixed into the dreadful brew. Nazism did not appeal only to the inadequate, the ineducable, the greedy and sadistic, but to patriotic and historically conscious men of action and to consciously post-Christian intellectuals who appealed to the supposed discoveries of science (when it suited them) to vindicate their treatment of humans as so much natural stuff. Nor is it sensible to blame it on a uniquely 'German' spirit: which evasion, indeed, amounts to an agreement with a central thesis of Nazism, that there *is* a distinctively, German, or 'Indo-Germanic' spirit. Nazism appealed because it was an attempt to revive a religious feeling, very different from the Abrahamic or Platonic traditions dominant in the West, which was already present in the minds and hearts of Westerners. It appealed because it struck a lot of people as profoundly true, and because we are all too ready to mistake moral intransigence in the prosecution of a supposed 'duty' for the kind of moral courage that vindicates its cause. Borges may have been right to say that 'Nazism…is uninhabitable: men can only die for it, lie for it, kill and wound for it. No one, in the intimate depths of his being, can wish it to

triumph....*Hitler wants to be defeated*'.[12] But if he was right, we must be more than modern naturalism allows.

Scientific-industrialism vs. naturism

One response to nationalism or ethnocentrism must simply be to conclude, with Patterson, that 'it is just this underhanded assault on the universal culture which all humanists who sincerely believe in the unity of mankind and in the possibility of a just and free society must strongly deplore'.[13] The kind of 'relativism,' or romantic disaffection with the sins of bourgeois society, that elects to see 'soul' in a 'street culture of petty crime, drug addiction, paternal irresponsibility, whoring, pimping and superfly inanity'[14] is every bit as oppressive and patronising as the efforts of other Whites to contain 'primitives' and 'orientals' in a culture which is 'right for them'. 'It is all too easy for the reactionary White South African, or American, to say of the reservation Bantus or Indians, that it is wrong to interfere with their way of life since what might appear to be squalor and backwardness to us may be matters of great value to them'.[15] Rules of non-interference with other people's social orders are an understandable reaction against the kind of deracinating and abusive interference that sometimes, often, occurs, but I refuse to endorse the notion that diseased and superstitious peasants should go on killing animals by slow strangulation, mutilating their children and beating their wives forever, merely because it would be 'cultural imperialism' to think that they should stop. I certainly see no reason why I should take relativist criticism seriously: if it is out of place to condemn clitoridectomy and wife-beating (as being central elements of someone else's 'culture'), it is also out of place to condemn attempts to educate or police those who practise such customs (for those attempts are central elements of *our* culture): how could an officer of the British Raj *not* seek to prohibit suttee? And please don't tell me that Hindu widows volunteered to die.

The central thought of – broadly – humanistic culture, as it has emerged from our Hellenic and Hebraic past, is that human beings are not to be considered simply 'part of the landscape'. They are to be considered as free and rational agents capable of taking their place in the slowly forming 'Brotherhood of all Mankind', or (with fewer sexist overtones), the Commonwealth of Humankind. This ideal is threatened by romantic nationalism and social relativism, but also by the scientific naturalism in which some have hoped to find a defence against irrationalists like the Nazis and post-moderns. If we were simply creatures like the other animals, or like what we suppose the other animals to be, we could expect there to be many different subspecies, 'breeds'. We could expect to be governed by the self-same impulses, and adaptive patterns. Tracing how creatures of our kind will 'normally' behave, we will know both what behaviour patterns have worked till now, and what degree of effort it would take to make selected subjects behave

differently. Thinking of 'ourselves', or more especially of those in our power, like that, we would treat them, treat 'us', as we would any other half-domesticated beast. There is a certain paradox in the attempt to breed, domesticate and train our own conspecifics: are 'we' of another kind than they, that 'we' can see past present and immediate concerns to what might be? 'Have we found angels in the form of kings to govern men?'[16] But despots and their tame intellectuals have never found it very difficult to think that they are of another kind than those they rule, even when they simultaneously say that they are also only 'natural' beings.

As I pointed out in an earlier chapter, in any case, the merely biological concept of 'humankind' gives us no good reason to suppose that there is one single human nature. The human species is simply an historically identifiable set of interbreeding populations. Neither biochemically nor behaviourally are we of any radically other kind than other hominids, primates, mammals. Nor are we likely to be immune to those processes that cut other species down to size. Animal kinds differ in the extent to which they require a very particular environment to survive: on that spectrum we are much like rats or sparrows. But even generalists have limits, and even generalists form close attachments to the lands and companions that they know. Left to themselves small human groups would wander the land like any other tribes. If we allow that they might discover how to cultivate crops or domesticate animals (as presumably we must), they would by the same token learn to domesticate their weaker conspecifics (and so presumably they did). Speaking from within that naturalist perspective: we are the product, and the partial agents, of a millenial programme. That we are 'domesticated' animals is revealed in the astonishing variety of human types, and in our equally astonishing conformity. We have bred possessiveness, subservience, racism, sexism into ourselves, and may have made as many errors as other breeders (who are, after all, just us). The only hope for our species survival, as for any other bred species, is to try us out 'in nature', to set the forms of humankind in competition. And that, too, is a part of Nazi ideology. It is, I suppose, some comfort that the Nazis lost (and were therefore, by their standards, wrong), but it is not obviously true that a similar experiment could not succeed. Isn't that what social relativism amounts to?

By Nazi, or naturist, standards (and I remarked before that the Nazis were happy to use 'scientific' thought-forms when it suited them) all forms of humanism are a revolt against nature, and will pay as high an evolutionary price as miniature dogs that can only give birth by caesarian. Breeding creatures that depend so entirely on the body politic and on an ecologically unsustainable industry we breed a plague. Breeding creatures that depend on drugs and homicidal excitement, or that never heard 'any world where promises are kept, or one could weep because

another wept',[17] we breed slaves, without even the courage or good sense to acknowledge what we have done. Breeding creatures that do not care what happens to the world that sustains them, we must seek out the infection or the damaged gene, and eradicate it.

So what – in the face of a scientific naturalism that tends to erode it[18] – sustains the hope of a global, humanistic civilisation? Patterson's answer is to identify the other aspect of the scientific revolution, namely scientific industrialism, as what works ceaselessly against romantic naturism, nationalism, ethnic chauvinism.

> An industrial society cannot work if people do not change from traditional to more regulated rhythms of work; people must learn to get to work on time, whatever sacred views they may hold about the correct relationship between the rising of the sun and the rising of the human spirit; they must acquire greater literacy, however much such literacy undermines traditional cosmologies; they must acquire specialised skills, however satisfying the activities of the materially self-sufficient person; they must recognise the rights of women to greater independence outside the household economy, however dearly held the traditional sexist views on the matter; they must abandon traditional conceptions of ritual purity with respect to other groups if a modern transportation system is to work; they must accept the rules of bureaucratic structures; they must be willing to migrate from the regions of their birth; they must increasingly abandon familial favouritism in favour of generally accepted standards of competence; they must forgo the preservation of a large number of extended kin-ties; and they must accept the inevitable drift toward a more secular view of the world.[19]

And why should we wish industrialism to work? Obviously because it gives us – or the more fortunate among us – so much of what we want, or come to want.

I am certainly so far a man of my time and place that were I faced with a direct choice between industrialism and romantic naturism of the kind that issued in national socialism, I would choose industrialism and hope, unhopefully, that we would – somehow – avoid catastrophe. But I am less certain than Patterson that the great mass of humankind would choose industrialism on such terms, or that they definitely need to meet those terms. As I wrote back in the late 1970s: in a contest between Jubal and Tubal Cain my vote is with Tubal, but there is a brother that Kipling forgot.

> Jubal sang of the cliffs that bar
> and the peaks that none can crown,
> but Tubal clambered by jut and scar
> and there he planted a town.

But Jabal, 'the father of those who dwell in tents and those who keep cattle', can stand for an enterprise that does not seek to clutter every uncrowned peak, nor idly romanticise oppression.[20]

Industrialism, of course, only leads to a 'more secular' view of the world in the sense that it evacuates the world of sacred significance in order to make it available as material. It empties the world of its accumulated memories, but only to fill it up again with new ones. Industrialism, as Riesman remarks of its capitalist manifestations, is 'written into the landscape, so to speak: it (does) not need to be written into books'.[21] In this it is like any other social order: all inhabited landscapes embody a tribe's story. 'Group memories are supported by the stable features of the environment which becomes a spatial emblem of time.'[22] The difference is that an industrial landscape embodies the memory of destruction, obsolescence and, only occasionally, reformation. 'The practical necessities of change' are always to be invoked against 'impractical, even sentimental preservation', as *Time* magazine declared in 1972,[23] without troubling to explain why the goals served by change were any more significant than those already embodied in a loved landscape. As Aristotle pointed out long ago, a purely technical pursuit, that acknowledges no goal as final but only as a transition to some further, transitory state, is unending and inane.

The industrial landscape (which now includes the agricultural and residential landscape) allows no permanent or stable structure. By the same token, its present condition points inexorably towards a barren future. Rainforests are cut down to provide land for cattle ranches or smallholders, but the land that had sustained those forests is starved of nutrients, and does not endure: who then can replant the trees? The Great Plains of America are irrigated by water drawn up from the ground: but the aquifer is thereby drained, and the broken lands left barren, and contaminated with the chemicals that had kept them bearing for a little longer.[24] Reminded of these prospects those embedded in industrialism either expect themselves to move away, to diversify, to 'take the money and run', or place their trust in technological inventiveness always to evade consequences (as we also expect medicine to save us from our sins), or else of course simply endure, seeing no exit from the world they live. This is the menace that Heidegger saw, and reckoned National Socialism the remedy: in later life the only error he confessed was that he had mistaken a symptom of the self-same disease for the hoped-for cure. Heidegger, like Darré, attacked technology for dissolving ancient forms of being,[25] only to find that the Nazi elite only agreed as long as it suited them.

Patterson's praise of industrialism as a historical force that erodes ancient tyrannies, and releases human beings to be individuals, is partly convincing. It is certainly worth pointing out that people left the country for the town because, however hideous, the town was better. I share enough of Jefferson's idealised

memory, or project, of a world where every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid,[26] to think that a sound 'peasant economy', buttressed by decent customs, should be the stable heart of society. But the reality for most country folk was one of grinding labour, for no lasting advantage, in the service of landlords, priests and money lenders. It is the anonymous city, the ship of strangers, that has given us all a glimpse of an identity that transcends the narrowness of farm, castle, village, tribe and of a future that is not at the behest of others. 'City air sets a man free': a mediaeval German proverb cited by Tuan.[27] Not that this is an entirely 'modern' invention: on the contrary, it is the millenia of agrarian culture that seem anomalous. The deracinated strangers of an urban and industrial environment are rediscovering something of the life of hunter-gatherers, who never need to put up with people that they do not like, or stay in places they have already cropped. For hunter–gatherers the world and its resources, until we came along to confine them, were infinite (see Sahlins 1972). It was agrarians who experienced the need to cultivate and sustain their world, and to nestle into an appropriate and enduring status. The trouble is that whereas hunter–gatherers could indeed move on, and expect to find the land renewed behind them, we cannot.

One further gloss on the industrialist experiment – an experiment, remember, that we are trying out in a global context, without any serious experimental control: the need for women to take a place within the public, extra-familial society, does not necessarily – or even usually – make for a genuinely egalitarian society. A people that has been taught and encouraged not to think of women, just as such, as deserving respect, but instead to treat them as individuals seeking employment on just the same terms as males, requires women to believe and think as males, and so in the end to be alienated from their own bodies and the offspring that once we all desired: 'if only women could be more like men.' Industrialism offers just that hope: like the natural and built environment, our bodies, women's bodies, are to be rebuilt, 'rescued' from biological constraint. If we are trained to see the land and its inhabitants as commodities and industrial resources, trained to deny the existence of a 'sacred', how long can we continue to think human beings sacred, or their bodies as anything but just such a resource? Faced by that propaganda, and by the promises of genetic engineers, other feminists have begun to join hands with more consciously traditional moralists, to insist that women do indeed have different goals and interests that are not well served by a speciously 'egalitarian' industrialism. The risk of such a reaction is that it ends so often in endorsing all the old stereotypes of what is 'really womanly', and mistakenly attributes to all men what is no more, historically and biologically, than an adolescent phase. Grown-ups, unlike slaves

and children, accept responsibilities: any of us can be tempted to forget them, and are encouraged to do so by the image of a perpetually remodelled future.

Wink finds another name for this kind of industrialism: it is, exactly, Satan.[28]

Radical monotheism and the standing peoples

'The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself',[29] said Roosevelt *à propos* of the Dust Bowl crisis, and thereby echoed 'Chief Seattle's' warning. Native American religion, at least as it is now identified, emphasised the importance of the land we can never strictly 'possess'.[30] The trees of the land are 'the standing peoples in whom the winged ones built their lodges and reared their families',[31] owed respect as other nations in a single land that all together compose one nation under God: *e pluribus unum,* but with a wider plurality than the Founding Fathers usually remembered.

But in fact we did not need to hear the message from Native Americans, and the document attributed to Chief Seattle is a much later invention. Immigrants did not need to be surprised that the Native Americans could not 'own' the land. Jefferson thought so, too, even though he allowed 'private' occupancy and use. 'Nothing was given to man to waste or destroy', said Locke (1965), who was very far from endorsing the individualist industrialism that has laid waste to the land. The earth belongs in usufruct to the living, said Jefferson,[32] or rather is held in trust for the unborn. 'The land belongs to (God) and to (Him) we are only strangers and guests.'[33] One American tragedy is that incomers refused to see that Native Americans and incomers could share a vision. The Vanderbilt agrarians' recognition of the appalling injury done to Native Americans was of a piece with their rejection of industrialism.[34]

And what could that vision have been? 'The practical task of philosophy in its relation to individuals is to enable people to experience the world as a harmonious, divine whole, to rediscover their rootedness in the mysterious primeval forces of divine creativeness, and in such a way to help them to get rid of the depressing feeling of a total meaninglessness of life.'[35] Thus wrote the Polish naturalist philosopher, Galenchowski, in 1822. Polish romantic nationalism aimed to take pride not simply in Polish history and courage, but in the natural universe wherein it, and countless others, were embedded.[36]

Their nationalism was 'local', not 'imperial', but without giving any ground to social relativism.[37] Those post-industrialists who have lost all sense of being part of a living family and national tradition may seek to identify directly with the non-human wilderness. Hart hopes that American mobility may give his countrymen a chance to conceive themselves as a 'pilgrim people' on God's earth.[38] The image of the solitary adventurer, the hermit, is an important myth.[39] But it is obvious that few

of us could ever actually live like that, and that the image is indulged to sooth our guilt: at least someone could live like that, and as long as someone could the world can't be that far gone. Our actual attitude to serious dropouts, tramps, renouncers is not as friendly. We don't believe in them. It is understandable that people who aim to live 'in harmony with nature' usually now seek to establish tribes and families to sustain them through despair, boredom, industrial temptation. Few of us could survive, or wish to survive, as Aristotle's 'wild beasts or gods'. We seek instead a society of the like-minded.

But invented tribes, invented myths and rituals, rarely bind us long. The very point of a binding ritual, after all, is that it is already *there,* something to be tied into: what I have just invented will not hold me long – unless I have not really 'just invented' it. Such inventions are industrial in spirit, as much as the architect of Brasilia's insistence that city founding must be 'a deliberate act of possession, a gesture in the colonial tradition'.[40] So if we seek sustainable organic forms of community amongst the standing peoples perhaps we had best look back to the customs, tribes and nations where we grew. 'The Polish nation alone…has recognized that every nation is a fragment of the whole and must roll on its orbit and around the centre like the planets around theirs'.[41] But Brodzinski exaggerated Polish originality. Not all 'nationalists' are ethnocentrists, as Tuan seems to imply (though some certainly are).[42] Burke's nationalism was at least as open-hearted: it was not that British custom should control the world, but that each nation, civilisation, should find the seeds of companionable growth within itself, not despising our ancestors for their errors, nor our neighbours for being foreigners. The standing temptation of all nationalists is that, but it does not follow that we can escape it by identifying ourselves solely with global bureaucracy. According to Mazzini, different peoples are to be seen as different corps and divisions in the army of humanity.[43] By the same token we are all intermingled in 'the odyssey of evolution', the long return home.

What is all too easy for any national group to neglect is, along with openheartedness, openmindedness. What we need to remember is that our national spirit, however arch-angelic, is not God, not something that deserves our absolute devotion. 'The struggle in Israel', Niebuhr comments,[44] 'was between radical faith in the principle of being, and social faith with its reference to the principle of the society as center of value and as cause.' We need, within the nation, people that remain open to a transcendent vocation, who can be reminded of those people, creatures, things that have no standing in the nearby, closed-off, national universe.[45] That is, I remark in passing, the only final justification of a true university; which 'takes its place alongside church and state and other communities or institutions

without subordination to anyone of these. It is as directly responsible to the transcendence in the performance of its particular duties of study and teaching as they are in the administration of the laws or in their preaching and worship.'[46] It was, correspondingly, Heidegger's sin to subordinate the academy to the Führer as the pure expression of a national purpose, and the sin of far too many academics to provide the skills for a short-sighted and destructive 'agribusiness'. 'Located in a nation (a university) is not of the nation but of the universe; though it is part of a culture, it cannot but try to transcend the outlook of that culture.' I hope I need not remind you that this is very far from the strategy of 'deracinated intellectuals' all too fixed in their socio-economic class. Niebuhr's academics aim to root themselves in the eternal, but are supported in the endeavour by the culture that surrounds them.

What Niebuhr is expressing is the spirit of that Judaic faith that gave the Greek philosophers pause. How shall we, being a named and natural people, so live out our historically, environmentally grounded lives as to do worship only to the One beyond all idols of all tribes? Industrialism is as distinct from that enterprise as is romantic naturism.

> The moral consequence of faith in God is the universal love of all being in him....This is (faith's) requirement: that all beings, not only our friends but also our enemies, not only men but also animals and the inanimate, be met with reverence, for all are friends in the friendship of the one to whom we are reconciled in faith.[47]

It is that Judaic faith that issues more reliably in a conviction of the infinite worth of all those whom God has chosen from infinity, and that ceaselessly reminds us that there are real things, real values outside the merely social nexus. And by the same token it is that Judaic faith which should serve to remind us that oppression does not go unavenged. Those who will not grant the land her holidays, will find that they have lost her.[48] 'We can ravage the ecology, suppress the poor, murder prophets, adulterate the gospel, shake our fists defiantly at God and declare the world a mechanism and human beings machines. But the system of systems remains the ultimate arbiter, and we can no more secede from its jurisdiction than we can stop breathing air.'[49]

Notes

1. This paper was originally composed for a lecture series at Lancaster University, and was also delivered to the Philosophy Society at Bowling Green State University in the spring of 1989.
2. Bramwell 1985, p. 54. Darré, the topic of Bramwell's book, served as Hitler's Minister of Agriculture till his final fall from favour, in 1942, and was head of the SS Race and Settlement Office till 1938.

3. I. Dinesen, *Out of Africa,* cited in Lynch 1972, pp. 41, 126.
4. S. D. Porteus, *The Psychology of a Primitive People* (New York: Longmans Green, 1931), cited in Lynch 1960, p. 126; see also Strehlow 1947, p. 31, 'The whole countryside is (the Aranda's) living, age-old family tree.'
5. Pois 1986, p. 58.
6. E. Krieck 1936, cited in Pois 1986, p. 117.
7. Spengler 1934, p. 7.
8. Lynn White's thesis, adopted – no doubt – without any anti-Semitic intention, is one that is constantly reaffirmed in environmental circles: 'it's all the fault of *Genesis*!': see, for the contrary view, my *How to Think about the Earth* (London: Mowbrays, 1993).
9. Kersten 1956, pp. 115–17; see Pois 1986, p. 34.
10. I emphasise that there is no good reason to attribute such submissiveness to the Jewish Diaspora through the ages. Diaspora Jews were politically astute and forceful people: it is another paradox that Zionist rhetoric about the 'ghetto' mentality actually 'excuses' what the Nazis did to dehumanise their victims. See Biale 1986, pp. 118 ff.
11. Pois 1986, p. 132.
12. Borges 1964, p. 135.
13. Patterson 1977, p. 151.
14. Patterson 1977, p. 155.
15. Patterson 1977, p. 171.
16. T. Jefferson, cited in Mead 1963, p. 82 f.
17. W. H. Auden 'The Shield of Achilles' (Auden 1966), p. 295.
18. I do not intend to deny the real benefits, and the real glories of the scientific endeavour (itself a part of humanistic culture). But it is too easy to imagine that the methods and the results of 'science' are bound to be compatible with the moral and metaphysical ideals that have sustained the culture that gave science its start.
19. Patterson, 1977, p. 186.
20. See my *The Moral Status of Animals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 162).
21. Riesman 1955, p. 71.
22. Lynch 1972, p. 125.
23. Costonis 1976, p. 4.
24. See Hart 1984, p. 27.
25. Bramwell 1985, p. 173.
26. See Brown 1954, pp. 51 f. So also, of course, did Darré, see Bramwell 1985, pp. 147, 179.
27. Tuan 1974, p. 150.
28. Wink 1986, p. 28.
29. F. D. Roosevelt 1937: cited in Hart, 1984, p. 15. Darré found inspiration in Roosevelt's anti-erosion measures, see Bramwell 1985, p. 176.
30. Hart 1984, p. 42 ff.
31. Lee 1959, p. 1 after Black Elk.
32. T. Jefferson, *Writings V,* p. 116, see Brown, 1954, p. 12.

33. *Leviticus* 25.23; see Hart, 1984, p. 69 f.
34. Twelve Southerners 1977.
35. Galenchowski 1822, cited by Walicki 1982, p. 104.
36. Tuan 1974, p. 101.
37. Cf. Bramwell 1985, p. 130: 'the basic difference between Darré and Himmler was that Darré was a racial tribalist, and Himmler an imperialist with romantic racial overtones.'
38. Hart 1984, p. 66.
39. Note that ' "nomad" was a code word among the circle around Schultze-Naumberg for the international, cosmopolitan, rootless eastern European Jew' (Bramwell 1985, p. 51).
40. Tuan 1974, p. 171.
41. Brodzinski (pre-1848) cited in Walicki 1982, p. 74.
42. Tuan 1974, pp. 31 ff.
43. Walicki 1982, p. 76.
44. Niebuhr 1960, p. 41.
45. 'If one were to write that Jews have always been in the forefront of movements designed to liberate the poor and oppressed, that they have always taken up the cudgels on behalf of trade unionists, idealistic internationalists and victims of superstition, one would be saying, objectively, exactly what the *völkisch* writers of the 1920s were saying' (Bramwell 1985, p. 36).
46. Niebuhr 1960, p. 96.
47. Niebuhr 1960, p. 126.
48. Leviticus 26.14 ff.
49. Wink 1984, p. 115.

7 Good and bad ethology and the decent polis[1]

Kummer's question

> One of the basic questions society poses for biologists is: why does an individual put up with the time-consuming, frustrating and often harmful ado of group-life rather than live in unhindered, but perhaps dangerous and uninformed, solitude? Why does he direct his attention to the behaviour of the dominant males in his society, rather than to predators or food distribution; why does he groom and quarrel with group members rather than rest? The biologist's answer is that the gains must outweigh the costs, and that natural selection therefore produces individuals with social inclinations.[2]

Hans Kummer's question, and his answer, are hardly novel. Indeed they are likely to strike the uninitiated as banal.

> Why ever should individuals prefer to live with others of their kind, and devote their energy to maintaining good relations? Why don't they go off and live like Philoctetes '*aphilos, eremos, apolis, en zosin nekros*: without friends, deserted, without city, a corpse among the living?'[3]

Well, why ever should they? Isn't it obvious that individuals get more of what they want from friendly association than from solitary life? We, like other animals, are *zoa sunagelastika,* animals that herd together.[4] Those who care nothing for companionship must be far below or far above their fellows: beasts or gods.[5] Those who must feed, clothe and defend themselves die young, quite apart from any wishes they may have to cuddle, groom or debate with others. Those who have no need of others must have few needs, or vast abilities.

Kummer knows that individuals like us want company, that we actually want friends and companions, as well as wanting the assistance they can give us. 'Diodorus, Polybius and the Epicureans all envision a situation in which [gregariousness and self-interest] are supplementary rather than mutually exclusive.'[6] *Philallelia,* a liking for each other, is a fundamental motive.[7] The question is not, what motives do we have to stick together (as if many of us were ever likely not to), but what is it that has brought this state of things about? Why are we *zoa sunagelastika*? Why are there any such at all? If we did not like each other's company, and did not care, save instrumentally, what happened to another, could we not, each of us, make better use of time and the world's resources? We should not need to make allowances, to forgo advantages, to treat others of our kind any other way than as resources; we could have lived, in Epictetus's phrase, like 'flies among flies'.[8] After all, flies do, and the appearance that they give of congregating for their mutual aid and satisfaction is an illusion. All sexually reproducing animals, to be sure, must sometimes treat each other as something else than food, predator, obstacle or irrelevance. But why are there sexually reproducing kinds? And why should sexuality require the level of association we observe in ourselves and other warm-blooded animals? There could be temporary, or even long-lasting, sexual and familial bonds without any advance upon the Cyclopes, laying down the law for their wives and families.[9] In the war of each against all that scarce resources cause,[10] why did the dedicated egoists, or even the Cyclopes, not win long since? If they had, of course, there would be no-one to debate the question (so they can't have done) – but that is not an explanation (and may even be, if science fiction writers are to be believed, an error).

The social pleasures, of grooming, honour and conversation, do not fully explain our social habits. As Kummer implies, many of them actually divert our energy from other and more immediately useful activities. Grooming is not a sensible form of food-gathering, even if the occasional louse or salt-crystal turns up. It may relieve the one being groomed of parasites, but what does it do for the groomer, except give pleasure? The action is not even always payment in advance for being groomed: some animals take turns, but in other species grooming is the prerogative of the dominant animal, or else of the subdominant. It is not even linked, except in humans, to the sexual bond. It is clear that it gives pleasure, but the pleasure (and the minimal alleviation of parasitic irritation) it gives seems at first sight to contribute nothing much to the reproductive success of the animals concerned. To say that they do it simply because they enjoy it, is a true explanation: they have, we can reasonably suspect, no ulterior motive. But it is not a complete one: the question is, why do they enjoy it? It is not the immediate causation that concerns us, but the evolutionary function, and if possible the evolutionary history.[11] It is possible that

grooming, which takes subtly different forms in different species, also has many subtly different explanations, and evolutionary functions. But a possible general explanation is that through grooming individuals secure their own recognition as useful members of the group.[12] Because group members can recognise each other, and have friendly feelings towards each other, they can co-operate more effectively, and secure advantages for all that no one of them could manage on his/her own. That there are other forms of gregariousness, in which individuals do not recognise each other as individuals at all, is evidence that this is not the only way to a secure future. We might have been members of an anonymous herd, in which all that mattered was whether we were male or female, full-grown or adolescent or neonate. We might not have been *sunagelastika* at all

As creatures that do herd together, and recognise each other as individuals and also as embodied universals, we can be fairly confident that this way of living gave our ancestors a genuine reproductive advantage over their immediate rivals. If there were hominids that lived like solitary ogres, or like anonymous herd animals, they are long gone. But is this because we are 'socially conditioned', constrained by convention not to act like the ogres we would otherwise be? Or does it need no special force to 'make' us sociable, since that is now our nature? And were there ever solitary hominids in our ancestral stock, or must such a stock of solitaries have long preceded any remotely viable anthropoid? In brief: when did the putative shift from solitaries to sociable companions happen, and what is the mechanism? Do people stick together because they find each other of instrumental value, or because they have been coached to think they should, or conditioned to respond to each other as they would to 'real pleasures'? Or do they pasture and make lives together because they always would, given half a chance, have just those pleasures?

My strategy is to recount the anthropological hypotheses of our classical predecessors, and suggest how they may be confirmed or qualified by modern investigation of our non-human kindred. Such an ethologically informed classicism, I argue, can provide the groundwork for a better understanding of a properly 'political' community. The 'natural' forms of human association go far beyond the merely contractual 'societies of strangers' on which modern political theorists have concentrated. We live together as social and political mammals, able to recognise each other as individuals and form genuine friendships, clubs and colleges of the like-minded. The errors of our classical predecessors (the principal ones being their misreading of 'animal' nature and of male–female differences) can be avoided in a classically inspired, ethologically aware, politicism.

It is obvious that we now know far more about our ancestry, about other human cultures and about other animals, than did the Greeks. Their speculations

are not therefore valueless. Sometimes ancient and modern theories coincide: when Alexander[13] suggests that the group life of non-human primates evolved simply as a means of avoiding and resisting predators, he applies more generally the Epicurean theory that civil society was formed as a defence against wild beasts.[14] More often, perhaps, the ancient theory is founded not on serious observation of non- human animals, but on ideological needs: Hesiod's notorious dictum that beasts devour each other, living without *dike* (justice), which is the gift of Zeus to men.[15] We must not live 'like animals', but by a higher law; animals, to give us a proper foil, must be supposed to live as we ought not, but as we would if civil society failed.

> It will readily be granted that in a variety of absolutely obvious ways and in some no doubt less evident ones animals were used in early Greek thought as the vehicle for the expression of fundamental social, moral, religious and cosmological categories.[16]

Animals enter political philosophy not only as the concrete dogs, cats, pigs, horses and cattle with whom we share our lives, and the equally concrete wolves, lions and bears that once we feared, but also as symbols of such forms of life as we free, adult, male members of society may wish to exclude, idealise or tame. It is through our fleshly kinship with the animals that we may grow like wolves, faithless, treacherous and hurtful, or like lions, or foxes.[17] Bad men, so Aristotle said,[18] are worse than any beasts, but that is only because they choose their bestiality: what they choose is the life beasts live without realising it. Civil, civilised existence rescues us from falling prey to real animals, and our own 'animal nature'. Epictetus, and others, held that our true human nature, that by which we could claim kinship with the gods, with God, was best revealed by distance from the 'animal'. Animals did not need to understand or discriminate: men are the spectators and interpreters.[19] Others held that it was only custom, *nomos,* that protected us; by nature we would be what the beasts are. Some, like Plato's Callicles, preferred what they believed to be the natural life, the perpetual demand for more and better pleasures. Others, like Plutarch,[20] wondered if it was custom that perverted natural virtue, the calm recognition of necessity. Attitudes varied, but there was considerable agreement about the way that non-humans lived, the way we would have lived, or might live still, if civilisation failed us.

> Dio Chrysostomus records Diogenes' ironic remark on the subject of Oedipus: 'Oedipus bewails the fact that he is father and brother to his children

> and husband and son to his wife but that is something that neither cocks or dogs or birds complain about', for among those creatures there are no such things as brothers, fathers, husbands, sons or wives. Like isolated pieces in a game of draughts they live without rules, knowing neither difference nor equality, in the confusion of anomia.[21]

As Vernant points out, the draughts game Aristotle and Diogenes had in mind – though with opposite evaluations – was probably one called *polis* (that is, City). In speaking as he does, Diogenes stood in a long tradition. Till Prometheus took a hand our ancestors 'had eyes but saw to no purpose, heard but took no heed: like dream-shapes they lived their lives in utter confusion'.[22] It was 'a mixed up and bestial existence' that some god saved us from, giving us understanding, language, agriculture, shelter, sea voyages and trade and augury.[23] Before that day our ancestors lived, as the further barbarians do now, by sense, and not intelligence.[24] If it were a Golden Age, when death and senility were unknown, it was only because no-one lived to be senile, and no-one knew what death was.[25] Hephaistos and Athena established us in houses, where before we had lived like beasts, wandering the hills like deer, in tattered clothes.[26] Humans alone have households; others live promiscuously.[27] It is because we have acquired a sense of civil distinctions, shame, respect, that we can both maintain a civil peace among ourselves, and be masters of wild nature. Alternatively, by Diogenes' transvaluation of the coinage, it is because we make unreal distinctions, and live by customary rules, that we live 'unnatural' lives. Diogenes' abandonment of civil life was perhaps only partial: he lived 'a dog's life'[28] – but other and more fearful outlaws lived as wolves (consider the cannibals of Zeus Lykaios) or lived as the Greeks thought wolves lived.

Some god gave understanding, language, agriculture, sea-faring, trade and augury, and so brought our ancestors' scattered, confused and bestial existence to an end. Previously, they had been at the mercy of the wild beasts,[29] beings whose way it is to prevail over each other by violence. Their union, of the weak against the strong, brought us the art of politics, of which warfare is a part.[30] Till then the stronger killed and ate the weaker: but the weak banded together under an animal-sign,[31] and now resolve their differences by law.[32] The war with beasts (and with human outlaws who make beasts of themselves) is fundamental to human civil order.[33] Without law and order we should all be savages, undiscriminating in our casual affections, violent in our revenges, and philistine in our attitude to art and science alike. Because they thought that we would be like that without the constant presence of the law, generations of Europeans have convinced themselves that non-Europeans actually were like that. So Samuel Johnson: 'Pity is not natural to man. Children are always cruel. Savages are always cruel. Pity is acquired and

improved by the cultivation of reason.'[34] Again, replying to one who 'expatiated on the happiness of the savage life':

> Do not allow yourself to be imposed upon by such a gross absurdity. It is sad stuff; it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as well exclaim – Here am I with this cow and this grass; what being can enjoy greater felicity?[35] Besides, sir, a savage man and a savage woman meet by chance; and when the man sees another woman that pleases him better, he will leave the first.[36]

> Gross men prefer animal pleasures. So there are men who have preferred living among savages. Now what a wretch must he be, who is content with such conversation as can be had among savages! You may remember an officer…who had served in America told us of a woman whom they were obliged to bind, in order to get back from savage life. (Boswell: 'She must have been an animal, a beast'). Sir, she was a speaking cat.[37]

This dangerous and dreadful nonsense, which treats those of another history and culture as unthinking animals, has its own mirror image: some, like Cynics, have always been ready to see the 'natural' life as good, 'free and unrestrained amid the rude magnificence of nature' (the gentleman whom Johnson mocked as brutish), and identified that with the actual life of particular foreign tribes. Johnson was probably right to insist that, e.g. the Otaheite are 'not in a state of pure nature; for it is plain they broke off from some other people'.[38] Tribes found wandering in the forests of the Phillipines (as 'the Gentle Tasaday'[39]) are only 'primitive survivors from the dawn of humanity' in the eyes of credulous journalists. Archaic Greek thought gives us as good, and as bad, a model for the thought and habits of our first human ancestors. Where Johnson thought that the Otaheite must simply have forgotten all law and culture, we are readier to agree that they had remodelled them, that there are no tribes of savages as Johnson understood the term. But we retain something of the older view: those who behave like animals, in popular parlance and the law courts, are those who have forgotten the restraints of law and culture, and loosed their blind, brute passions. The truth is, of course, that animal passions are mild by comparison, and the greatest crimes the product of excess, not natural needs.[40] Bad men are worse than beasts.

The seeds of morality

The view that non-human animals are lawless and undiscriminating is not the only one that influences our moral and political thought. As I have already hinted, the 'seeds of morality' may be found among the animals.[41] Love of offspring is the

norm.[42] Even among *theria* (by which is usually meant carnivorous wild beasts) mothers may die for their young.[43] Pigs, as I remarked earlier, fight harder (at least according to Xenophon) for their young than for their own survival.[44] There is more concern for the young the more intelligent the species,[45] and while some humans resemble *theria,* it is also the case that some animals use their offspring in a more 'politic' fashion.[46]

Whereas on the first view it is civilised men alone that are ever truly domesticated, brought to live in households, on this second account there is a difference of nature between the 'tame' and the 'wild', the tame (of course) being better.[47] Elephants are most easily tamed because they are intelligent.[48] Remember that you are tame animals,[49] neither wild beasts nor domesticated cattle.

> Well, when do we act like sheep? When we act for the sake of the belly, or of our sex-organs, or at random, or in a filthy fashion, or without due consideration. When we act pugnaciously, and injuriously, and angrily, and rudely, to what level have we degenerated? To the level of the wild beasts.[50]

Other animals than ourselves are 'tame' or gentle. Bees, perhaps, have been the preferred example for socially minded philosophers.[51] But other sociable kinds exist that preserve some semblance of justice, fidelity, courage and chastity.[52] Animals can develop friendly associations,[53] even if these are, strictly, at the level of friendships for pleasure or utility.[54] Courage and gentleness go together in those animals that are not beasts.[55] Though only humans have households, according to one line of thought, the houses that they build were first constructed in imitation of birds' nests,[56] or beehives.

The structure of society among the sociable animals, *zoa sunagelastika,* was generally perceived – and still is popularly perceived – to be hierarchical. Human groups and animal assemblies alike have the strongest and boldest lording it over the rest,[57] but those lordly individuals do not actually kill and eat their companions, as genuine *theria* might. Sociable animals, like our nomadic ancestors, were *volgivagi* (wanderers in crowds), not *solivagi* (solitary wanderers), as Rousseau supposed, and Diodorus.[58] Even if rule belongs by nature to the strong,[59] those rulers were not invariably conceived as predators, partly because even the strongest could be expected some day to weaken. There is a difference between the style of dominants from different kinds, and even within one kind: some are more bullying and violent; others likelier to have their way through a kind of moral dominance, or through hedonic attachments nurtured through grooming and play.

We are in a position to realise that some observations of social, apparently hierarchical, animals were mistaken. The dominant males whom folk ethology has

conditioned us to notice, and to equate with our human lords, are not always (or even often) genuine masters of all they survey. Their 'dominance' is simply their acknowledged place at the head of the queue, and only has a direct effect on other males.[60] Dominance within a social group is much the same as territorial right between scattered individuals: dominants carry their territory around with them. This does not mean that they are strictly leaders, capable of giving instructions even by example. The leaders and innovators of a group are often, as I pointed out in an earlier chapter, the young. Some dominants seem to show something like a sense of responsibility for their fellows; others are content to be first in line, and interfere with their fellows' doings only if there is a threat to their own position. The Old Man, whom we think of as the first ruler of the first human tribes,[61] was probably not the strongest, and was not doing just the same thing as the alpha-male of a baboon troupe, or herd of wild cattle.

As I have observed in an earlier chapter, our ordinary perception of the social animals as living in a male-dominated, hierarchical society is ill-founded. It would be truer to say that the centre of a mammalian group is almost always the lineage of mothers and daughters, that most males are pushed outwards to the fringes of the group and only a few make their way back as favoured friends, or pets. It is to the advantage of displaced males, of course, to form alliances, whether with a view to displacing the existing dominants in their original or in some other tribe, or simply to survive in a dangerous world. It may well be right to say that certain forms of human (and hominid) groupings came into being to resist wild beasts – including of course the young males of other hominid groups, out to secure a new home.

The particular mechanism that most of the higher social mammals have adopted is a network of personal relationships founded on individual recognition.[62] We have not lived either as solitary, brutish units, or as members of an anonymous collective, since long before we were human. Like other primates we recognise our friends, hold grudges against those who cheat, try not to carry feuds and family quarrels to the bitter, fatal end, defer to established dominants (but do not necessarily obey them) and care for our young. In two respects we have – it seems – devised a novel strategy. First, we rely more than any cognate groups on sharing.[63] Even the unfortunate Ik (who do not reveal what people are 'really' like, but what depths they can be driven to by poverty and oppression) are duty-bound to share their kill with their fellows – if their fellows catch them with the kill (Turnbull 1973). Gift-giving – with the unexpressed proviso that equivalent or greater gifts be given back some day – lies at the basis of economic exchanges and of the *polis,* which survives by *metadosis* (giving back).[64] Those who have more to give acquire the greater glory, and impose the greater obligation on their recipients. The Big Man, the one with a lot to dispose of, is a more significant figure than the Old Man! Such

mutual giving can occur only when most have something to give: which is why private property – so called – is valued. We need it to be able to share it.[65]

Our second innovation, so it seemed to Democritus, is that whereas it is normal enough for parents to care for their offspring (and the greater the intelligence, the longer is that period of parental care), humans alone require that children care for their parents.[66] The Greeks, perhaps, were unduly conscious of this law simply because Greek patriarchs were fairly hard to love: the 'natural life', notoriously, was often understood to carry with it the right to beat the old man up.[67] But even this innovation builds upon the mammalian norm: one's allies and protectors in the past have earned one's gratitude, and all associated pleasurable feelings. *Syntrophia* (familiarity) and *synetheia* (shared habits) influence animals.[68] In fact the apparent innovation may be simply a failure on our part to see that loving one's parents is not different in kind from loving one's peers: such general associations are for most mammals of more importance than particular sexual bonds.[69] We make filial love a duty, but loyalty to friends and benefactors is the real duty, and as binding on other mammals.

Both these apparent innovations, then, turn on our enhanced capacity to remember favours past, and consider alliances to come. Human sociality need not rest upon repression of 'animal impulse', but on the management of social impulses and forms that are ingrained in the higher mammals, as much as in the social insects (though the latter forms are subtly, and not so subtly, different). This picture of social evolution, and of the structures that now assist us to an uneasy civil peace, can be detected even in those thinkers who emphasise the role of rational law as an antidote to animal passions of greed or anger (self-aggrandisement and destruction). Hobbes's imagined wild men, in a notional state of nature, are not consistent solitaries: they live in associations bound by the 'natural lusts and affections', of which Hobbes thought less harshly than did Johnson. Hardly anyone could ever seriously have thought that human beings were ever rootless solitaries, strangers who must make external, heavily policed agreements if they sought 'friends' or allies. Modern society, or modern society as seen by the most influential political theorists, may be, as MacIntyre suggests,[70] a 'society of strangers', but that is not where we started.

Friends and strangers

Modern political theory has laid enormous stress on abstract argument, and has generally embodied the covert intention of justifying the existence and propriety of government and nation-states. The aim has been to show that all of us rational beings have good reason to accept something like state government, with its monopoly of lawful violence, its claim to own as much of any individuals' property

as it cares to take, and its insistence that there is no superior authority within its national territory. A decent state, of course, can still be distinguished from indecent counterparts, but most respectable political thinkers – and this includes Robert Nozick – think that life without state governments will indeed be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. It is easy enough to point to regions of the world where state government has collapsed, and suggest that the ensuing chaos is worse than all but the most abominably brutal of regimes. None but the dangerously naive can welcome rebellion, even if the existing rulers are little more than brigands. Even if someone is driving rather badly it is usually folly for a passenger to try and wrench the steering wheel away (as I argued in an earlier chapter).

So the norm consciously or unconsciously invoked is of a government apparatus that serves to repress the lawlessness and self-seeking of individuals and groups that share no common perception of their life together, that do not much like each other, and are only rational enough to know that they all stand to gain from the maintenance of the King's Peace, even if they lose the occasional advantage. The arguments, correspondingly, employed to justify states in general, or one particular state form (liberal democratic, socialist, managerial or fascist) are ones that any rational being is supposed to find convincing, whatever her personal ideals, cultural history or styles of friendship. This is MacIntyre's society of strangers: an association of people in a particular region, to avoid mutual injustice and for the sake of economic exchange. We are not to violate each other's vital interests, and to keep our bargains. To police each other, and to spare ourselves temptation, we create (or pretend that we have indeed created) an impartial mechanism of law enforcement that will take no sides in questions of 'personal ideal'. How much we allow, or expect, this government to do by way of regulating inequalities of birth or economic luck or talent, how much insurance we demand against personal disaster, how far we allow individuals to take their personal ideals – all these questions embody real difficulties that different theorists attempt to solve in radically incompatible ways, which does itself suggest that more, in practice, is at stake than abstract argument. There is no fully satisfactory argument of a kind that anyone of any background or belief would have to accept, to settle the differences between Rawlsian liberalism, Nozickian minimalism, Islamic fundamentalism, Soviet socialism, Swedish socialism, and Burkean historical pluralism-cum-casual-sabotage (which is my not entirely unserious label for the British experiment). There is not, and cannot be a government that does and is only what every rational being would agree that it should do. If some theorists have thought otherwise, it is only because they have a parochial concept of what rational beings are like.

My brief description of the society of strangers may have sounded a little strained, or else a little familiar. It is in fact Aristotle's account of what a *polis* is,

exactly, not.[71] If there is to be a *polis,* then there must indeed be the possibility of economic exchange, must be some apparatus to settle the rights and wrongs of property and trade, but that alone does not constitute a political community, which is, instead, an association for the sake of living well, to gain a complete and self-sufficient life for households and clans. Householders may perhaps have come together to exchange their special products and to defend themselves against wild beasts (human and otherwise), as Plato had suggested,[72] but they became a *polis* when they began to share a common concept of how to live well, a concept embodied in brotherhoods, religious rituals, new occupations.[73] A *polis* is an association supported by *philiai,* friendships, among those who can be friends. Those who contribute most to the noble acts which are the *raison d'être* of the *polis* have the greatest share in that *polis.*[74] When their common purpose is lost, or can no longer have any influence in the world, that *polis* is dead, even if the same people remain in the same region and still call themselves by some ancient name. Such an association does not exist to repress lawless impulse (lest worse befall), but to support the citizens in their historical endeavour. Different *poleis* will have different styles and histories, and none will think themselves required to do only what any *polis* should.

The *polis,* as a social form, is more like a network of political clubs and fraternities, self-perceived as having a common origin, a common blessing, than like the Hobbesian Leviathan, in its liberal or its totalitarian avatar. Genuinely national states, founded on the conviction of a shared history, shared attitudes, common friends and families, and a distant goal, have often behaved so badly to their neighbours and to any aliens resident in their midst, that it is understandable that liberal theorists especially should distrust the form. But a *polis* need not be national at all: it is founded on the acknowledgement that people get on with those they have lived with, those whose habits they understand and share, that virtues of loyalty, fidelity, courage and sobriety exercised in the service of an ideal community life, are what give meaning to the lives of our talkative and occasionally generous species. Some *poleis* at any rate may gain enjoyment and delight precisely from the range of visitors and resident aliens, who bring their own perspectives to a social life they have agreed to admire and support. Such political communities are not apparatuses of repression but arenas within which the associated groups of friends, fellow workers, coreligionists can work towards a shared ideal, while still acknowledging that other, different *poleis* live across the way.

That last factor is, of course, the rub. Those who have one ideal, one way of life, will very often have a counter-ideal, a picture of that way which stands most at variance with their chosen life. Such aliens are dangerous in practice, and offensive in principle – they are the wild beasts and barbarians and natural slaves of folk ethology. Those who are doing something quite disgusting just across the way

can hardly be trusted not to come and do it here (especially if they think We are 'a quite impossible They'![75]). This is why abstract law seems so attractive: rather than be at the mercy of alien missionaries and their attendant gunboats we will all agree (and establish Leviathan to keep us to the mark) to allow each other to do disgusting things as long as we stay out of each other's way. The two difficulties about this programme are as follows: first, that it seems impossible to carry out in practice, simply because disgusting things are indeed being done both here and elsewhere (and how can we ignore that?[76]); second, that it identifies the greatest menace to civil peace and plenty not in our 'animal nature' but in our human nature. Anger and greed and ignorance (which can at a pinch be identified with merely 'animal' impulses) may be the engines that drive our personal lives astray, but no-one goes to war to fill his belly, or in a fit of bad temper. The more bestial the crime, the greater it is,[77] perhaps, but not even wild beasts behave in as 'bestial' a fashion as some humans, and though we may be at war with them (as Isocrates and others have claimed), they have no strategic plans about us. We are warring and contentious animals not because we are much like other animals, but because we are rather unlike them. Chimpanzee groups may battle it out with neighbouring groups, but not because they think their neighbours are immoral, and not with any intention of leaving no alien to tell the tale. Individual chimpanzees may even be cannibals and infant killers, but it is not clear that they are afflicted with any consciousness of sin, or intend some symbolic meaning to their acts. The bestialities that Aristotle mentions – eating dirt, or human embryos[78] – are not likely to be simple responses to a vitamin-deficient diet, or a lack of culinary discrimination: they are cultural and symbolic acts as clearly as Ezekiel's, even if their meanings are such as we abhor. 'In man and other primates', as von Cranach remarks, 'a movement is never just a movement. At least partly its identity emerges from its meaning'.[79]

Political peace is not to be obtained by a struggle with our supposedly animal or primitive nature, as if our problem lay with uncultured emotions of greed or anger. Nor can it, in practice, be obtained by the sort of abstract law that simply denies the ideals of those involved. What we regard as abstract and impartial justice, all too often, turns out to be an ideological subterfuge, a way of denying that our victims' beliefs and interests have any rational weight. Aboriginal or Amerindian interest in the land, embodying their cultural ideals, their sense of unity with the natural order, is automatically discounted: it becomes one special plea to be overturned in the interest of 'the general good'. There are more of 'us' than of them, and 'our' ideals and priorities are so obviously 'rational' anyway that no-one but an eccentric or a savage could prefer another way. The pretence of abstract justice, being the application of rules that all rational beings would agree to see enforced, can hardly be distinguished by its victims from complacent tyranny.

The two main ways in which our species has sought to deal with inter-tribal, ideological conflict are war and custom. 'Law' may sometimes be war under another name (the imposition of one ideology upon an alien other), and sometimes the medley of rights, traditions and privileges that have grown up through the mutual accommodation of people who like to live together. Common or customary law may have the edge over statute and military dictat. The *polis* was a club or set of clubs, a structure in which members of a typical male cohort could arrange their lives, and keep the abiding lineage of mothers and daughters under some control. Neither war nor statute law was really what kept civil peace, any more than it is now: a people who are kept in line only by fear of the magistrate are not at peace (as Hobbes observed). It was the network of shared (not universally shared) experience, common friends, and phratry acquaintances, a public ritual of prayer and expectation,[80] the chance to publish grievances and unload ill-luck upon a chosen scapegoat.[81] It was not abstract law of any rationally exact kind that kept the peace, but customs closely analogous to (and possibly homologous with) animal rituals. Our own historical development allows us other options: we do not need, for example, to separate the sexes so oppressively, though we should perhaps not pretend too dogmatically that any human individual, of whatever age or sex or station, is interchangeable with any other. Our customs differ (for the better, to be sure), but are ill-founded on mere individualism, which would in the end return us to Diodorus's fantasies.

Individual liberties and life chances, within our political community (in so far as we have one) are founded on historical rights and privileges, not on abstract 'Rights of Man'. It is similarly on such irrational accommodations, historical contrivances, bizarre displacement activities and subtly changing customs that we may best rely in international matters. Instead of believing that there is one way only, one rational life, that ought to control and modify our animal or irrational impulses, we might more profitably abandon that ancient error. We are not abstract intellects weirdly conjoined with merely bestial bodies, but social and political mammals, with more resources than either war or statute law can offer. The true and practical cosmopolitan, citizen of the world, knows that she is also and ineradicably a citizen of her own *polis,* just as she is that latter by being a spouse, rate-payer, businessman, churchgoer, baby sitter, hobbyist, amateur tennis player and friend of friends. The decent *polis* is one in which we can be decent animals, and recognise the virtue of most other kinds, without indulging in the ancient fault of imagining counter-ideals too obviously realised in the citizens next door

Notes

1. A. Loizou and H. Lesser (eds) *Polis and Politics: Essays in Greek Moral and Political Philosophy* (Aldershot & Brookfield, Vermont: Gower Press, 1991), pp. 12–22.
2. Kummer 1979, p. 381.
3. Sophocles *Philoctetes* 1018; Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981, p. 180.

4. Plato *Laws,* 680d
5. Aristotle *Politics,* 1.1253a2 ff.
6. Cole 1967, p. 84.
7. Tzetzes: Cole 1967, p. 36; Democritos B158 '*he prose allelous horme,*' Cole 1967, p. 58.
8. Epictetus *Discourses,* 1.23.6.
9. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 10.1180a27 ff.
10. see Aristotle *Historia Animalium,* 9.608b30 ff.; *Eudemian Ethics,* 7.1235a19.
11. Hinde 1982, p. 21.
12. Kummer 1979, pp. 389 ff.
13. Alexander 1974, pp. 325–83.
14. Porphyry *On Abstinence,* 1.10 f., after Hermarchus; Cole 1967, pp. 71 f.
15. Hesiod *Works and Days,* 275 ff.; see Dover 1974, p. 75.
16. Lloyd 1983, p. 12.
17. Epictetus *Discourses,* 1.3.7 ff.
18. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 7.1150a3.
19. Epictetus *Discourses,* 1.6.18 ff.
20. Plutarch *Gryllus,* 987b.
21. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981, pp. 118–123. The Vatican, incidentally, has argued that it is this expectable confusion of roles that is the strongest argument against the cloning of human beings.
22. Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound,* 442 ff.
23. Euripides *Suppliants,* 201 ff. (Theseus speaks).
24. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 7.1149a9.
25. Tzetzes: Cole 1967, p. 10.
26. *Homeric Hymns,* 10; Theognis 55–6; Ostwald 1969, p. 30.
27. Aristotle *Eudemian Ethics,* 7.1242a23.
28. Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Philosophers,* 6.60.
29. Dicaearchus fr.67: Cicero *De Officiis,* 2.5.
30. Plato *Protagoras,* 322b.
31. Diodorus (1933) 1.90.1.
32. Ps.Lysias 2.18 f.; Guthrie 1969, p. 74.
33. Cole 1967, p. 124.
34. Boswell 1953, p. 309 (20 July 1763).
35. Boswell 1953, p. 521 (21 April 1773).
36. Boswell 1953, p. 474 (31 March 1772).
37. Boswell 1953, p. 912 (7 April 1778).
38. Boswell 1953, p. 757 (29 April 1776).
39. Nance 1986: now suspected to be a hoax engineered by the Marcos regime.
40. Aristotle *Politics,* 2.1267a13.
41. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 6.1144a8; *Historia Animalium,* 8.588a18 f., 608a1 ff.
42. Aristotle *Eudemian Ethics,* 7.1241b3.
43. Aristotle *Eudemian Ethics,* 7.1235a34.
44. Xenophon *Cynegetika,* 10.23.
45. Aristotle *De Generatione Animalium,* 3.753a8 ff.
46. Aristotle *Historia Animalium,* 8.589a1 f.
47. Aristotle *Politics,* 1.1254b11.
48. Aristotle *Historia Animalium,* 9.630b18 ff.
49. Epictetus *Discourses,* 2.10.4.
50. Epictetus *Discourses,* 2.9.2.

51. see Aristotle *De Generatione Animalium,* 3.759a8 ff.
52. Porphyry *On Abstinence,* 3.11; Plutarch *Gryllus,* 978b *et al.*
53. Xenophon *Cyropaidia,* 2.1.28, *Memorabilia,* 2.3.4; Aristotle *Historia Animalium,* 9.611a7 ff., 629b10; *Nicomachean Ethics,* 8.1155a16 ff.
54. Aristotle *Eudemian Ethics,* 7.1236b7 ff.
55. Aristotle *Politics,* 8.1338b7 ff.
56. Democritus B154: Cole 1967, pp. 32, 57.
57. Polybius 6.6.5f: Cole 1967, p. 83.
58. Diodorus (1933) 1.69: Cole 1967, p. 84.
59. Democritus B267.
60. There are also dominant females: in some species males generally dominate even dominant females; in others, they don't.
61. Plato *Laws,* 680b.
62. Kummer 1979, p. 385.
63. Burton Jones suggests (in a paper in Schubert and Masters (1991)) that the practice has its origin in tolerated theft rather than in reciprocal altruism between close kin!
64. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 5.1133a2; see Burkert 1979, pp. 52 f.
65. Aristotle *Politics,* 2.1263a25 f.; see Sahlins 1972.
66. Democritus B278.
67. Aristophanes *Clouds,* 1427 ff.; see Slater 1968.
68. Cole 1967, pp. 87 ff.
69. Kummer 1979, p. 382.
70. MacIntyre 1981; see 'Morals, Moore and MacIntyre', *Inquiry,* 26. 1984, pp. 425–45.
71. Aristotle *Politics,* 3.1280a31 ff.
72. Plato *Protagoras,* 322b; *Laws,* 680b.
73. Aristotle *Politics,* 3.1280b17 ff.
74. Aristotle *Politics,* 3.1281a4 ff.
75. Rudyard Kipling 1927, 'We and They', p. 710.
76. Those who think of themselves as decent liberals actually find it hardest to ignore: liberals can tolerate anything – except the intolerable.
77. Aristotle *Rhetoric,* 1.1375a6.
78. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 7.1148b20 ff.
79. von Cranach 1979, pp. 423–8; see my *The Mysteries of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 5 ff. It is accordingly possible that the cannibalistic chimpanzees do mean something by their actions: we simply don't know what.
80. see Burkert 1979, p. 36 ff. on the relation of 'animal' ritual to human.
81. see Vernant and Vidal-Naquet 1981, p. 105 ff. on ostracism.

8 Apes and the idea of kindred[1]

How were the apes demoted?

There was serious debate in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as to the precise limits of humankind. Monboddo, in particular, concluded that such apes as the orang-utan and chimpanzee (counted together as the Ouran Outang) were of our kind, a notion satirised by Thomas Love Peacock in *Melincourt* in the person of Sir Oran Haut-ton, a parliamentary candidate for the rotten borough of Onevote.[2]

> They are exactly of the human form, walking erect, not upon all-four....They use sticks for weapons; they live in society; they make huts of branches of trees, and they carry off negro girls, whom they make slaves of and use both for work and pleasure....But though from the particulars mentioned it appears certain that they are of our species, and though they have made some progress in the arts of life, they have not come to the lengths of language.[3]

Monboddo was gravely misinformed in some respects, and engagingly open in his judgement that our species nature was shown chiefly in war, rape and domination rather than, as tradition said, in the use of language. He guessed right, though perhaps for not entirely happy reasons, that 'if ever men were in that state which [he] call[ed] natural, it must have been in such a country and climate as Africa'.[4] Maybe he guessed wrong about our species nature. His inclusion of apes within 'our kind' is matched by those of his contemporaries who excluded Hottentots (like Voltaire[5]). Those who insisted, with J.G. Herder, that 'neither the *Pongo* [probably the chimpanzee] nor the *Longimanus* [the gibbon] is your brother, but truly the American [that is, the Amerindian!] and the Negro are',[6] now occupy the scientific and the ethical high ground. Any attempt to re-open the question is bound to seem offensive, especially if it is conjoined with the somewhat salacious details enjoyed by earlier anthropologists and explorers. I share with liberal critics

a suspicion that supposedly 'objective' examinations of, say, the brains of 'Australids' (that is, native Australians), orang-utans and 'Europids' are profoundly racist in their motivation and execution.[7] But there really are important questions here. The story of the exclusion of such apes from 'our' kind requires an examination of the relations between folk taxonomy (which is strongly evaluative) and scientific taxonomy (by which, as I pointed out before, biological taxa are defined genealogically). What follows is a beginning.

Species natures and the nature of species

Either we are simply natural products of evolutionary processes or we are not. If we are, then any objective judge would be likely to count us together with the other apes (just as we think ants or dolphins or finches are of single kinds even though there may be many (strict) species of ant, finch or dolphin). This is not to say that all such kinds display a single nature. Chimpanzees and pygmy chimpanzees and gorillas and orangutans and humans are different in many ways. But it does not follow that they are not of the same biological kind. One of the points on which philosophers have yet to agree with biologists is that there *are* no natural biological kinds in the sense once intended. 'Natural kinds', so-called, are sets of creatures with a shared, distinctive nature, but biological taxa, including species, are not so defined (see Sober 1980). Even if all members of such a taxon happen to have shared, distinctive properties that is not why they are its members. Cows are not mammals because they feed their young on milk; bovine mothers feed their young on milk (unless prevented) because they are mammals. Being a mammal is being genealogically linked with a complex individual, the order Mammalia, such that its members are more closely related to each other than to members of any other order. This is not to say that they more closely resemble each other. The order's members, or those now judged to have been its members long ago, were not always more closely related to present-day mammals than to their non-mammalian contemporaries. Even now, there may be mammals that *look* more like non-mammals than they look like any other existing mammals. There might even be mammals whose parturient females do not secrete milk, just as there might be birds without wings or feathers. They are not therefore 'imperfect mammals', though such phrases are not wholly unhelpful. When Aristotle identified seals, for example, as 'deformed quadrupeds', he was partly right – though any implication that seals are therefore not what they should be must be resisted. Whereas philosophers still tend to believe that there are 'typical' members of a taxon, and to be as eager as Aristotle was to identify defect or anomaly, modern biologists think that cheetahs are as obviously cats, Down's syndrome children as obviously human, as any 'type-specimen'. Either might have *been* the type-specimen of the relevant taxon, because the biological type of a taxon is simply the specimen (however unusual it eventually turns out to be) that serves as the referential tie for that particular taxon.

Biological taxa are individuals (Hull 1974b). That may seem thoroughly mistaken: surely taxa are sets of individuals who more or less 'resemble' each other? So Quine: a biological kind is the set of all things 'to which [the paradigm] *a* is more similar than *a* is to [the foil] *b*'.[8] There may be such sets, but they are not the same as taxa. *Drosophila pseudoobscura* and *Drosophila persimilis* are sibling species, indistinguishable to naive observers, but certainly distinct (because their members do not successfully breed together). If one such species vanished from the world, but there later appeared creatures indistinguishable even to an expert eye (but having a different ancestry) the older taxon would not have reappeared. The dodo, once extinct, is gone forever, because 'dodos' are not just those creatures that look more or less like the pictures, nor even those creatures whose DNA looks more or less like that of the old birds (if we could discover this). There is no need for members of a given taxon to resemble each other more than any of them do members of another taxon. There is no need even for them to share any particular genes which are not shared with creatures of another kind. So being a member of that taxon is not a matter of instantiating any non-historical property, whether obvious or hidden away. The taxon is an individual, and ordinary individuals are parts of it, segments of a lineage. 'Academic classification extends to classes, which it divides according to resemblances while natural classification divides according to relationships, by taking reproduction into account.'[9]

Where two or more species emerge within a previously existing taxon that till then had only been *one* species, it is customary to give both of them new names, even if one such species is indistinguishable to us and to its members from the older species. If the earlier species merely develops, as a single population of interbreeding individuals, taxonomic practice varies: some will judge that the differences are such that if the species had been contemporaneous they wouldn't form a single breeding population; others that there is no clear break between the old and new, which may as well be counted as one species. *Homo erectus, Homo habilis* and *Homo sapiens* can be one species or three. Traced back through time, of course, the difference between species will often seem quite arbitrary, even when there are two or more daughter species to consider. Why, after all, should x be a different species from y merely because there is another species, distinct from x but equally descended from y? If that other species had not been discovered, or had been extinguished before it was truly established, x would be uncontroversially the same species as y. Even at one time there are populations that reveal the transience of species: the different varieties of herring gull that live around the Arctic Circle are one species in the sense that genes from one variety can spread, by degrees, to any other, but two or more if particular varieties are paired. This phenomenon is, in Kant's terminology, a *Realgattung,* a historical collection of interbreeding populations, and in more modern terms a *Formenkreis,* or ring-species.

It is probable that humankind, historically, is such a *Realgattung*; it may even be that it still is, that there are particular varieties within the species that would be judged different species if the intervening varieties were lost.[10] As Dawkins points out, humans and chimpanzees are judged to be of different species precisely because the intervening varieties are indeed extinct.[11]

Once synchronic species barriers are established the flow of genes will be restricted: that is what species barriers are, and that is why lions and tigers are of different species. But their ancestors were not, and genes flowed equally from the urcat to lion and tiger populations. It is because there are, by hypothesis, no diachronic species barriers, that some have reckoned that palaeospecies (like *Homo habilis*) are only metaphorically species at all. Nor can we always claim that the barriers against interbreeding were established by some other general change in the character and conduct of ur-lions and ur-tigers. More likely the barriers were established, by distance or mountain or river, for reasons having nothing to do with any original characters, and the other general differences accumulated since. We cannot even be sure that what had seemed like barriers against interbreeding are always more than accidents of preference or opportunity: maybe lions and tigers *would* interbreed successfully often enough to identify them as a ring-species if enough of them had the chance. There is good reason, after all, to think that domestic dogs, wolves, and coyotes are really all one, variegated species such that not all its varieties will willingly interbreed. Lose all the other dogs, and wolf-hounds and chihuahuas would be unlikely conspecifics – far more so than Voltaire reckoned 'Hottentots, Negroes and Portuguese'.[12]

But surely human beings are all one species in a more important sense than this? Maybe other grades of taxon, family or order or phylum, are merely genealogically united. Maybe there are taxa that look like species but are really not. Species, real species, are, precisely, special. Don't members of a single species share a nature? Don't human beings? Isn't that the axiom on which humanism and the United Nations charter depend? If modern biological theory suggests that there need be no shared natures, no perfect types, and even that the purity of species must be questioned, so much the worse for biological theory. The Negro and the American *must* be our brothers and sisters, and therefore must be like us. It is insufferable to suggest that there are real varieties of humankind that might not willingly interbreed. Still less sufferable to imply that *Pan, Pongo, Gorilla* and *Homo* might perhaps have been, or still may be, a ring-species.[13] What varieties of *Homo* might breed, or once have bred, with *Pan*? Isn't there a submerged, and prurient, racism at work here? 'Ape' is an easy, racist insult. Those Whites who use it should perhaps be reminded that most commentators, worldwide, will suspect the smelly, hairy Europids (which is, 'the Whites') of being 'closest' to the ape. Do we need to abandon biological science to avoid being racists?

Racism, on the contrary, is the natural expression of misplaced essentialism, the belief that groups embody different natures. Or else it is an early version of the barriers against interbreeding that establish distinct species. New species is but old race writ large. There need be no antagonism between such new-born species: the consequence may actually be a lessening of competition, because the species eventually graze in different places and on different things. It seems likely that speciation is an advantage because it replicates the situation of a geographically isolated population, which evolves more rapidly than do larger populations. There may be many good reasons, despite this, for us *not* to allow the emergence of barriers between human varieties, and maybe the other breeds of hominoid are now sufficiently distant (as once they weren't) from 'ours' as to make all present interbreeding doubtful. But we do not *know* this to be true. I do not recommend the experiment – but mostly because the fate of any such cross-breed as that pictured by Dawkins with the aid of a computer-generated image would probably be to serve as laboratory material.[14] As long as mispced essentialism rules, we will suppose that cross-breeds do not really share our nature, that they are throwbacks to a pre-human kind not 'of our kind'. The truth is otherwise.

A further difficulty for moralists is the rejection of norms in nature. If there is no one way of life and character that best suits all or most members of a particular kind, such that we may detect deformity, disease or deviance by comparison with that ideal type, can there be 'a good human life'? Can we truthfully suggest that battery chickens are deprived by being denied 'the' life that chickens would live 'in nature'? If species are only genealogical groups, such that members need not especially resemble each other, we have no right to suppose that there is one way only (however vaguely defined) for any particular species. The limits of variation will be empirically discoverable: what a kind can adapt to will be shown by what as a matter of fact it does, and there will be nothing normative about its 'natural' life. Lineages evolve to make and fit their environments, or else are extinguished. I am a member of the Clark family: but not because I resemble other Clarks, nor yet because there is a way that Clarks will naturally live that is unlike the way that others live. Even if Clarks were more inbred than they were (and so approximated the condition of a species), they need not always resemble each other. There might be atavisms, sports, changelings, or disabled Clarks, but they would all be Clarks, and such variations would not be failures: on the contrary, they would contain the Clarks' hope of posterity. Variation is not a dysfunction of sexual reproduction (even if animal breeders are annoyed if the line they are concerned about does not 'breed true'): it is what sex is for.

This may seem old news. After all, moral philosophers have insisted for most of this century that no natural facts are norms, that 'natural' is not necessarily a

term of praise. They have even insisted that human beings are special because they have no single species nature. The claim is flawed: partly because nothing has such a nature, and partly because the claim exactly identifies a nature shared, at least in potency, by every human being. As Aristotle said, we are creatures whose life is one of acting out decisions. Aristotle was less essentialist than his heirs, because he never identified that 'we' straightforwardly with a species. Not all those born into our species will be capable of their own actions. In some the capacity for choice, or even for understanding, is missing from the start. The good life for us is the life well-lived by those who ask such questions. The very same moralists who have emphasised our freedom from natural constraint actually think but poorly of those who do not, or even cannot, make their 'own' decisions, and constantly deplore attempts to make divisions within the species, which we ought (by their account) to be entirely free to make. So once again the primary danger is not from the biologically grounded notion of kinds, but from our habitual confusion of species and natural kind. We can find out a lot about what individual creatures need and like, what sort of lives they can arrange to live together. We do not need to think that there are goals that only and all conspecifics share.

A fully Aristotelian ethic can accommodate the remarks on species natures that modern biologists endorse. 'We' means only those engaged, or potentially engaged, in this sort of conversation. 'We' are probably all human, as being members of the *Realgattung* of humankind. But not all our conspecifics need be self-motivating or rational in any way. 'Maybe all triangles must have three angles, but not all reptiles must have a three-chambered heart, though in point of fact they might'.[15] By the same token, Monboddo was right to think that not all human beings *must* be able to speak. And creatures who are not now of our species, though their ancestors once were, may share as much with us as any 'disabled' human. The thought is a dangerous one, no doubt. We are not long removed from moralists who deployed Aristotle's ethics to suggest that Amerindians were natural slaves, owed no respect as real images of God. Any suggestion that not all our conspecifics share our nature is heard as licence to oppress and kill. But there is no such licence, nor any proper argument from neo-Aristotelian premisses to ignore the ties of kindred.

Who is my sister?

A fully modernised neo-Aristotelianism is probably inadequate, for reasons that I shall address below. But it may serve us for a moment. UNESCO's declaration that 'all men [*sic*] belong to the same species' was clearly intended as a moral commitment to the thesis that all human beings have very similar needs, and that those needs should be met by the global community, acting through the various national

authorities that are the best we can yet manage (however obviously imperfect they are). It was certainly a necessary commitment, in the face of those who had sought to divide the species against itself, and create a new, predatory species on the ruins of the old. As a moral programme, some will say, there was no need to give reasons, or to found our commitment in any agreed facts. That we are all one species was never really a biological claim, as might be a similar assertion about dogs, wolves, dingoes and coyotes (but not marsupial wolves). Nor would its authors, we must suppose, have been really alarmed to find that humankind was rather a *Realgattung* that might easily become two or more species. They might not even have been moved by the discovery (if such there could be) that not all our conspecifics possessed rational souls, or were capable of reasoned action. Moral commitments need not and cannot, so we have often been told, rest on any non-moral dictum.

This is not the time to explore that particular error, except to say that it *is* an error. If non-moral dicta are ones that can coherently be joined both to one moral dictum and its opposite, then it is, of course, impossible to demonstrate either one of those moral dicta from a dictum that, by definition, does not have moral implications. P cannot strictly imply Q if (P&Q) and (P&-Q) both make sense. It does not follow either that there are such 'non-moral dicta', or that strict demonstration is the only rational form of argument, or that there are no ordinarily factual dicta with moral implications. At the very least, ordinary moral argument is possible, and most of us expect to give some reasons, even if not demonstrative reasons, for the causes we endorse. UNESCO's declaration was not intended as an arbitrary judgement, a dictat of the world's new rulers: its authors obviously thought that those who disputed it were *wrong*.

They thought, that is, that our conspecificity should make a difference to the extent and nature of our obligations. Whereas what is now called 'racism' claims the right to treat human beings of other races less favourably than the racist's own, UNESCO's demand was that no differences of race, sex, age, intellect, capacity or creed should license what would otherwise be obvious injustice. It may be that one historical explanation of the slogan's popularity in the West, in addition to the shocked discovery of what racist jibes about 'backward races' had led to in the West, was the converse discovery that, for example, the Japanese so heartily despised the smelly, hairy Europids they captured. We all began to realise how vulnerable we were.

The natural conclusion has been that species differences do license such injustice, perhaps because such differences are real and predictable, and relevant to the nature of the putative injustice. Those reasons are not wholly wrong, but of course they hardly touch the real point: some of our conspecifics would not be

injured by acts that injure us, just as some creatures not of our species would be injured by those acts. If what matters is only the quality of the putative injury, then there will be many occasions when, if we ought not to injure those capable of being injured, we ought not to injure those outside our species, and may do to our conspecifics what, in their case, will be no injury. That we are conspecifics plays no central role in the argument. Nor are any of the merely rationalist arguments very successful: respect for humankind's unity is not well represented by respect for rational autonomy, since not all human beings are thus rational. If UNESCO wished to oppose the Nazi project (as of course it did) it could hardly do so by endorsing the Nazi preoccupation with such forms of human living as they deemed rational. The object of the declaration was to oppose the extermination of the 'mentally unfit' or 'the backward races', and not merely to dispute the Nazis' identifications, as though their error was only a case of mistaken identity.

So it seems likely that conspecificity was really offered as a moral fact, a fact that ought to influence our actions and omissions. 'We be of one blood, you and I' was the slogan taught to Mowgli for his safety's sake.[16] In that fictional case the slogan is a sort of magic, that compels courtesy even if it is literally false; or else it is a promise to live by the same law as is invoked, the rule of mercy. But part of its force, and the reason for the metaphor, is that we do care for our kindred. Because we share our ancestors and may yet share descendants, because we live under the same sky, are nourished by the same foods, share the same diseases even, we are part, and know ourselves a part, of one individual lineage. What we do to others of our kind we do to ourselves, because we are all one, variegated kind. It is not that we are all or most of us *alike.* Our pleasure in each other is that we are *different,* and yet the same.

The moral truth that lies behind the error that others have called 'speciesism' (and justly rebuked) is that we both do and should treat those 'of our kind' better. But now recall the remarks I have already made about the actual nature of a species. We retain the word as physicists retain the word 'atomic'. But modern atoms are not *a-tomic* (which is, indivisible), and modern species are not specific (any more than Aristotle's were).[17] Species kinship rests on relationship, and not resemblance, although there will be various similarities to reckon with within and without the kind. UNESCO's sloganeers did not recognise that *Pan, Pongo* and *Gorilla* were our sisters, any more than the writers of the American Declaration of Independence fully realised what they had committed themselves to by saying that all men [*sic*] were equal. They and their successors could have insisted that no mention was made here of women, or that the obvious intention at the time was not to include negroes (since the passages denouncing Britain's involvement in the slave trade were, of set purpose, omitted from the final document). Instead, the real implications

were allowed to emerge. All those of one kind with us begin as equals: we are, each of one us, a part of one long, variegated lineage, sharing enough of our habits, gestures and abilities to reveal our common source.

The real danger to a decent humanism (that is, to the rule of law, the rejection of oppression and genocide) is not from those who emphasise our kinship with the other apes, but from those who rest the demands of humanism only on resemblance. Resemblances are easily denied or altered; historical relationships are not. Not all our kindred are adept at language of the familiar, human kind: not even all our ordinary conspecifics are. It is enough that we are apes together, and know from the inside what it is usually like to be a versatile, manipulative primate with a sense of family and friendship. The American and Negro are indeed my sisters and my brothers; so also are the other apes who form, with us, the great individual, Hominoidea (which is the greater humankind).

What, then, is the good life for Hominoidea?[18] Hominoids live well when they can gather in friendship, in groups small enough that their individual status can be recognised and large enough that they can find congenial companions. They live well when they are fairly secure from arbitrary arrest and murder, with some opportunity to innovate and to explore. Who can secure this for them? Plainly, at present, only those with power and foresight enough to face and solve the problem. There is a risk that any such creative minority will conceive itself to be an intellectual and political elite, and run things only for its immediate interest. It is certainly a good thing that recent elites have been constrained at least to pay lip service to the slogan that all human beings are 'equal' and all owed a like respect that they cannot enforce. Demanding a similar respect for hominoids (including, please remember, us) may place too great a strain on intellectuals still in the grip of fantasy. With care, however, we may risk the attempt.

The spiritual form of humanity

I said before that either we are simply natural products of evolutionary processes or we are not. If we are, then it seems clear that there are no rigid boundaries between species groups, that species, and other taxa, are quite real, but only as *Realgattungen.* There is a real difficulty, however, in believing this, despite the efforts made by other signatories of the Great Ape Project to expound a fully naturalised epistemology. The argument, which is a powerful one even if it has not convinced all theorists, runs as follows. If we are the products of evolutionary processes, then we have no good ground for thinking that our thoughts are anything but none-too-harmful fantasies. As Nietzsche saw, we must presume that we have evolved as the descendants of creatures who could ignore a lot, who could live out their fantasies. There is nothing in evolutionary epistemology to give us reason to expect that we would care about the abstract truth, or ever be able to obtain it. If the theory is correct, we have no reason to think that we could

find out any correct theories, beyond (at best) such truths or falsehoods as we need to obtain the next meal or avoid being one. And so we have no reason to suppose that any theory that we have devised is really true, including the current theory of evolution. Only if the divine reason is somehow present in us can we expect that we could find out truths, or trust our moral instincts. That, after all, was what Enlightenment thinkers thought, borrowing a Platonic doctrine about the powers of reason that does not fit the neo-Aristotelian framework I have so far described.[19]

This alternative picture – that evolutionary theory does not leave room for the kind of being we have to think we are (namely truth seeking and would-be moral images of a divine reason) – is what has often lain behind attempts to insist upon a radical disjunction between apes and people. But there is a better answer. Plato, after all, denied that it was sensible to contrast human and non-human things, creatures of our specific kind and all others. We might as well divide the universe into Cranes and Non-Cranes.[20] By his account (or at least the account developed from his writings), there are indeed real natures, but they are not identical with the things that partly remind us of them. Even we ourselves are not wholly identical with the Form of Humanity, though we are called to serve it. The Form of Humanity is the divine reason, and we are indeed more *human,* in this sense, in so far as we think and do as the divine reason requires. The true image of humanity, for us, is the saint or perfect sage.

How are such forms related to the *Realgattungen* I have described before? Simply enough: one lineage after another has tuned in (as it were) to the Form of Life-at-Sea, and so produced the lesser kinds of shark, mackerel, plesiosaur, whale, dugong, seal. Life-in-Society has found its images among the ants, termites, bees and mammals. Maybe we can bring the Form more clearly into temporal existence, but we can hardly do so by denying all its influence on beings outside our immediate kin, as if it were our possession. If saints are the ones who best embody Humanity (as the Platonic tradition would suggest), then we will do the best we can by imitating them. From which it follows that we should respect those other 'apes', our kindred.

If there are no natural kinds but only *Realgattungen,* then it is reasonable to think of ourselves as parts of *Hominoidea,* Greater Humankind. If there are such kinds as Platonists imagine, and 'we' here–now are partial imitations of the Form of Humanity, let us imitate it better by being humane. Such Forms require no special ancestry, nor can we boast of being children of Adam, as if the Creator could not raise up new children of the spirit from the dead stones. That spirit, if it is so truly universal as to contain the truth of things (which is the condition of our finding truth), must also be present everywhere. If we should respect Humanity in ourselves and others we should, by the same token, respect the other creatures that reflect that Form in however tarnished a mirror.

If we are apes, let us be apes together. If we are 'apes' (as aping the Divine), let us acknowledge what our duty is as would-be saints and give the courtesy we owe

to those among whom we sprang. Either we evolved along with them, by merely 'natural' processes, or else we evolved, in part, to imitate a Divine Humanity. Neither theory licenses a radical disjunction between ourselves and other apes. Either may give us reason to esteem and serve the greater humankind.

Notes

1. P. Singer and P. Cavalieri (eds) *The Great Ape Project: Equality beyond Humanity* (Fourth Estate: London, 1993), pp. 113–25.
2. T.L. Peacock *Melincourt,* especially Chapter 6. See *Novels of T.L. Peacock,* ed. R. Garnett (London: Dent, 1891), vols 2, 3.
3. *On the Origin and Progress of Language* (Kincaid and Creech: Edinburgh, 1773–92), cited in Baker 1974, p. 23.
4. *Origin,* op. cit., Book II, Chapter 5, cited in Peacock op. cit., Chapter 6.
5. See Baker 1974, pp. 19 f.
6. Cited in Baker 1974, p. 22.
7. See Baker 1974, pp. 292 ff. after E. Smith (1904).
8. Quine 1969, p. 9.
9. I. Kant *Gesammelte Schrifften* vol. 2, pp. 427–33, cited in Baker 1974, p. 81.
10. For further details of modern taxonomic practice see Mayr 1969; Jeffrey 1973; Slobodchikoff 1976.
11. Dawkins 1993.
12. *Questions sur encyclopédie,* cited in Baker 1974, p. 20.
13. All these are genera, with several species usually included in them (as *Pan satyrus paniscus,* the pygmy chimpanzee). Linnaeus identified the chimpanzee instead as *Homo troglodytes.* Nowadays, the level of the taxon is determined by professional judgement having to do with presumed ancestry and relative degree of relatedness.
14. Dawkins 1993.
15. Hull 1974a, p. 79.
16. Kipling 1910, p. 49.
17. Since scientists learn their Aristotle solely from Enlightenment anti-scholasticism, their picture of Aristotle is unrecognisable to any competent Aristotelian scholar; see Balme 1980.
18. This is technically a superfamily, including Pongidae and Hominidae as families. The pongids include gibbons and siamangs as well as the great apes and now extinct varieties like *Ramapithecus*. Hominidae includes *Australopithecus, Pithecanthropus* and the various, mostly extinct, species and palaeospecies of *Homo.* These classifications, remember, are still guesses about the likeliest historical relationships. *Pithecanthropus* is classed by some in *Homo.*
19. See further my *God's World and the Great Awakening* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1991), and *God, Religion and Reality* (SPCK: London 1998).
20. Plato *Politicus,* 263d.

9 Herds of free bipeds[1]

Introduction

In the millenial dispute between Platonists and Aristotelians, it is usually the Aristotelian who is supposed to treat human beings 'naturalistically', as a particular variety of placental mammal, and the Platonist who suggests that human beings are spiritual amphibians, citizens of a wider world than Nature and unnaturally yoked to the decaying flesh. On the other hand, the Aristotelian tradition, like the still more naturalistic Stoic tradition, is much more inclined than the Platonist to make a radical distinction between human and other animals. Whereas the Stranger, presumably with Plato's approval, mocks the simple division between human and non-human (*Politicus* 263c ff.),[2] Stoic and Aristotelian philosophers have taken just that division for granted. Platonists, not Aristotelians, have usually been the ones to consider our duties to those not of our species. Platonists, not Aristotelians, have found corporeal nature sacramental.

> The land is [our] ancestral home and [we] must cherish it even more than children cherish their mother; furthermore, the Earth is a goddess and mistress of mortal men, and the gods and spirits already established in the locality must be treated with the same respect.[3]

My concern in this chapter is not with Platonic sacramentalism,[4] nor with its environmentalist implications, but with the morals to be drawn from Plato's 'naturalistic' account of human society and behaviour. Some of his suggestions are easily assimilable to more familiar theories of our social origins. We began – or we can conceive ourselves as having begun – as family groups brought together by the perceived advantages of trade and mutual defence. Once we were motivated by simple desires for food, drink, sex and shelter, but new social motives, of shame, propriety and ambition took shape in us to help preserve the civil peace. They in their turn engendered problems that had to be met by the growth of political and military power. The model here is that provided by the experience of social

negotiation between human beings already equipped – or miraculously supplied – with the necessary moral responses and intellectual abilities. Identifiable individuals might make particular contributions, but not in virtue of any ability unknown to others. Later political theory is of a piece with this account. If any mention is made of the alternative I shall be describing, it is only as an early version of the divine right of kings, the kind of thing that Locke denounced in Filmer, though there is actually very little resemblance.[5]

That alternative, of course, is to associate civilisation and domestication. Whereas the more familiar model treats the statesman's art, the political art, as an application of those powers of decision and negotiation that we find among contemporary human beings, this other and less familiar thought attempts an answer to the question of how we came to be like this at all. There are animal kinds whose 'political' character is indeed innate, and for that very reason less 'political' than ours. Precisely because individual bees or ants will naturally do what best sustains the whole, they do not need to talk about expediency or justice, and therefore have no need of any human language. Nor do they need the kind of kings that Plato envisages. The form of politics natural to us – so Aristotelians say – is one involving shared decision-making amongst individuals who esteem each other. Anyone who can decide for herself can help to decide for all. Only those who cannot so decide must be excluded from the process, and exist alongside other domestic cattle. Aristotle thought it likely that there were such 'natural slaves', but pinned his hopes on more typically human forms, those able to reason with themselves and others about what it was right to do, and to stick to their decisions. Those who could reason but not abide by their decisions (which is how he conceived women), had best contribute to the body politic at one remove, as wives.[6] I argued in an earlier chapter that this ideal of consensual negotiation offers less support to state authority than liberals have imagined, and by implication that those who believe in such authority must look elsewhere for its defence. Domestication may not be the answer to the problem of state *authority*: I suspect that it *is* an answer to the assumption of state authority. It does not tell us why there is someone whom we all ought to obey, but it may help to explain why we think there is. It has to be added that the good liberal conviction that all would be well if we only sat around a table and discussed things sensibly is looking a little tired. Even despotism has its unacknowledged merits.

The statesman's art

The first attempt Plato makes to define the statesman, in his *Politicus* (258b–267d), distinguishes the Statesman, King, Slave-Master and Householder as one who

maintains his rule, by mental power and force of personality (259c), over a host of subordinate directors (261a) with the object of breeding and nurturing herds (261d)[7] of tame, gregarious animals (264a): specifically those land-dwelling (264d), walking (264e), hornless (265c), non-interbreeding (265d), and bipedal animals (266b) that we call human. The very nearest thing to the Statesman is the swineherd, 'the man who is of all men best trained for living an easy life' (266d). A slightly different cut might instead have identified us as featherless bipeds (266e), and the Statesman's nearest kin, by unspoken analogy, as a craneherd or gooseherd (see 264c). The art of governing people is to manage the breeding and nurturing of a particular kind of herd animal: 'the science of the collective rearing of men as distinct from the rearing of horses or other animals' (267d). That Plato really did endorse the description of humans as herd animals is confirmed by many passages in *Laws*: it is imagined, for example, that 'government originated as the rule of the eldest who inherited his authority from his father or mother; all the others followed him like a flock of birds, thus forming one single horde ruled by that patriarchal authority and kingship which of all kingships is the most just'.[8]

The Stranger at once qualifies his apparent success by noting that there are other craftsmen that might legitimately claim to 'feed humankind', including the statesmen themselves (268a), whereas a cowherd, for example, manages the herd entirely. It is a strange fault to find: after all, the Stranger had earlier identified many subordinated arts, which the statesman manages.[9] A cowherd might be feeder, doctor, matchmaker, midwife, entertainer and the like (268ab), but would be no less in charge of the herd if he delegated duties. What matters is who *manages* the herd. And there is the real problem for the peopleherder: not everyone will take instructions, or accept his managerial role. The cowherd (at least if managing 'his own') is the one to define what needs to be done for his herd; but the Statesman is not the only one with views about what must be done for people. All other herds 'obeyed their keepers more readily than people obey their rulers', as Xenophon also remarked.[10] I doubt if Plato, any more than Xenophon, intended us to think that this unruly nature was a function of our 'intelligence or self-responsibility'.[11] 'Man is a "tame" animal…but his upbringing has only to be inadequate or misguided and he'll become the wildest animal on the face of the earth'.[12] 'Of all wild things the child is the most unmanageable....That's why he has to be curbed by a great many bridles'.[13]

In the dreamtime days, the age of Kronos, so the Stranger says, it was God who managed everything (269c ff.), by appointing spirits to care for every separate herd.[14] 'There were then no political constitutions and no taking of wives nor begetting of children' (272a),[15] no agriculture, no domestic arts. That God managed

everything amounts to much the same as saying that everything that happened of itself, without human contrivance, went well. Whether men then spoke with each other and the other tribes of animals to find out truths (272c) or were content to eat and drink, who knows? Earlier commentators had supposed that in those days people 'had eyes but saw to no purpose, heard but took no heed: like dream-shapes they lived their long lives in utter confusion'.[16] But the Stranger suspects that 'every one of us is like a man who sees things in a dream and thinks that he knows them perfectly and then wakes up, as it were, to find that he knows nothing' (277d).[17] It may be that the earlier times were wakeful after all. Even their nakedness need not imply (as of course it could) that they were destitute. Rather were they stripped as for a race, 'the Olympia of the soul'.[18] It is an image with a long history. Edward Herbert, Earl of Cherbury in 1624:

> Those who would enter the shrine of truth must leave their trinkets, in other words their opinions, at the entrance, or as one might say in the cloakroom. They will find that everything is open or revealed to perception as long as they do not approach it with prejudice.[19]

and John Colet:

> Would anyone see truth? Then he must wholly strip and lay bare himself, laying aside all the thoughts of his mind…by which he deemed that he had learnt something.[20]

This is a commonplace, derived from Philo of Alexandria's allegory whereby the High Priest must strip off the soul's tunic of opinion and imagery to enter the Holy of Holies.[21]

Only when God had withdrawn His hand, were procreation, birth and nurture made binding on all creatures (274a). Only then were people threatened by wild beasts turned savage (274b), and dependent on the gifts of Prometheus, Hephaistos and Athene (274c).[22] In this age of the world creatures must fend for themselves, and not be wholly managed by another. The Shepherd of the human flock is a god, not a mortal (275a), and bereft of that daimon's care (274b) we must somehow find an alternative. Those who rule us now are much more like us than are shepherds like their sheep (275c). They are not charged, the Stranger says, with our bodily nurture (275d) – though this does not mean, as we shall see, that Statesmen need take no care for our bodily well-being. It certainly does not mean that they have no responsibility for *breeding* us. Nor does it mean, as Barker curiously concluded, that the philosopher–kings of Plato's earlier imagination are 'now relegated to

times before the fall'.[23] Those latter did not control the cosmic cycles, but could only take account of them. The Divine Shepherd is not a philosopher–king; the true statesmen of this era are. Their task is the 'responsible charge' of human herds, not by violence but by 'tendance accepted voluntarily': 'tendance freely accepted by herds of free bipeds we call statesmanship' (276e). It is worth adding that Plato suggests that 'the human animal has a touchy temper, and it won't be easy to persuade him to fall neatly into the two categories, slave and master'.[24]

But of course we are no nearer knowing what that art involves. True statesmanship, it eventually emerges, is the art of managing the human herds for their true good, whatever the constitutional form such rule may take (293a). It is just not true that Plato forcibly rejected the idea of the king as herdsman, as Aalders claims,[25] and others would prefer to think. It seems, on the contrary, to be a Socratic metaphor[26] that endures until the *Laws*. It turns out that those herds need not, after all, be very willing to submit – though there might be several ways of avoiding outright contradiction here, including the analogy I shall emphasise in a moment. True statesmen will not bind themselves by laws (294a ff), for no finite law can wholly accommodate all circumstances, even if they may leave laws for others to obey (295c ff), which kings of a lesser kind will follow (301b). Neither rhetoricians, generals nor judges (304c ff) are the true king's equals: only those very few who understand what the human herd needs are statesmen. Only they practise the art which controls all other arts (305e), and weaves the varied characters of humankind together into the fabric of the state. True statesmen must concern themselves with the proper education of the young, the proper association of the old: they will organise the breeding and nurturing of people, and assign their proper tasks (310e ff.). Their goal, of course, is peace: even if they take account of military needs, they 'design [their] legislation for war as a tool for peace, rather than [their] legislation for peace as an instrument of war'.[27] That finest and best of fabrics, a true fellowship established by mutual concord and by ties of friendship (311c), is what the statesman aims at, and what will never – we must assume – arise without the statesman's aid. 'Those who cannot or will not cooperate must be put to death, or banished, or enslaved' (309a). Anyone who takes charge of a herd of animals must first purge it of unhealthy and inferior stock.[28]

Pigs and people

The true king differs from the Divine Shepherd of an earlier age in that he cannot do everything by himself, and must rely upon the often rebellious assistance of lesser craftsmen. Things do not go God's way 'of themselves', without disciplined attention. He is also unlike that Divine Shepherd in being far more like his flock. But it remains true that statesmanship as Plato defines it amounts to the domestication of creatures that would otherwise be wild: they may be 'tame' in the sense that they

are tameable, but they cannot be expected to do right 'of themselves' or 'by God's grace' (which here amount to the same thing). The would-be statesman who forces his ways on us mimics the true statesman who knows – like the true doctor – when to ignore our complaints, but does not act to serve our deepest will, which is for the good. The true statesman, conversely, may look very like a tyrant to those immersed in their own fleeting passions. His vindication is that his flock prospers, even in his absence, because he has fixed his laws in their hearts. Domestic animals are not governed by fear alone, but their master does not gain his authority solely from their consent: rather he gains their consent by the exercise of his authority, his care, or – as the Athenian Stranger says – his persuasive explanations.[29] The best training for a statesman, Philo said, is to have been a shepherd,[30] and Mediterranean shepherds do not drive, but lead their flocks. According to Varro, by the way, swineherds trained their pigs to come to a horn call.[31]

The laws of the state are to be obeyed because – or so we may believe – they still embody ancient wisdom. Mythologically: once God was with us openly, and what we did was automatically His will; after the catastrophe, true kings, with explicit knowledge of what we all once knew implicitly, governed their unruly flocks by word of mouth; after they had gone, only the record of their usual decisions was left us as a better guide than anything that we could find out for ourselves. The laws themselves are our parents and originals, as Socrates told Crito, and are owed filial obedience.[32] In the last decay even those imperfect general laws were lost, and we had only the memory of paradise. 'At last, as this cosmic era draws to its close, this disorder comes to its head', and God takes control once more (273d).

The point of the Protagorean myth recounted by Plato in his *Protagoras* is that settled, law-abiding society is our only alternative to lawless bestiality, the nature below the *nomoi.* It is strange in that case, Dio Chrysostom remarked, that our arts are devoted to increasing our pleasures, and usually our trivial pleasures, and not to increasing courage or justice.[33] We sacrifice to the gods for health (though nowadays we call it medical research) but take no pains to live healthily.[34] Maybe this is unavoidable, but it was not so in the beginning.

There is, of course, no more *need* to take all this historically than the *Timaeus.* These stages need not really be successive periods (though perhaps they were): what matters is the contrast between an imagined era when righteousness need not be struggled for (the age of Kronos), and one in which our highest goal is discipline (the age of Zeus). In this latter age, there is a contrast between discipline and disorder, but perfection does not lie in discipline. When Lewis's imagined (but familiar) scientist seeks to justify himself before a people whom he thinks primitive, he boasts of 'our science, medicine and law, our armies, our architecture, our commerce and our transport system....Our right to supersede you is the right of the higher over the lower'. His interpreter, compelled to express these vast abstractions in more concrete terms, discloses their absurdity: as if one's health were proved by

the quality of bandages around one's sores.[35] Even the exercise of our present moral virtues is not what we should attribute to the gods, for such exercise depends on the existence of evils that had better not exist. Just so, the ideal state we call Plato's Republic is an heroic attempt to cure a city fallen away from its first simplicity, which Glaucon calls 'a city of pigs'.[36]

There is of course some scholarly dispute about that latter city, as there is about 'the age of Kronos' itself. Glaucon's phrase is offered as a criticism, and it may be – as, for example, Berry argues[37] – that the imagined city is one of people 'hoggishly' content to satisfy corporeal desires. As the Stranger says, 'if when [the people of the age of Kronos] had taken their fill of eating and drinking the discussions they had with each other and with the animals were of the kind that the surviving stories make them out to have been' (272c), then our judgement must be clear. But if they spoke with each several tribe of creature to find out its own distinctive truth, then their happiness was a thousand times our own. The point, I think, is not that Plato has any doubt about what would have happened in an age when God was wholly in control: 'the age of Kronos' just is the title given to a golden age, which some imagine to have been a time of 'easy living' in the material sense. A true golden age would not have been like that. Socrates, too, replies to Glaucon that he thinks the 'city of pigs' may really be the best. Its diet, I need hardly remind you, was vegetarian.[38] Dicaearchus, it is said, blamed the collapse of the Golden Age on our progressive, carnivorous meddling with animals. In the age of Kronos those of the golden race 'slew no animal whatever'.[39] Plato also says there was a time when people thought it a great impiety to eat flesh, or pollute the altars of the gods with blood.[40] Meat-eating features amongst the hill shepherds who survived the flood, namely the Cyclopes.[41] But it was not so in the beginning. In the *Politicus* the fall is a consequence of God's withdrawal, thereby reversing other stories which suggest that God withdrew because we fell.

In another passage noted by Skemp,[42] in humorous criticism of Protagoras, Socrates enquires why Pig should not be the measure, and not Man alone.[43] Really, no doubt, it's God that is the Measure, as the Athenian Stranger says,[44] and the references to pigs are jocular – as all commentators agree.

> No wonder that we talk thus and are pleased with ourselves and think we are fine folk. For a dog appears the fairest of things to a dog, an ox to an ox, an ass to an ass, and verily a pig to a pig.[45]

Need we think that the joke is merely frivolous? Must it be obvious that Plato thought that pigs were risible? The life of paradise might look much like the life of pigs: even if we cannot quite return to it, any more than to the 'city of pigs', maybe we can see something like it here? Swineherds have an easy time – because pigs do of themselves what decent swineherds want them to. Human statesmen struggle,

because free bipeds don't, and rather do what seems good in their eyes, even if it isn't. 'That spiritual soil is better which produces a harvest of virtue as a spontaneous crop without toil.'[46] Not all non-humans are to be admired: some have become wild beasts, as have some humans. And goats, it seems, are like present-day humans in needing competent herdsmen, even though they are not exactly wild.[47] 'Non-humankind', as Plato realises, is not a real class. There are tame, 'virtuous' beasts, too, and even the wildest do not equal us.

> Is it not absurd, since we see that many of our species live from sense alone, but do not possess intellect and reason, and since we also see that many of them surpass the most terrible of wild beasts in cruelty, anger and rapine, being murderous of their children and their parents, also being tyrants and the tools of kings [is it not, I say, absurd] to fancy that we ought to act justly towards these, but that no justice is due from us to the ox that ploughs, the dog that is fed with us, and the animals that nourish us with their milk, and adorn our bodies with their wool? Is not such an opinion most irrational and absurd?[48]

A short digression: it is striking how few references there are to pigs, even by comparison with the general silence about animal husbandry in Greek writings.[49] According to Bolkestein,[50] 'pigs were kept in some districts in Arcadia and Aetolia', and the only references he can cite are Atheneaus 4.140 (not, as he says, 148) and Xenophon's *Commentaries* II.7.6, neither of which is in the least illuminating. Dio Chrysostom mentions a poor two-family farm with pigs reared on acorns and barley.[51] The only swineherd known to the commentators is Eumaeus.[52] But pigs, obviously, were present in the agricultural economy. They seem to be much less significant than ovicaprids, and are mainly sacrificed to Demeter. Only in upland villages, or where there were plenty of oak trees, it seems, were they likely to be kept in large herds. In more densely populated areas pigs would more probably be kept in ones and twos, close to the fields and gardens.[53] In short, they would not usually be herd animals at all in Plato's day – though Xenophon mentions a successful Athenian businessman who keeps large herds of swine and cattle.[54] They might well, in fact, have been almost members of the household in many places: the Megarian who sells his children in the guise of piglets might have felt, as other farming families have, that pigs were almost human, being curious, naked omnivores, and far noisier than most domestic cattle.[55] But the point, after all, is that he *doesn't* have any pigs to sell, and Aristophanes was writing vulgar comedy. Theophrastus cites the otherwise unknown Chartodras on the agricultural merits of manure: pig excrement is second only to human in its value for the soil.[56] Pigs, in brief, are very

close to people. That, after all, is why they are likely soon to be used as organ donors, once we've fiddled a little more with their genetics.[57]

Pigs, to us, are fat and laughable, the most 'animal' of all our domestic slaves. In an earlier age 'beasts courageous and hard to kill are noble beasts, by the law of chivalry. Therefore the boar was a noble beast; and a common crest for great captains'.[58] It was presumably pigs that the Athenian had in mind to recommend the athletes of Magnesia to chase (as anything less would be feeble).[59] What the pig fought for is also of importance: they fight harder for their young than for themselves. Of course, pigs are also the very type of gluttony,[60] or something worse. Critias, so Socrates exclaimed in fury, kept rubbing himself against the youthful Euthydemus, like a pig against stones.[61] According to Claudius the Neopolitan, cited by Porphyry, 'a hog is not useful for anything but food'.[62] According to Chrysippus it is only a 'walking larder', made for nothing but sacrifice, and benefited, so Carneades ironically concluded, by its own slaughter.[63] In these circumstances its only duty is to eat. Allegorising interpretation of the myth of Circe is easy enough: only Odysseus, protected by the gift of Hermes, can resist her spell.[64] But it is noteworthy that this very fable was also used, by Plutarch, to a different end: to show the pig as laudable. The dialogue called *Gryllus,* from which I quoted a moment ago, has for long been treated as a joke, but for no reason that I at least can see. No doubt it is a commentary upon a joke: Plutarch was Boeotian, and therefore – to Athenian racists – piggish (which is, stupid). A pig confronts Athena's favourite, and silences him. One of Circe's transmogrified victims, speaking – she says – for all, insists to Odysseus that he has no wish to become a human being again. Non-humans, he says, are courageous, temperate and prudent by nature, whereas people are only brave through fear, and afflicted with unnecessary lusts. 'Bravery is an innate characteristic of beasts, while in human beings an independent spirit is actually contrary to nature.'[65] It is people, and not pigs, who are the gluttons: 'nothing that flies or swims or moves on land has escaped your so-called civilized and hospitable tables'.[66]

That non-humans give us good examples of bravery, fidelity, temperance and good sense – as Plato also insisted[67] – does not, of course, establish that they are 'really' virtuous. Real virtue, after all, may rest in a willed obedience to right reason, whereas non-humans act as nature bids them without needing to know why. That human beings act viciously in preferring a needlessly varied and expensive diet, 'made unclean by the slaughter of beasts',[68] does not establish that the beasts themselves are injured by that slaughter, that they are, after all, owed justice. I suspect that later Platonists (like Xenocrates, Plutarch, Plotinus, and Porphyry) were true to their master's spirit in respecting beasts, and that other Socratics, like Diogenes, were of a similar mind.[69]

In short, I suspect that the Stranger's association of Statesman and Swineherd, though it may seem to be an ordinarily Socratic comparison of the pretentious and the vulgar, actually has deeper meaning. Statesman is to Swineherd, in the first account, as Statesman is to Divine Shepherd in the myth. Pigs do 'naturally' what people do under protest. Civilisation is a necessary discipline, for us, but there is a better life, and some 'civilisation' is feverish.

> The victory of a state over itself does not come into the category of ideals....You might as well suppose that the sick body which has been purged by the doctor was therefore in the pink of condition, and disregard the body that never had any such need.[70]

Domestication and civilisation

> Already, over two or three hundred thousand years ago there were probably men (of the calibre of Plato and Einstein) who were of course not applying their intelligence to the solution of the same problems as these more recent thinkers; instead they were probably more interested in kinship.[71]

That is to say: they were breeding *us*.

This is obviously a difficult thought for people to embrace. It seems easy enough to see that our ancestors of long ago bred dogs and cattle that were more to their taste than wolves or buffalo. They hand-reared puppies, bred them carefully and drowned the runts. It is a measure of their success – and the co-operation of those other species – that efforts to domesticate new species are so unsuccessful: wild things often do not breed in captivity, and – if they do – do not become more tractable, more 'human', through the generations. Only the cat, it seems, has grown domestic during historical time.[72]

The great age of domestication was so long ago that domestic animals are much the same across the world – and that includes the human animal. Domestic animals – and humans – have many varieties, which are yet one species; they retain childish tendencies to play and to follow exemplars, and childish features such as large eyes and high foreheads; they are sexually active more of the year than their wild cousins. Children and human beings in general may be, as Plato said, touchy or occasionally intractable, but they are also astonishingly obedient: like dogs. Our traits were selected by our common ancestors, it seems, and it is now frequently remarked that we are better suited to a hunting–gathering life than to the disciplined toil of the agrarian and industrial worlds. It must be admitted that those who say so rarely act on their conviction! The question does arise, however,

whether perhaps distinct human groups might perhaps have been selected for distinctive traits. There is some evidence of 'natural selection' for physical characteristics suited to particular climates (for example, the Caucasian capacity to digest milk in adulthood). Some sociobiologists have suggested that, say, Tibetans are better suited to polyandry than most people are, and explained this, too, by 'natural selection'. Artificial selection might have served as well. The trouble is that, so far at least, sociobiologists' description of behavioural variety is as unconvincing as their description of the human norm. The idea that Tibetans are more polyandrous than Caucasians, or that Yanomamo males are more violent than Britons, and that this deserves evolutionary explanation, tells us a lot about the historical ignorance of biologists, but little about Tibetans or the Yanomamo.

The topic is not an easy one, especially because attempts to describe and then explain distinctions between human varieties may play into the hands of racists. But despite this danger, and the absence of clear cases, I do not think that we can ignore the possibility. Dogs may be much the same across the globe, but there are clearly different varieties, with different propensities. If pit-bulls shouldn't be bred because they're dangerous, or miniature chihuahuas because they're bound to be unhealthy, why may we not face similar dangers in the human sphere? Miscegenation helps, by preventing the isolation of gene pools. That may, indeed, be one of the devices that our ancestors created, forbidding people to breed within the dangerous degrees: human bars on incest are not wholly unlike the behavioural checks on inbreeding found in other species, but they are more complex, more obviously cultural.[73] Nietzsche was wrong to deride 'the hotch-potch human being', the mongrel:[74] mongrels are the best. But miscegenation is never entirely promiscuous: people select their breeding partners, in accordance with shared value systems. So it is likely that we will be breeding for behavioural characters we value: or rather, we will be trying to do so. Unfortunately, 'everyone is naturally drawn to the person most like himself, and that puts the whole state off balance'.[75] 'One should regard the prevention of mistakes here as a matter of supreme importance.'[76] Our problem is that the genotype, the inheritable factor, is not strictly tied to one particular phenotype.[77] We select partners by their overt characteristics, whatever their genetic character. The point is not – or not only – that we can be tricked, but that we cannot tell what other hidden effects their genes, whatever they are, might have in strange conjunctions, under new conditions. Natural selection is serendipitous; artificial is aimed at ends that may not be realisable. A character that is valued will be produced by many different genotypes, whose union will have unpredictable effects.

So we may gladly conclude that Plato's suggestion that we breed our rulers, and our servants, will not work. Even the Ottoman Empire, after all, that really sought to breed Janissaries,[78] has had little discernible effect. Even 'the Law of

Manu', dedicated to breeding four races of human being (so Nietzsche said[79]), has not really created distinct species of priests, warriors, traders and servants. Eugenicists imagine that we know far more than we do of what we value and what grounds those characters. There is a charming, but dangerous, naivity in the idea that I and my friends have valuable traits that depend upon our own 'genetic makeup', rather then – as is likely – on a shared upbringing. Those who believe that their children are bound to be like the 'Real Me' are in for a surprise. Even the less intrusive practice, of preventing births to couples 'with genetic defects' (as distinct from encouraging births to couples we admire), is unrealisable. Any couple at all have more 'possible offspring' than the stars of heaven,[80] of whom a significant number might be judged 'defective' because of genetic factors that – in other cases – had no bad effect at all. In brief, Platonic eugenicism is a fantasy once it steps beyond truisms about taking a good look at your prospective spouse's parents! Best leave it to the Divine Shepherd.

Yet somebody once did something like it. We cannot, in historical time, expect much effect from selective breeding. Promiscuous miscegenation, *non*-selective breeding, might even be a better tactic, for the species, so as to avoid even the appearance of distinct human varieties, though it is not one that I would recommend to anyone. But our ancestors succeeded. Prudence, personal affection, parental care and attention-grabbing they could take for granted: these are part of the primate biogram. They bred people to be obedient to abstract law and to the living law, their leaders. Those who could not or would not co-operate they put to death, or banished, or enslaved.

> Our fathers invented ritual as an artificial extension of instinct. They invented a ritual to detect and conserve all mutations in a human direction and eliminate regressions toward the animal norm. They devised ordeals in which normal animal instinctive behavior meant death and only those able to sin against instinct could survive to be human and father the next generation.[81]

The marriage patterns they invented might almost seem to anticipate Plato's demand that the statesman weave different characters together, especially the vigorous with the tranquil (310b),[82] except, of course, that it is Plato who is imitating *them*.[83]

Obedience to the living law

Domestication is a process whereby creatures that would otherwise be wild are bred and reared to live under a law. That law does not get its power from their consent: they are reared, under the law, so as to consent, and not be ruled only by immediate fear. Those who obey only because they are afraid to do otherwise are slaves, and the main thrust of philosophical ethics since the Stoics has been to

suggest that only those who do what they do because they see for themselves that it is right – or decree for themselves that it is right – are free. But the great mass of civilised humanity obeys the law neither from fear nor philosophical judgement. We have not been tamed, but bred, to be obedient, partly by the exaggeration of those childish features that we value in all our tame domestics. We defer to our superiors, keep off the grass, stop at red lights, wear suitable clothes and do not lick our knives, because it seems the natural thing to do, as natural as speaking our own mother tongue. That last analogy is worth consideration. Some of us (perhaps especially at an avowedly international gathering) may have made some attempt to view the various languages of Middle Earth, and actively decide which really 'cuts the world at the joints',[84] 'the letters with which the universe is spelled out' (278d). Maybe we then learnt that language and decided to do all our serious thinking in it. But I suspect that even at the third Symposium Platonicum there were rather few who did. We speak and think the language or languages that we do because we were brought up to do so. If we deny our mother tongue authority, we are unlikely to find any way of justifying our denial, being bereft of speech. We speak our mother tongue quite willingly, but not by choice. No doubt there are many radicals among us, and rebels elsewhere in the city: what is most striking about all of us is how *conventional* we are. When we chance to discover people – some identical twins, for example – who have their own idiolect, we think them freaks, not innovators.

There are those who live by 'sense' alone. The conviction that 'barbarians' do this was so pervasive for so long, and issued in such dire injustice, that we are now in danger of adopting the opposite error, of supposing that 'savages are the slave of custom', not of appetite. It could, on the contrary, be argued that 'savages' are indeed less custom-bound than we. 'We learn so early that we forget having learnt, and think that reason is our prompter'.[85] Even when we rebel we find the models of our rebellion ready to hand: 'it is a peculiarity of man that [he may] feel restless and rebellious but he cannot give his rebelliousness a definite direction except by imitating previous rebels, who have themselves imitated earlier ones'.[86] Despots gain power over us by presenting themselves in the guise of kings, who themselves reminded us of gods. Filmer, whom Locke mocked, was essentially correct to think that we obey our masters because long ago we obeyed our fathers (an obedience that the masters happily enforce upon literal children so as to keep the habit live). The laws, remember, can correctly claim that we are their offspring and their servant:

> Or are you so clever that it has escaped your notice that your country is more to be prized and revered, and is more sacred than your mother, your

> father and all the rest of your forebears, and is held in greater esteem both among gods and among men (those who have understanding); and that you must pay honour to and be more submissive, even servile, to your country when it is angry than to your father; and that you must either persuade it or do what it commands.[87]

Somebody, in brief, domesticated us, and left us with the laws and custom of obedience. Good liberals usually object to Socrates' argument for absolute, passive obedience, recalling that he himself insisted, it is said, that he must obey God rather than his fellow citizens.[88] It perhaps escapes their notice that God speaks to Socrates through quite traditional channels, and that he is not even confronted by incompatible commands. Instructed (by Delphic Apollo) to practise philosophy, and (by the laws of Athens) either to keep silent or to suffer death, he correctly infers that he should suffer death. 'He chose to die through his loyalty to the laws rather than to live through violating them.'[89] That is the nature of passive obedience, as Berkeley was to point out in eighteenth-century Ireland. Anything less than that duty does not actually provide us with a reason for obedience unto death at all. Why should I consent to my own expropriation or execution in order to keep myself secure? Why should I die for the Water Board, or at the command of an arbitrarily selected group of variously virtuous people, unless I believe that they are *owed* obedience, as representatives of something more divine?[90] 'Even the Romans understood that their sometimes clownish Emperors must be "deified" if they were to merit obedience – for who but a slave would obey a merely human master?'[91]

> The rights of the State over us and its claims upon us diminish in proportion to its loss of transcendental legitimacy. When it no longer acknowledges any transcendental authority, it must become our servant, providing protection and certain amenities – a kind of glorified Water and Sewerage Authority.[92]

But my object here is not to defend the argument for passive obedience, nor even to press the case – indirectly – for anarchism, but to identify evidence of our domestication. We behave – even good liberals behave – as creatures who expect to obey the laws, and think of them, in practice, as voices from the past, even if we have to invent a past for them to speak from!

> When the laws under which people are brought up have by some heaven-sent good fortune remained unchanged over a long period, so that no-one remembers or has heard of things ever being any different, the soul is filled

> with such respect for tradition that it shrinks from meddling with it in any way. Somehow or other the legislator must find a method of bringing about this situation in the state.[93]

Left to ourselves, after the great catastrophe when God removed His hand from the world's tiller, we would be living in small, transient groups like other primates, other mammals. Existing hunter–gatherers, though we should never assume that they have remained unchanged since the first beginnings, give us our best model of what life was like. Custom was already king, but there were no other kings, nor laws enforced on all inhabitants. Even the hunt was felt to be a sort of dance with willing partners: our species always prefers to think that we are loved, that beasts are glad to die for us, but at least the hunters did not, do not, think that they are God's favourites. It is, as Aristotle also said, absurd to think that people are the most important creatures.[94] In hunter–gatherer societies, egalitarianism rules: there are no human hierarchies, nor natural ones. The process of our self-domestication had begun, but it takes its present shape with pastoral and agricultural economies. We began to impose laws not of their making on the beasts, and on our separate classes. It does not, of course, follow that they, that we, are now oppressed by our domestic status: we would not exist at all without it. It also does not follow that we are wrong to think that some domestic circumstances are oppressive.

The habit of rational thought, as we now know it, arose – it has been argued – from social classification.[95] Somewhere in our past some people appropriated authority, began to speak as God's mouthpiece, with whatever help from existing images. 'Every ninth year Minos used to go to a consultation with his father Zeus, and laid down laws for [the Cretan] cities on the basis of the god's pronouncements'.[96] As their rule spread beyond the range of word-of-mouth, they laid down laws by which the young were bred. 'The law's origin,' said Kropotkin:

> is the desire of the ruling class to give permanence to customs imposed by themselves for their own advantage. Its character is the skilful comingling of customs useful to society, customs which have no need of law to ensure respect, with other customs useful only to rulers, injurious to the mass of the people and maintained only by the fear of punishment.[97]

After a while it became impossible for most of us to imagine that people could ever live outside such god-derived authority. The ideal always was that the laws might be written in our hearts, and we act – of ourselves – as they would have us do. So far the breeding programme (partly because it has not been consistent) has not achieved this supreme consistency (there are even a few wilful anarchists about). Instead we must live with conflict between what we would be doing and thinking

and what 'the laws' require of us, whether they are laws of thought or laws of the land. It is for this reason that attempts to 'rationalise' the laws by which we live are so naive: the rationalists themselves are obedient to laws that they were bred, and reared to obey, and for which they can themselves give no better reason, once they have been challenged, than more honest or self-conscious loyalists. 'Why should the British have a monarchy?' Why indeed? Why should 'the British' be a nation-state at all?

Do the laws have real authority? One way of telling the story certainly, it seems to me, must diminish our respect for them. The gods, as Plato's uncle said, were invented by some past legislator,[98] as was the sense that there were things we *should* do even if we didn't. If that invention was self-serving why should we respect it? 'Does law so analysed coerce you much?'[99] But maybe, though there are bad imitations of the divine lawgiver, there has also been a real one. Maybe it was after all some god that gave us law, and reason to obey. As in an earlier chapter: 'the pre-nineteenth century state did not serve nations; it did not even serve communities. It served God, the Heavenly Mandate, the Law of Allah.'[100] It is easy to agree that unlawful conquerors often claimed that mandate to excuse their crimes: but this neither proves that there never was a real mandate, nor goes any way to justifying those governments which act yet more intrusively without bothering to invent excuses.

'It has been said, not without good reason', Philo of Alexandria said, 'that cities can only make progress in well-being if either kings are philosophers or philosophers are kings.'[101] For Philo, it was Moses who combined those characters (and also those of legislator, priest and prophet). Such a king is a living law; and the law, conversely, is a just king.[102] The proof that Moses was the best of all lawgivers, and that his laws truly come from God, was that they have endured. 'That which no famine nor pestilence nor war nor king nor tyrant, no rebel assault of soul or body or passion or vice, nor any other evil whether of God's sending or man's making, could undo, must surely be precious beyond what words can describe.'[103] The fact that the Jews are indeed still here, while all the empires are 'one with Nineveh and Tyre' is indeed something worth considering. Philo's candidate has not been the only one, but he is unusually clear about what is required in such a king and priest.

But who inherited Moses' authority? Philo is adamant that Moses displayed his virtue and intelligence in *not* appointing the heirs of his body, as the later theory of 'divine right' required.[104] He would have been even more scornful of the claims of the Hellenistic kings, as he was of Caligula's. Any number of tyrants can imitate the true priest–king, whose:

> first duty is to carry the pattern enshrined in his heart and so be in a sense transformed from a human being into the nature of the world; and if one may

> dare to say so – and in speaking of truth one may well dare to state the truth – be himself a little world, a microcosm.[105]

> The true statesman alone is able to forge by the wondrous inspiration of the kingly art this bond of true conviction [this manifestation of the divine occurring in a race which is in truth of supernatural lineage]. (309c).

In the absence of our great high priest, we had better trust instead to the laws laid down of old. Those who would have us break them are almost certainly deceivers (300c), but it is still true that 'if ever by the grace of God some natural genius were born, and had the chance to assume such power, he would have no need of laws to control him'.[106] A moral genius, a saint, a sage who claimed to know the Right and Rational Way to live might be correct to overthrow tradition: those rationalists who naively think that *they* can do better than ten thousand years rarely give evidence that they are such sages. 'If all constitutions are unprincipled the best thing to do is live in a democracy' (303b), a gathering of people with their own inheritance. Or to put the point more forcibly: in the absence of a living law, our best bet is to find ourselves in an anarchical community, one where there are no self-styled experts to dictate to us. Unfortunately for us, if we aren't already there, it would be wrong to seek, by revolution, to achieve it.

> Where the ruler of a state is not a god but a mortal, people have no respite from toil and misfortune. The lesson is that we should make every effort to imitate the life men are said to have led under Cronos; we should run our public and our private life, our homes and our cities, in obedience to what little spark of immortality lies in us, and dignify this distribution of reason with the name of 'law'. But take an individual man or an oligarchy or even a democracy that lusts in its heart for pleasure and demands to have its fill of everything it wants…and rides roughshod over the laws, it's impossible to escape disaster.[107]

It would be wrong to despair of some political salvation. Maybe the priest–king will return; maybe we have some hope of resting on the remnant of tradition. In the meantime, most of us had best attempt to found the ideal city in our hearts,[108] whether or not it ever exists on earth.

Notes

1. C. Rowe (ed.) *Reading the Statesman: proceedings of the Third Symposium Platonicum* (Academia Verlag: Sankt Augustin, 1995), pp. 236–52.
2. The fact that Plato elsewhere makes use of that same distinction (*Philebus,* 16a; *Laws,* 2.653e) does not prove otherwise (*pace* Scodel 1987, p. 57). Humans may have distinctive traits, but 'non-humans' no more identifies a genuine class than 'non-umbrellas'.
3. Plato *Laws,* 5.740; see also 6.761. Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Philosophers* 3.15 f. testifies that Plato believed that 'living creatures could not have survived unless they had apprehended the idea, and had been endowed by nature with intelligence to that end': wisdom is not confined to humankind.
4. A topic addressed in 'Platonism and the Gods of place': T. Chappell (ed.) *The Metaphysics of Environmentalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).
5. See Figgis 1914.
6. Plato, too, identified women as having an inferior potential for virtue, and as inclined to be secretive and crafty (*Laws,* 6.781), but the Athenian also insists that any city could double its achievements by encouraging men and women to have a common purpose and throw all their energies into the same activities (*Laws,* 7.805). This suggests that his strictures only applied to contemporary women, and that – as a matter of faith – he expected better.
7. Scodel suggests (1987, p. 49) that the Stranger here neglects the importance of caring for people as individuals, as Socrates perhaps did. I am not persuaded that Plato intended us to think the Stranger absurd.
8. *Laws,* 680e: the passage is quoted, and misrepresented as an endorsement of violent conquest, by Popper 1945, vol. I, pp. 50, 225.
9. A theme taken up by Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1.1094a6 ff.
10. Xenophon (1925) *Cyropaidia,* I.1.2. Xenophon went on to say that Cyrus managed it, but Plato suggests that he failed because though 'he went on accumulating herds and flocks for [his childrens's] benefit – and many a herd of human beings too,…he didn't know that his intended heirs were not being instructed in the traditional Persian discipline (the Persians being shepherds)' (*Laws,* 3.695).
11. As Mitchell 1980, p. 33. The assumption that Plato is complimenting, rather than describing, us in saying that we are 'free' is so ingrained as to defeat all argument.
12. Plato *Laws,* 6.766.
13. Plato *Laws,* 7.808.
14. See also Plato *Laws,* 4.713.
15. Barker 1918, p. 328n oddly equates this with 'community of wives': but there is no procreation in the Golden Age, and probably no sex (see 274a).
16. Aeschylus *Prometheus Vinctus,* 442 ff.
17. According to the Athenian Stranger, it is mathematics that wakes up the sleepy ignoramus (*Laws,* 5.747).
18. Porphyry *De Abstinentia,* 1.31. It may also not be wholly irrelevant that the boys and girls of Magnesia must dance together naked, 'provided sufficient modesty and restraint are displayed by all concerned' (Plato *Laws,* 6.772).
19. Herbert 1937, p. 72.
20. Cited in Miles 1961, p. 128.
21. Philo *Legum Allegoriae,* 2.56. I was pleased to discover from John Dillon's paper (Dillon 1995) at the conference where this chapter was first aired that

Proclus makes exactly this use of the nakedness motif in his comments on the *Politicus* (*PT* 5.7–8). I do not to find all this as silly as Dillon fears we might (in fact, not at all).

22. See *Homeric Hymn,* 10; Theognis, 55–6; see Cole 1967.
23. Barker 1918, p. 319n.
24. Plato *Laws,* 6.777b.
25. Aalders 1975, p. 14, 24.
26. Xenophon (1925) *Memorabilia,* 1.2.32: a bad cowherd lets his cattle decrease and go to the bad, like the Thirty.
27. Plato *Laws,* 1.628; see Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 10.1177b4 ff.
28. Plato *Laws,* 5.735: the Stranger also identifies milder purges (including sending the rebellious poor away as colonists), but the competent statesman should not have allowed his community to be thus polarised between the rich and poor (*Laws,* 5.744).
29. Plato *Laws,* 4.720 ff.
30. Philo *Life of Moses,* I.60 f.: (1950), vi, p. 308.
31. Varro II.4.17 f.
32. Plato *Crito,* 50e ff.
33. Dio Chrysostom 6.20 f.
34. Diogenes: Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Philosophers,* 6.4.
35. Lewis 1952, p. 159.
36. Plato, *Republic,* 2.372.
37. Berry 1989, criticising Melling 1987, p. 77.
38. In this they were closer to the ancient norm than to the modern. It seems certain that animal products were a minor part of the diet in the densely populated core of the ancient world: see Foxhall and Forbes 1982. According to Xenophon, Socrates reckoned people who eat meat (*opson*) by itself, or as anything more than a relish for their bread, are greedy (*opsophagoi*): Xenophon (1925) *Memorabilia,* 3.14.2 f.
39. Porphyry *De Abstinentia,* 4.2.
40. Plato *Laws,* 6.782.
41. Plato *Laws,* 3.679; the Hebrew scriptures suggest that permission to eat flesh was only given after the Flood (*Genesis* 9). See further, Shaw 1982.
42. Skemp 1952, p. 140n.
43. Plato *Theaetetus,* 161c.
44. Plato *Laws,* 4.716c. People, the Athenian says, have been created as God's toy, and should put God at the centre of their thoughts (*Laws,* 7.803): we should, that is, spend our lives 'at play'.
45. Epicharmus, cited as a Platonist before Plato by Diogenes Laertius op. cit. 3.16.
46. Plutarch *Gryllus,* 987b: (1957), vol. 12, p. 501. Plato (*Laws,* 1.642) allows his Spartan to say that Athenian virtue is like that: 'they are good not because of compulsion but spontaneously, by grace of heaven'.
47. Plato *Laws,* 1.639.
48. Porphyry *De Abstinentia,* 3.19.
49. On which latter, see Skydsgaard 1988, p. 76.
50. Bolkestein 1958, p. 23.
51. *Oration,* 7: see Hodgkinson 1988, p. 46.
52. Homer *Odyssey,* 14.96 ff.
53. See Jameson 1988, p. 99.

54. Nausicydes: Xenophon (1925) *Memorabilia,* 2.7.6.
55. Aristophanes *Acharnians,* 729 ff.
56. Theophrastus HP 2.7.4: cited in Hodgkinson 1988, p. 49.
57. See *The Independent* 29.8.92.
58. Chesterton 1914, p. 108.
59. Plato *Laws,* 7.824. Jameson comments that 'the damage done by wild boars to "the works of men" reaches mythical proportions' (e.g. *Iliad,* 9.538–42; Herodotus 1.36): Jameson 1988, p. 99.
60. So much so that Trevor Saunders (*Plato: The Laws* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 326) translates 'theria' as 'pigs' in the Athenian's description of money-grubbers (*Laws,* 8.831): this is a warning not to rely even on excellent translations!
61. Xenophon (1925) *Memorabilia,* 1.2.30.
62. Porphyry *De Abstinentia,* 1.14.
63. Porphyry *De Abstinentia,* 3.20.
64. Xenophon (1925) *Memorabilia,* 1.3.7: Circe made swine by providing a ppetisers.
65. Plutarch *Gryllus,* 987f.
66. *Gryllus* 991d.
67. Plato *Laws,* 8.840: 'the citizens' standards should not be lower than those of birds and many other wild animals which are born into large herds and live chaste and unmarried without intercourse until the time comes for them to breed'.
68. *Gryllus,* 991c.
69. There are two other famous pigs, namely Pyrrho's: one that 'he showed his indifference' by washing, and another that he pointed out on board a ship as an example of an admirable tranquillity, in that it went on eating while the storm was raging (Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Philosophers,* 9.66, 68).
70. Plato *Laws,* 1.628.
71. Lévi-Strauss 1968, pp. 349–52: p. 351. Lévi-Strauss's estimate may be too large: current theory suggests a date of 100,000 years ago for the first recognisable members of our species. On the other hand, we do not know that *Homo habilis* or *Homo erectus* were dumb, or even whether they were really of a different biological species.
72. See Tabor 1983, p.15; see also Clutton-Brock 1987.
73. An issue discussed in my *Animals and their Moral Standing.* According to the Athenian the desire for incestuous pleasure is completely stifled by the doctrine that such acts are absolutely unholy (Plato *Laws,* 8.838); but see also Xenophon (1925) *Memorabilia,* 4.4.20 f., where Hippias says that isn't 'a law of God' because some transgress it, and Socrates has nothing to offer against the practice of parent–child incest but the probable weakness of the offspring in view of the age difference (which misses the point).
74. Nietzsche 1968, p. 57.
75. Plato *Laws,* 6.773, especially with regard to relative wealth: the Athenian is very concerned to avoid the development of separate castes of rich and poor
76. Plato *Laws,* 6.771.
77. 'Genetic predispositions seldom stand in a one-to-one relationship to a phenotypic trait; they seem to need a particular environment or experiential factor in order to yield their result, or they will not result in anything'

(Noske 1989, pp. 90 f.).
78. See Toynbee 1934, p. 32.
79. Nietzsche 1968, p. 56.
80. Each partner could produce up to 2^n genetically distinct gametes (where *n* is the number of loci on the chromosomes). The number of possible combinations is therefore anything up to 2^{2n}. That theoretical maximum is probably rarely achievable in practice, since each partner will be homozygous at very many loci: that is, they can only contribute one allele to that locus. Many of the combinations will also be unviable under the particular conditions obtaining at the time of procreation. On the other hand, most of the resulting genotypes will have indefinitely many phenotypic products: each one of identical twins does not actually turn out to be identically the same as the other.
81. McKenna 1973, p. 114.
82. And Plato *Laws,* 6.773.
83. Or modern palaeo-anthropologists who are imitating Plato?
84. Plato *Phaedrus,* 265.
85. Hocart 1970, p. 206.
86. Hocart 1970, p. 126.
87. Plato *Crito,* 51a ff: Woozley 1979, pp. 151 f.
88. Plato *Apology,* 29d. Xenophon (1925) *Memorabilia,* 4.4.1 ff makes clear that Socrates' *disobedience* of the people, and the Thirty, rested on his recognition that their orders were against the law.
89. Xenophon (1925) *Memorabilia,* 4.4.4.
90. See my *Civil Peace and Sacred Order* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 85.
91. Eaton 1977, p. 90.
92. Eaton 1977, p. 98. See my *Civil Peace and Sacred Order,* pp. 94 f.
93. Plato *Laws,* 7.798: the Athenian's solution is sanctification.
94. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics,* 6.1141a20 ff.
95. Durkheim and Mauss 1963. Needham's introduction (pp. vii–xlviii) demolishes much of the argument, but the claim remains one worth taking seriously. Similar claims are now being made by feminist epistemologists.
96. Plato *Laws,* 1.624: the Athenian describes Cretan belief.
97. Kropotkin 1976, p. 34.
98. Critias *Sisyphus,* fr.1: A. Nauck *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Leipzig 1889), p. 771 f. Strictly, a character in his play said this, but rumour suggests that Critias himself meant it.
99. Browning, 'Bishop Blougram's Apology': 1912, p.150.
100. Navari 1981, p.13.
101. Philo 1950 II.2.
102. Philo 1950, II.4; see also I.162. See Goodenough 1928.
103. Philo 1950, II.16.
104. Philo 1950, II.142.
105. Philo 1950, II.135.
106. Plato *Laws,* 9.875.
107. Plato *Laws,* 4.714. The age of Kronos, as depicted in *The Laws* does not have the peculiar features of the *Politicus*'s version. It does not follow that Plato had any different age in mind.
108. Plato *Republic,* 9.592.

10 Enlarging the community[1]

Wisdom, ordinary decency and human rights

One of the roots of philosophical humanism is to be found in Stoicism. This is not to say that Stoics all thought that 'all men were created equal, endowed by their Creator with equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'.[2] On the contrary, the mass of suffering humanity were slaves, and morally incapable. The wise, if anyone was wise, owned everything: they alone, whatever their social standing amongst the unconsidered many, were free, royal and possessing all things. But even those who were not wise could come to see their kinship. Some respect is owed to any human being, of whatever class or race or gender. 'The mere fact that someone is a man makes it incumbent on another man not to regard him as alien.'[3] Nothing, by contrast, is owed to what is less than human. No bargain can be made between human and non-human, and everything non-human may be used solely for human purposes. Pigs, it was said, are only walking larders, with a soul to keep them fresh in place of salt. Anyone who expressed sympathy for brutes must be something of a brute. This is the dogma that was, unfortunately, endorsed by Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, Kant and any number of self-justifying moderns. Moderns, unlike their predecessors, feel no qualms at adopting as their goals exactly the 'bestial' purposes the older moralists deplored. Stoics certainly thought it right to use brutes for good human ends – but would not therefore have endorsed their use to create, or test, cosmetics or minor drugs or luxury foods. Someone with such tastes would be no better than the brutes themselves.[4] Moderns have also usually forgotten that even the wise owned nothing *absolutely,* since they 'own' it only in a sense that allows the gods and their peers to own it too: as Thomas Jefferson insisted, in line with the common law of England and ancient ethics, we have no claim upon the land itself, but only on its lawful fruits.[5] Nothing, said Locke, was given to man to spoil or destroy.[6] The point preceded Locke: 'this is what an early Muslim legal scholar, Abu al-Faraj, says: People do not in fact own things, for the real owner is their Creator; they only enjoy the usufruct of things, subject to the Divine Law'.[7]

Stoic ethics culminate in a firm division between the human and the less-than-human, as well as between the wise and foolish. But it is grounded in natural impulses shared with other animals.[8]

> The Stoics say that an animal has self-preservation as the object of its first impulse....The first thing appropriate to every animal is its own constitution and the consciousness of this. For nature was not likely either to alienate the animal itself, or to make it and then neither alienate it nor appropriate it.[9]

Nature also ensures that each sort of animal will be similarly attached to what is needed for its survival – including other creatures of appropriate kinds. 'We are an animal, but a gregarious one which needs someone else as well. For this reason too we inhabit cities; for there is no human being who is not part of a city.'[10] Hierocles also identifies what are, as it were, different circles around each of us, to whose inmates we are variously attached.

> The first and closest circle is the one which a person has drawn as though around a centre, his own mind....The second one further removed from the centre but enclosing the first circle…contains parents, siblings, wife, and children. The third one has in it uncles and aunts, grandparents, nephews, nieces and cousins.[11]

The widest circle is that of the whole human race, and our duty is to try and respect the people of each as if they belonged to the next inner circle, drawing them closer in until we mind as much about distant strangers as about ourselves (or as near as we can manage: 'for no-one agrees with [the Stoics] that the appropriation is equal – that is contrary to plain fact and one's self-awareness'.[12])

Oikeiosis, or appropriation, is the process whereby creatures are 'attached' to what matters for their preservation. That same process helps to constitute their very being. An entity is something whose parts co-operate in furthering their common survival. A human individual will generally need friends and family even to survive as a single organism: but those associates are not merely instrumental goods. Even the foolish are not wholly self-absorbed, or else the 'self' they are attached to is larger than their individual bodies. We 'identify' with larger wholes. The wise will also choose what nature has appropriated to them, but for a grander reason. Ordinarily foolish people, like other creatures, do what comes naturally, because that's what they feel like doing. The wise may do exactly the same things (to the outward eye), but do them because they see they should. Lacking that perception, and suffering from many sicknesses, 'some will do wrong, while others will perform right actions: for these are natural to them'.[13] Only the wise know why

this or that is needed for the world to be, and do it because they know that God or Fate or Nature will have it so.

My concern here is not with the wise, nor with that aspect of right reason that requires us never to complain, never to regret, never to be surprised.[14] 'If I actually knew that I was fated to be ill,' said Chrysippus, 'I would even have an impulse to be ill. For my foot too, if it had intelligence, would have an impulse to get muddy'.[15] Once they have understood what the world requires of them, the wise would wish it. The mind of the wise is the very mind of God, for they identify themselves entirely with the world. Since we do not understand, and are attached to smaller wholes than the great world itself, we strive to follow such impulses as preserve what is appropriate to us. No Stoic would seek to blame us when we act in ways that lead to personal disaster, but the disaster – or what to us is disastrous – will still come. What is it that we had best preserve, and how should we do it?

Epictetus's advice runs as follows:

> Consider who you are: in the first place a human being, that is, someone who has nothing more authoritative than moral purpose, but subordinates everything else to this and keeps it free from slavery and subordination....Furthermore you are a citizen of the world and a part of it, not as one of the underlings but one of the foremost constituents. For you are capable of attending to the divine government and of calculating its consequences. What then is a citizen's profession? To regard nothing as of private interest, to deliberate about nothing as though one were cut off [i.e. from the whole]....Next keep in mind that you are a son…next know that you are also a brother…next if you are a town councillor, remember that you are a councillor; if young, that you are young, if old, that you are old; if a father, that you are a father. For each of these titles, when rationally considered, always suggests the actions appropriate to it.[16]

The classes to which we belong are not merely descriptive, but normative. By knowing what we are, we can tell at once what we should do. Sometimes Stoics emphasised the primacy of universal law, world citizenship. 'There will not be a different law at Rome and at Athens, or a different law now and in the future, but one law, everlasting and immutable, will hold good for all peoples and all times.'[17] Only those obedient to that one law can really be free, or friends: 'all who are not virtuous are foes, enemies, slaves and estranged from one another, including parents and children, brothers and brothers, relations and relations'.[18] Only the virtuous will even manage to fulfil their lesser duties, as town councillors or parents. The

rest of us, being vicious, cannot console ourselves that we manage to be good parents, or good councillors despite being failures on the wider stage. At other times the Stoics could agree that we could, and should, do our lesser duties even without a firm grip on right reason. Nature requires us to identify with family and friends and cities, and think ill of those who fail to. The wise may justify their local loyalties by reasoning them out from the first principles of cosmic citizenship: the rest of us are loyal long before we even glimpse the possibility of wisdom.

Amongst the loyalties we actually and historically form are ones towards domestic or working animals. A child's affection for a cat or dog or horse is not much different from her affection for her human friends and family. The child values its company and reciprocal affection, demands that others care for it and could easily resent occasional bids for solitude or independence. Those who work with 'animals' are usually, and naturally, attached to them even when they have put 'childish things' away. They come to see, more or less knowledgeably, with the others' eyes, and allow them more or less of liberty to go their own way when it suits them. Dogs, cats and horses are the commonest non-human creatures to elicit, and partly reciprocate, affection, in the settled West. But cows, pigs, hawks, snakes, spiders all have their admirers, here and elsewhere. It seems indeed to be a species characteristic that we readily adopt small (smallish) creatures and rear them in our midst, expecting them to learn enough of our ways to be called 'tame'. It is no contradiction to add that we frequently betray what trust they have in us.

Stoics, of course, do not usually mention such attachments. There may be reasons why we should detach ourselves from them, and form 'adult' loyalties instead. People who go on loving 'animals', at the expense of more 'mature' relationships, are thought to be 'social inadequates' even if they do no harm to anyone. If we were more Stoic we might add that people who go on loving chance-met friends at the expense of larger loyalties are more dangerous still – while also suspecting that those who *profess* to follow larger loyalties and betray their friends are more likely to be villains. What is strange is that moralists of this stamp do not even recognise the fact of human–animal attachment, except as a stage in education. Maybe youngsters who never learn to love and take responsibility for a 'pet' will be less able to manage more mature relationships. Maybe children who abuse those animals in their power will, dreadfully, go on to abuse such humans as they can. Here in Britain, at least, we instruct our children to be 'kind to animals', and hope they will go on to be kind to human beings. But even in Britain, and even disregarding those who unashamedly oppress both wild and domestic animals, those who are 'too kind' are judged sentimentalists, and scorned.

The species characteristic that allows us to 'tame' the young of other species (and eventually to breed more easily tameable varieties) no doubt has a neo-

Darwinian explanation. Hominids who could identify with other animals in this way had a better chance of managing them: hunters could guess which way they'd run or how to get the help of other hunting species; pastoralists and farmers could appreciate good health and beauty in the creatures whose milk or meat or labour they required; even traders and industrialists found it easier to be courteous towards their neighbours, strangers and competitors because they'd had practice disentangling other creatures' aims, and been in the habit of liking such dissimilar beings. Whatever the wise do, many of us feel friendly toward strangers because they remind us of our pets!

It is not improbable that our ancestors selected other creatures for those infantile features that please us in our young: cuteness and an affectionate intelligence. Delighting in those things we bred ourselves, and our domestics, to display them. Civilised human and domestic non-human animals alike are 'tame': that is, we are tied by affection and obedience to our stations. For most of human history most people never matured beyond that point: we stayed loyal to our superiors and did not expect ourselves to be self-movers, independent agents. For most of human history most human beings have been slaves or wives or children. For most of human history there was no reason to expect that different rules applied to humans and non-humans. 'Non-human animals are in part *constitutive* of human societies – any adequate specification of societies as structures of social relationship or interaction must include reference to non-human animals as occupants of social positions and as terms in social relationships.'[19] 'The ox is the poor man's slave', said Aristotle, accurately insisting that in human society there were always parents and children, men and women, free and slaves.[20] Even the 'free' (the self-owned) – except in such self-governing cities as Aristotle thought were best suited to a core human nature – rarely ruled themselves or thought of themselves as having 'rights' to do so.

Affections that bind associates together, in brief, can easily be manifested in strongly domineering forms that give little liberty to those who are, sincerely, 'loved'. Those affections pay no heed to species boundaries. What has happened to ensure that so many moralists now think it 'obvious' that all and only *human* beings are really owed 'respect', and that the actual affections felt between human and non-human should be disregarded?

Deconstructing humanism

Humanism decrees that every 'human being' is of a 'rational' kind that merits a respect far greater than we could reasonably give to any non-rational creature. We can make explicit bargains with such rational creatures, but not with the non-rational. Because we *can* do this, some say, we should behave as if we have

already agreed to treat each other 'decently' (though no such actual agreement to be decent could affect us if we weren't already decent). The historical fact is, of course, that we have more reason to suspect that our ancestors made bargains with wild dogs than that they made a bargain with all human strangers. Dogs can be domesticated: strangers cannot always be enslaved, or bargained with. The Stoic response, which was also Spinoza's, was that every human being was attached, by nature, to the nature common to all human beings. The point was not merely that we are gregarious animals, but that in liking what we come to realise we are we are bound to like, to admire, to seek to preserve the nature we have in common with all other humans. Why we should not equally admire the nature we have in common, say, with all mammals remains moot.

The character or set of related characters which has usually been identified as the human essence is a capacity to speak a human language, to make choices about one's future, to organise communal actions in accordance with some freshly negotiated plan, to recognise oneself as one creature amongst many, having a history, a character, a hope of change.[21] '*Homo sapiens*' names a species uniquely and universally endowed with language, self-consciousness and a capacity for life under the law in a community of the like-minded. Aristotle's dicta that humans are political animals, animals with language, animals capable of recognising and acting upon general principles all amount to the same thing, a picture of humanity that identifies human beings as something unlike all other animals (though Aristotle, as I have already pointed out, was not committed to the view that *all* human beings are like that). Some have added that the capacity to make tools to alter the environment, and to organise the labour of so doing, makes a crucial difference.

Ancient moralists might have agreed that there were human beings who deserved respect (the wise, the saintly, the heroic), yet felt no impulse to respect the mere fact of a shared 'humanity'. Some might have added that we should love even the greatest wretch or villain, but not because their nature (or ours) had merited such love. We are still influenced by the idea that conspecifics share 'the same nature', that a biological species is a natural kind, with its very own 'essence'. In coming to love, or at least respect, any fellow human being (as being a human being) we are bound to love or at least respect all other humans. We may, of course, be irrationally and personally attached to some particular human beings, and feel indifferent to others who are, 'objectively', just like them (that is, no impartial judge would notice any important difference). But it is a mark of rationality to be moved instead (or at least as well) by characters that do not depend on any such irrational attachment. 'Rational' moralists of this kind, like the Stoic wise man, may deduce a duty to care for 'their own family and friends', but would not accept a personal attachment as a really 'moral' reason for that care. 'Rational' moralists,

correspondingly, deny that any attachment to tame animals could count against their duty to humankind.

Not all our conspecifics can actually join the conversation that identifies us all, importantly, as human. Some are too young, too old, too foolish or too damaged. Most of us prefer to believe, or to pretend, that even those who cannot, in fact, converse with us still *could* if things were different, and are owed the same respect as human beings without those disabilities. Some recent moralists have suggested that this is superstition, and that those who can't converse should not be treated as if they could. 'Becoming a person' (which is to say, a creature that can have real rights) is a slow, socially determined happening. Creatures that aren't (yet) persons may be treated gently, but are not wronged by being imprisoned or killed. It seems indeed that Aristotle's notion of a 'natural slave' is still alive and well: such slaves have no will of their own, and are rather helped than otherwise by being treated as means to their owners' goals. Not that those 'personists' who hold to this view actually admit to approving of slavery.

Did Aristotle contradict himself by holding both that there was a universal human essence, and that there were some 'humans' (biologically so called) who were not fully moral agents? The truth is that he did not think there was an 'essence of humanity', shared by all members of the species. Human beings *in general* have to decide what to do, and those who wonder how best to live must obviously decide on their own answers. It doesn't follow that those who can't decide, who lack that power, aren't *human,* nor that we owe them nothing. We may even owe them such assistance as we can to overcome their disability: children should be brought up to be the agents they could not have been without our care; if those incapable of moral agency could possibly be cured, they should be. I doubt if Aristotle thought they could: their defects were deep-rooted. Other humanists have held that creatures not of our own species cannot be cured of moral imbecility (of not being agents), because the mechanism is not even potentially there, but that our conspecifics always could be. Whether this distinction is a real one, who can say? My purpose is rather to bury 'humanism' than praise it, but without adopting the new 'personism' in its place.

Humanism, traditionally understood, demands the real existence of a natural kind, humanity. The problem is – as before – that biological species are not natural kinds. There is no character that a thing has to have if it is to count as a member of a particular biological *taxon* – except the historical character of being a member, by descent, of a named set of populations. A species, in modern terms, is not a set of creatures with a shared and essential nature, but a set of interbreeding populations. It seems to follow that if we consider human beings as a biological class we cannot expect that all such creatures share a nature. Maybe all humans presently known to us can talk, or live under negotiated agreements with their fellows, just as all reptiles have three-chambered hearts: but there is nothing to say they must. We

might yet discover a genuinely human tribe that has lost the gift of language properly so-called.[22] There is no single nature that species members certainly display. 'Humans' might even turn out to be a merely nominal class, like weeds or fishes, identified as such only because a given community chooses to do so. If it does identify a real species (as seems likely) that species is simply a collection of creatures united by genealogical relationships, not phenomenal or genetic resemblances.

Consider an analogy. 'Mammalism', so to call it, does play a part in the choices that we make: furry creatures with faces get a better deal than scaly ones (unless they are rats). But even if we elevated this subjective preference to the point of objective principle (as it might be: all really 'moral' beings must respect all creatures that are cuddly and care for their young) it would surely be odd to deny respect to non-mammals that did the same, and respect what are technically mammals even though they didn't. It would be odder still to go on being mammalists when we had found out that, strictly, there were no mammals (any more than fishes). And that, unfortunately for humanists, is the point.

On the one hand, it is not easy to see why a shared nature should count for quite so much. Even if the reason why I value a particular companion would also, in other circumstances, give me reason to value a quite different one, it does not follow that I should now value that other being just as much, or do as much for her or to her. It might even happen that the fact of a shared nature is a reason to be very wary of that other: those who share a nature may be real competitors. From which it might follow that I will naturally be attached to those sufficiently unlike me, or unlike those I am at first attached to, not to be rivals. Of course, if I had been born across a border I would be just as attached to those I now oppose: why should I therefore not oppose them? If Nature or God or Fate can require me to love *this* woman, *this* country, *these* cats and *these* children, maybe I will thereby understand the feelings of my enemies for *their* loved ones. Will I therefore love them too?

On the other hand, even if a shared nature does give some reason for a wider respect or loyalty than at first we feel, what reason do we have to suppose that all our conspecifics have any such shared nature? If species are not natural kinds, then neither is humankind a kind. Consider a possible future – maybe that imagined by Olaf Stapledon on a future Neptune, after the great migration. In that age, he fantasised, the then human species evolved to fill many different niches. Amongst the descendants of our human stock were (will be) sea-squirts, grazers, pack hunters, porpoises, bats and creatures recognisably like 'us'.[23] Practically all the 'animals' of that future world were (will be) hominid. Maybe several different contemporaneous species could be speakers, though with somewhat different innate speech-patterns. Even in our world 'species-barriers' (which is to say, bars against interbreeding) are not as clear, nor as consistent, as popular thought supposes. What reason could there be on Neptune to attach ourselves entirely to

'our species' or 'our bloodline'? Why not acknowledge instead that every creature, whether on Neptune or on Earth, is like and unlike 'us', and we may be profitably and reasonably attached to any?

Why, in short, do modern humanists mind so much about descent, despite the fact that most of them acknowledge no importance in lineage or race? It is absurd, so most would say, to honour members of a particular royal line merely because they're 'royal' by descent, although they show no sign of any shared nobility of character or admirable competence. It is positively wicked to reserve all rights to members of one particular ethnic group, our own. Why is it less absurd, less wicked, to honour only 'human beings' when we no longer believe they share an admirable nature, and cannot identify a natural boundary between one 'species' and the next? Both reason and natural affection require more of us than that.

A partial history

In our beginnings as a species personal attachments to our relatives and friends served well. We liked each other's company, and could fairly readily devise joint projects that were profitable to all. None of us were strong enough to force unwilling partners: from which it does not follow that we didn't manage to manipulate each other's motives. These small groups were made up of males and females, parents and children, conversationalists and tamed animals. We even managed to form larger unions, recognising an advantage in seeking spouses from elsewhere and sharing out the land over which we wandered. We invented complex patterns of intermarriage, and rules to restrain ourselves from overhunting, over-grazing a land we shared with other human and non-human groups. In those days we did not suppose that we were anything but 'animals', and easily attributed a kind of speech to other animals with whom we sought to be on good terms. If we quarrelled too much, we went away.

There is no need to exaggerate. That life (which surviving hunter–gatherers still maintain) was not idyllic. Neither was it 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'.[24] When we settled down to farm the land, and fence it off from wild things, we started on the road to empire. We needed to defend 'our land', and to co-ordinate the manifold activities that were required for irrigation, trade and storage of our surplus. The result was that we could no longer rely on personal attachment and egalitarian exchange to keep the peace. We established rules of ownership, caste structures and embodied deities to make it possible for us to deal predictably with strangers. The world itself was moralised, in that the preferred order of society was projected on the cosmos, and social order founded on it. That moral order, largely now neglected by our moral theorists, governed, and still governs, a large

part of the world. People know their places, and treat each as place-holders more than friends. Non-human members of the wider order may have higher status than many of the humans, because hardly any human being (not even the priests or kings) is 'free' to choose. Acting otherwise than one's station requires is not a proof of personal agency, but a failing to be expiated, and so no mark of a superior status. Here, too, there is no need to exaggerate. Serfdom allowed more people than ever before to crowd together, and live in something like tranquillity: it was not, and mostly is not, Hell on Earth. But neither is such civilisation all that we could wish.

Both hunter–gatherer society and the empires have left their mark within our ethical tradition, the 'inherited conglomerate'. We value personal freedom, personal attachment, but we also acknowledge (grudgingly) such duties of obedience as civilised society required. Humanism is the attempt to recreate equality amongst the mass of humankind while still insisting upon immovable divisions between the different servants of empire. In the earliest ethic co-operation between people, dogs, horses, cattle was a sort of bargain; in the later, and imperial, version cattle, slaves, serfs, officers were all duty-bound to serve the Law. Industrial society creates new demands, making it difficult to enforce such powerful divisions of caste, sex and status. Our ethical systems, briefly, are historically formed adjustments to expanding populations, changing industries.[25] Recognising the historical and economic causes of ethical change, we need not simply acquiesce in them.[26] It is all too easy to believe that the ethical system created by and for a particular age is 'deeply rational', and that all those who move away from it are wrong. The alternative is to recall that ethical assumptions change, and can be changed. We do not absolutely have to continue rationalising the 'inherited conglomerate', though we should certainly remember what forces lie behind our illusion of ethical progress.

Ethical conclusions

By the Stoic account, those who are wise respect the wisdom manifested in a providential universe. Ordinarily decent people, unable or unwilling to follow Chrysippus's advice, should instead attempt to play their parts as parent, spouse, craftsman or citizen. Because irrational creatures cannot make or keep a contract (so it is said), there are no mutual agreements, no laws, between beasts and human beings. But such decent people will still be moved by personal attachments that transcend species boundaries, and may reasonably conclude that there are, after all, bargains to be made between us. Theories about our real natures helped our ancestors to move away from egalitarian and multi-species compacts. When we

settled down to fence and farm the land we made up castes and offices to divide us from each other, and from the wild things round about. As our empires grew in size we could no longer rest content with personal attachments: citizens from across the empire must be treated decently, merely because they're citizens (of one class or another). Industrial society, requiring greater mobility, greater adaptability among its workers, saps residual caste loyalties, while separating most of us still more from the beasts (except such domestic artefacts as we still allow).

Reason may help to teach us otherwise. We can come, we have come, to many agreements with non-human creatures. There is no essential boundary between Human and Non-human. Our ethics rest as much on sentiment and personal attachment as on any reasoned argument about what things like us should do. We may also be forced to realise that our lives and loves depend upon the living earth, made of up of many million creatures and kinds of creatures whom we cannot afford to treat as worthless. It is easy now to despise those human tribes who thought all strangers were their enemies or prey, who failed to see the promise of a greater friendship. In learning that those strangers were, after all, 'like them', they came to feel a certain respect for them that gradually permitted a degree of personal attachment between older enemies. But a more secure affection, and respect, came with the understanding that the strangers were *not* like them. The living earth, the promise of a greater friendship, often depends upon unlikeness.

Those who are wise, by Stoic rules, will welcome what there is, and not demand that everything be like themselves before they love it. Even ordinarily decent people, vicious and ill-informed as all of us, not being wise, must be, may come to believe themselves members of a wider city, compound of many species. Greek colonists convinced themselves (as later Europeans also did) that they need keep no bargains with barbarians (who could not be expected to keep any bargains): they thereby proved themselves more treacherous than any of their prey. The history of humanism is of betrayal. It may be that we have the reason, and the material opportunity, to learn better ways. Hunters, agriculturists and industrialists alike can contribute moral insights: our descendants, if we are lucky, may believe we did as well.

Notes

1. Brenda Almond (ed.) *Introducing Applied Ethics* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1995), pp. 318–30.
2. On the philosophical background to this claim see Wills 1979, pp. 229 ff.
3. Cicero (*On ends,* 3.63): Long and Sedley 1987, 7F: vol. I, p. 348.
4. It is of course a strange conceit to suppose that beasts have any interest in such things.

5. White 1978, p. 223.
6. Second Treatise 31, in Locke 1963, p. 332.
7. Mazri 1992, p. 7.
8. See my *The Nature of the Beast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, 2nd edn); Benton 1993.
9. Diogenes Laertius (*Lives of the Philosophers,* 7.85): Long and Sedley 1987, 57A: vol. I, p. 346.
10. Hierocles (1st century AD): Long and Sedley 1987, 57D: vol.1, p. 347: on this notion of 'city' see Chapter 7 on the decent *polis.*
11. Hierocles: Long and Sedley 1987, 57G: vol.1, p. 349.
12. Anonymous commentator on Plato's *Theaetetus*: Long and Sedley 1987, 57H: vol. I, p. 359.
13. Alexander (*On Fate,* 205): Long and Sedley 1987, 62I: vol. I, p. 391.
14. Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations,* 5.81): Long and Sedley 1987, 63M: vol. I, p. 397.
15. Epictetus (*Discourses,* 2.6.9): Long and Sedley 1987, 58J: vol. I, p. 356.
16. Epictetus (*Discourses,* 2.10 ff.): Long and Sedley 1987, 59Q: vol. I, p. 364.
17. Cicero (*Republic,* 3.33): Long and Sedley 1987, 67S: vol. I, p. 433.
18. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives,* 7.32: Long and Sedley 1987, 67B: vol. I, p. 430.
19. Benton 1993, p. 68.
20. Aristotle *Politics,* 1.1253b5 ff.
21. Some of this material appeared as Philosophical Anthropology, in: L.C. Becker and C.B. Becker (eds) *Encyclopedia of Ethics,* (New York: Garland Press, 1992), vol. II, pp. 963–4.
22. The chances are that there are no recognisably human beings whose ancestors *never* spoke – we have the features that we do because the ancestors of all of us began to speak long before we were recognisably human, and had no patience with offspring that failed the test. See Miller 1993. Pinker (1996) cites evidence for a family whose members are incapable of full human speech, but still manage to cope with modern life (pp. 297, 324 f.).
23. Stapledon 1972, p. 277 f.
24. See Lee and De Vore 1972; Sahlins 1972.
25. See my 'Companions on the way', *Philosophical Quarterly* 44, pp. 90–100, and an earlier citation of Patterson 1977, p. 186.
26. See Wood 1991.

11 Nations and empires[1]

Why nationalism is thought to be a bad idea

Nationalism is the proposal that groups of people united in the belief that they share a common ancestry and tradition, speaking a common language, deeply embedded in a particular landscape and history, and normally available for intermarriage should generally control the territory they think of as theirs. It is not an opinion that has a good press amongst liberal intellectuals. First, how can anyone praise nationalism, or endorse the right of nations to make their own way when there is war, all over again, in Europe about national rights and boundaries? The same patch of earth may be the promised land of many different peoples, house many incompatible heroes. How can one such nation control its territory if there are other nations with as good a right within its boundaries? Nationalism seems to require some form of 'ethnic cleansing', and how can that be defended? Second, most self-styled nations are accidental and often very recent inventions, whatever lies they tell about their glorious past. Third, and more abstractly, how can anyone give reasons for what is, at root, a denial of 'reason'? The rhetoric of 'blood and soil' that I considered in an earlier chapter merits no 'serious rational criticism' (Benn 1967), because it challenges the very basis of such rationality.

Philosophers who offer reasons for agreeing to state authority rest their case on our need for protection, neutral arbitration and (perhaps) welfare insurance in a dangerous world. Everyone has just the same interest in those goods, and ought not to be denied them for irrelevant reasons (like the colour of their skin, their ancestry, their place of birth, their faith). Convenient states have frontiers, but these need not be, in essence, any more than county boundaries, to be altered by some equally convenient agreement. Ideally, all decent states should simply be restructured as districts of a global civilisation. People who hang on to history, and insist that they had rather be the citizens of the land they were born to than subjects of a global empire (the phrase is borrowed from an eighteenth-century citizen of Massachusetts who deplored the Union[2]) are as ridiculous as those who worry about county boundaries, and more dangerous. States are those political

institutions that claim the monopoly of legal violence in a given area. Such powers should not be given to people who much mind about ancestral rights and wrongs, who squabble about boundaries, distrust their neighbours and have other goals than simple, secular security. The only state officials worth trusting would be those who could as easily be officers in any other decent state; the only laws worth obeying are those that any decent state would legislate.

So philosophers give reasons for obeying governments that only really apply to an imaginary world government; reasons for redistributive taxation that really imply that anyone much richer than the global average should be taxed to support the poor; limits on just legislation that really require most actual laws to be unmade. In ordinary political conversation such philosophers are comfortingly non-radical, but their message is unequivocal. If I have a justly enforceable obligation to support all those in need, I ought to be taxed, at punitive rates, so as to feed the starving. If I ought not to be subject to laws that would not be agreed by everyone I should not be required to observe local custom about drugs, or food, or marital practices, or child-rearing. If I ought to obey only that authority that most plausibly guarantees my life, I ought not to obey any little local chieftain, even if it goes by the name of Parliament or Congress. The Hobbesian contract that creates a sovereign state (in philosophical fiction) can have no force within a world of warring states. If there is no-one whom we can all agree to obey, why obey anyone (except for present convenience)? In civil war all pledges of obedience are void, and without a global authority the world is always at war. Hobbes did not need to reckon with this flaw, because neighbouring chieftains could then do little to disrupt the local peace if there were a local sovereign. State boundaries of a Hobbesian kind are now as obsolete as castles.

> There is only one rational way in which states coexisting with other states can emerge from the lawless condition of pure warfare. Just like individual men they must renounce their savage and lawless freedom, adapt themselves to public coercive laws, and thus form an international state (*civitas gentium*) which would necessarily continue to grow until it embraced all the peoples of the earth.
>
> (Kant 1970, p. 105)

The moral is that presently fashionable philosophical theory gives no good ground for denigrating treason. Loyalty to our 'kith and kin', the people of whom we are, by accident, a part, is an irrational motive, of no more weight than any sentimental attachment. In the absence of an actual global authority a decently philosophical moralist should do what such an authority would, most probably, require, and regard all local legislation, all national loyalty as no more than bye-laws. The mark

of a true philosopher, in the Hellenistic *oikoumene,* was that he behaved exactly the same wherever he was: a citizen of the cosmos, not his accidental city. The only loyalties that reasonable people should admit must be to civilised values – but of course it was in the name of that idea, or a version of it, that a good many intelligent people turned, as vulgar patriots say, traitor. They were no doubt mistaken in their faith, but it is worth remembering that wars of religion (which is, wars about the proper shape of civilised values) are as dangerous as any nationalistic squabbles. Good liberal intellectuals may prefer them, but should not be too contemptuous of the other, little wars of local patriotism – especially when, in practice, they tend to leave the actual fighting of important wars to men who themselves are usually vulgar patriots or worse.

The accidental origins of nations

It is worth taking a little more time to examine the arbitrary nature of most national identities. Back in the autumn of mediaeval Christendom the particular character of England, and the English, was only then taking shape.

> Nothing whatever resembling that conscious ideal of common sense or cold virility existed for Chaucer and his contemporary countrymen....If the Victorians could have actually had a vision of Chaucerian England they would have thought the Englishman was a Frenchman....It was partly because France and England were so nearly one nation that the kings struggled so long to make them one kingdom.[3]

Somewhere there is a possible world where the Plantagenets still rule over a Greater Brittany. Here and now, they don't – and it may even seem doubtful that the Windsors will be reigning in the United Kingdom for much longer.

The last sentence was not irrelevant. The course our history has taken means that 'our' national unity is focused on a particular, royal, family. Those who remark upon the arbitrary quality of our constitution are quite right, but might as reasonably remark upon the arbitrary nature of our national boundaries. In historical fact the *United Kingdom* exists as the territory of a United Kingship, the inheritance of the royal families of Scotland and England, with Welsh connections (Ireland being a more straightforwardly conquered and colonised neighbour – with the Pope's reiterated blessing). If there were no acceptable heir to the kingship, the question must arise (and will): why the territory should remain united. We could, of course, simply agree to remain Great British – just as we could agree, in principle, to be European, Danish or citizens of Wagga-Wagga – but who will be the 'we' that vote on it, and are 'we' likely to agree to this or that?

Nothing in nature – not even that we live upon a set of offshore islands – says that everyone who lives 'here' – what are the natural boundaries of 'here'? – needs to agree to be a fellow citizen of every other denizen, and not of those who live on shore. We might all have been Anglo-French (as Chesterton plainly rather wished we were), or some of us might have been Mercians, some Welsh, some West Saxons, some Northumbrians. The Shetlands – and all of Northern Britain – might have been Danish as easily as are the Faroes.[4] There might have been a real Celtic Nation, comprising Britanny, Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, and the Highlands (Logres?). Ulster, the Islands and Galloway might easily have been a single Viking nation, linked by the seaways, not divided by the sea. Border disputes would have been expensive (as they are elsewhere), and maybe there would have been a permanent congressional court to settle territorial claims, extraditions or the conduct of the Highland Games. Maybe such a congress would gradually become the genuine ruler of a genuinely United States of Britain, and romantic leanings by the local counties be as rudely repressed as were the Confederate States' appeals to original agreement between sovereign powers. Maybe, on the other hand, no such federal union would have much meaning, and our loyalties remain, as once they were, with local lands and lordships. Union by genuine, unforced treaty is a rarity. The Union of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (and the Orkneys, Shetlands, Inner and Outer Hebrides, Channel Isles, the Scilly Isles and the Isle of Man) is not it. Even England itself is not an obvious unity, being divided geographically by hills and rivers and demographically by ancient rivalries and newly created enclaves. If all denizens even of 'England' were given a free vote, it is at least doubtful that an overwhelming majority would vote to consider themselves mere English. Those north of the Wash suspect that southerners are snobs; those south of the Wash that northerners are yobs. Who on either side could possibly wish to trust her life and livelihood to the other? If the denizens of North Britain, currently 'Scotland', have a case for not being governed from Westminster by people they did not themselves elect, so also have North-Westerners, North-Easterners and the Welsh. West-country folk probably have their views as well.

The process of division could continue. Only outsiders could believe that 'the Welsh' are an indivisible nation,[5] or that Edinburgh, Aberdeen, the Orkneys and Strathclyde will necessarily agree to be mere Scots. Much of the Wirral, the little peninsula that juts out between the Dee and Mersey, would turn aside to Chester, rather than be judged 'Merseysiders'; Upton, Noctorum and Beechwood (I am now listing urban villages of Birkenhead, the town where, by chance, I live) are unlikely to consent to be ruled by any common council in anything that touches their real interests. Actually, I suspect that the only thing that would compel co-operation, at least between Upton and Noctorum, would be fear of Beechwood

(which might, in turn, make common cause with Overchurch). That was not a joke. We are horrified to hear how Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Slovenians, Albanians, Hutu and Tutsi hate each other – but are we so confident that 'Britons' don't hate 'Britons'? Are we sure that 'Welsh' do not hate 'Welsh'? 'A strong Wales embodied in a Welsh state could interpose herself between the various localities of Wales and all those contemporary forces that discourage the unique':[6] no doubt, but why should such a Wales be more acceptable than an equally strong Great Britain? Nationalism, in the nature of things, is as Nehru said: 'fissiparous'.

When the Soviet Empire collapsed, the new states that re-emerged from decades of oppression were widely welcomed. It was obvious, then, that people who believed that their deep interests and identities had been betrayed by generations of scheming commissars had every human right to create or recreate their own societies. The empire's collapse was probably accelerated by its refusal to acknowledge the rightful claims of the Baltics, but would have collapsed even if it had acknowledged them. But then other existing states began to seem as fragile: Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia divided, unable to provide a single national identity to their old subjects. Other surviving states contained unreconciled 'minorities' restrained from declaring their independence only by fear of arms. As I wrote the first version of this chapter, at the end of 1992, Czechoslavakia was ceasing to exist, and the attempt to create a Czechoslovakian nationhood to underpin the workings of that state was an acknowledged failure. Whether Czech or Slovakian identities will be able to contain, control, mediate or influence the lesser nations that now lie within their borders remains uncertain. The dreadful failure of Yugoslavia to do so is a signal that people's loyalties were not engaged by that forced union. As I wrote the latest version 'Russia' attempted to force itself on Chechnya, and other would-be autonomous regions within its border (and Turkey kills its Kurds). Whether any existing state can give its citizens good reason to defend it remains uncertain. 'The modern problem is more and more the problem of keeping the company together at all'.[7]

If all such nations had their own distinctive lands, the solution might be easy. That was indeed the preferred solution of Zionists, including Chesterton, earlier in this century: a land where all the Jewish people could be at home, and other nations be freed of the irritating presence of a pilgrim people. One comparable motif of science fiction is the general Diaspora when, imaginably, cheap interstellar transport scatters national and sectarian bands across the universe. The actual experience of such diasporas, for example, in nineteenth-century America, is less happy. How many other tribes are dispossessed? How long can those sectarian bands endure the neighbouring presence of people that most of them cannot understand or love?[8] The nations are by now too closely packed for each to have its own. Every time some little group achieves control of its own land and livelihood,

it discovers some still smaller group that it must either recognise or oppress. The record of such nationalists is not impressive: how many Québécois allow the original inhabitants their right to secede in turn? Each land, as I have already hinted, has multiple readings: Ayodhya cannot be only Hindu nor only Muslim.

Another solution, and the one that is mostly preferred by liberals, is that everyone should stop worrying. National attachments, like more openly religious ones, should be merely personal fetishes. What governs our lives together should be those goals we share: life, liberty and the enjoyment of such property as we can amass. The 'neutral' or convenient state can accommodate peoples with different creeds and backgrounds as long as they agree not to care about the land of their ancestors, the sacred places, the deliberately distinctive customs. This, too, was a preferred solution to the 'Jewish problem': assimilation. It is not clear that this can work any better than Zionist migration. The point about assimilation, after all, is that people are to agree to mind only about what others mind about, and to treat their ancestral or religious connections as no more than romantic memories, or family fetishes. By requiring this of citizens the controlling power must obviously identify those who do not comply as enemies – to be mocked if they are harmless, and suppressed if not. During the later years of Soviet domination people might, in principle, be Christians – as long as it was a personal hobby that they did not seek to advertise. No-one need mind – except more serious-minded Scots – if those of partly Scottish descent dress up in imaginary Highland costume or profess to like haggis.[9] A real attempt to run Scotland as a territory shared by Scots without the intrusive influence of Englanders gets less support. If and when Scotland does break from the Union, of course, I predict that there will at once be other breakages: Scottish identity will turn out to be as specious an amalgam as British, or European.

The moral seems to be that cosmopolitan rationalism and sentimental nationalism are equally damnable, but different. Academics, being rationalists, tend to prefer the former, and should patiently endeavour to appreciate the latter. Political rationalism echoes epistemological rationalism, the Enlightenment belief that we ought only to believe what can be proved or established beyond reasonable doubt by logical or scientific demonstration. The belief is sceptical in its effects, and pragmatically self-refuting (since its truth cannot be demonstrated). A more practical epistemology requires instead that we believe what we are told until there is good reason to doubt it. Custom is a better king than Clifford's Rule. Our loyalties have to lie where they begin, and alter only when they are themselves betrayed.

'Custom', of course, has often been the product of oppression. All existing states, and this is no exception, exist by historical accident and violent appropriation.

> Reason and experience alike tell us that the governments now existing in the world were established by bayonet-point, by force. None of the monarchies

> or governments that we see in the world are based on justice or on a correct foundation that is acceptable to reason. Their foundations are rotten, being nothing but coercion and force.[10]

Right on: but when I remind you that this is a quotation from the Ayatollah Khomeyni, one can be forgiven for being doubtful about the value even of bloodless revolutions and the imposition of a truly 'rational' order. 'The ills of rebellion are certain, but the event doubtful', as Berkeley advised the potential rebels of an earlier day.[11] We had better not seek too roughly to remake the world, or renegotiate our loyalties. The chances are quite high that we would only remove the old, and never manage to create the new.

'The men of my own stock'

There are, as a matter of fact, nations: groups of people who share stories about the world and about their ancestors, who embody distinctive national types and understand rather more about each other's emotional reactions and mannerisms than outsiders do.

> The men of my own stock
> They may do ill or well,
> But they tell the lies I am wonted to,
> They are used to the lies I tell;
> And we do not need interpreters
> When we go to buy or sell.
>
> The Stranger within my gates,
> He may be evil or good,
> But I cannot tell what powers control –
> What reasons sway his mood;
> Nor when the Gods of his far-off land
> Shall repossess his blood.[12]

Such nations did not come to be only in the nineteenth century, or only under the influence of European colonial expansion and retreat. It may well be true that particular nations did, and even that some of the nations in whose name particular states were founded were, at the time, inventions. In fact, most nations are probably inventions, in the sense that their remembered histories could as easily have formed the mythos of some quite other nation. It may also be true that people may be simultaneously members of the same nation and of different nations: Athenians

and Spartans, say, but also Greeks. In that respect 'nation' is a term that operates like 'family'. 'My family' may name myself, my wife and children; or else it may include brothers and brothers' wives and children. A little genealogical research could easily extend 'my family' to cover most of Western England – but of course that group of related people are only 'family' by courtesy. I know of no particular stories, mannerisms or emotional reactions that I share with all the descendants of John Chilton, woodman (1769–1853), my earliest named forebear five generations back. I doubt if I even share any particular gene-cluster with such cousins, or none that I don't share with people of quite different descent. It is, of course, a part of my family legend that we descend from woodmen, bricklayers, agricultural labourers, railway workers and disgraced gentry – the great labouring masses of Wales and North-Western England.[13] Other, neighbouring families, I am sure, have similar, though not identical, stories. Though we are not, in any realistic sense, one family, we may well be one nation. Families share particular stories and particular forebears; nations have similar stories and share ancestors they cannot name (unless they invent them).

So we can reach out to 'nations', of a suitably fluid kind, by considering families. But nations differ from families in this: families can't last at all without a real connection with new families. I can be descended from John Chilton only by also being descended from Finneys, Humphrieses, Bagnalls, Sandalls, Clarks, Joneses and Vaughans. My children have to add Metfords, Donalds, Hutchences, Hankeys and so on (thereby adding South Wales, Somerset and Scotland to the mix). I can myself, as it happens, be part by descent and custom both of the North Welsh and North-Western English nations.[14] I can even suspect that legend is correct and the Finneys were from County Sligo (so I manage Irish, too, and my children are as near to being mere UKish as one could wish).[15] But I might have been, and many others are, mere English. Exogamy is crucial to the existence of families, but not of nations. Nations, indeed, might almost be defined as groups of people who are mutually and normally available in marriage and sometimes forbid or discourage exogamous connections – except that some national groups, such as the Hindu, have adopted a caste structure that creates or sustains mini-nations within a larger, largely non-intermarrying whole.[16] The definition is therefore wrong – but still identifies an important issue. If we are to survive at all, we need to produce and rear children in something like a family (which need not be a nuclear one). For there to be families we need to ensure a ready supply of spouses who are of different, but not too different, families. The families brought together in marriage need to be compatible, and need to have reared their offspring to have roughly similar expectations of family life – which can only be done by rearing them in roughly similar families. I am speaking, of course, of general rules: there are many

successful 'mixed marriages', but it is not unreasonable to think that some mixtures are inadvisable.

The imperial or humanistic dream

The alternative vision, of course, and the one generally preferred by good liberals, is to hope that civil society can be united in loyalty to civilised values of a kind that all humanity can serve. Groups that sustain distinctive courting, mating and child-rearing customs for long enough are likely to become distinctive species, and to develop biological *differentiae,* but there is no evidence that there is more than one species or even subspecies of *Homo sapiens,* as yet. It is not impossible that we are (especially if extinct varieties of hominid are taken into account) a 'ringspecies', but there are at least no definite barriers against fertile and productive intermarriage. We could, that is, make some attempt to think of all humankind as one vast 'nation', conveniently or inconveniently managed by states that themselves do not express any special mininational dream. Although our stories, mannerisms and presuppositions differ, we are not utterly alien, and even very different ethnic groups are still interfertile. All of us, it seems, still smile and blush and bare our teeth in fury; all of us, or very nearly all, tell stories of the time before the fall, act out cosmologies and can, with an effort, understand each others' ways. This is a powerful vision, and one that has had many good results.[17]

Unfortunately, all actual attempts to organise humanity as a single nation in the name of the rationalist philosophy I identified before turn out in practice to be attempts to impose the habits of one particular real nation upon all others. This is especially so when the attempt is made in the guise of an attack on nationalism.

> 'We moderns believe in a great cosmopolitan civilisation, one which shall include all the talents of all the absorbed peoples…'
>
> 'The Señor will forgive me,' said the President. 'May I ask how, under ordinary circumstances, he catches a wild horse?'
>
> 'I never catch a wild horse,' replied Barker, with dignity.
>
> 'Precisely,' said the other. 'And there ends your absorption of the talents....When you say you want all peoples to unite, you really mean that you want all peoples to unite to learn the tricks of your people.'[18]

'Internationalism' is sometimes a name for old-fashioned imperialism. If nationalists, defending the real customs and associations of the people with whom they identify,

are often 'aggressive' this might have something to do with the behaviour of their supposedly 'non-national' opponents. 'What is large enough for the rich to covet is large enough for the poor to defend.'[19]

Confronted by the dreadful evidence that people mind about their national identities, rationalists are likely enough to suggest that such nightmares would be easily dispersed by economic means. All people 'really' want is security from arbitrary arrest, a chance of worthwhile employment, food, companionship and shelter. National liberation movements can only, 'really', be devices to secure such goods for people who will cheerfully abandon talk of national identity once they have the rights allowed to every citizen of a liberal state. That anyone should mind about the kind of companionship they get is apparently unbelievable, even though such rationalists themselves can make it very clear that they themselves don't feel at home with anyone but well-read liberals, with men of their own stock!

It is a mark of ignorance to suppose that the world we easily inhabit, the world as it is presented to us, is simply identical with the only world there is, and that anyone who professes to describe things differently or to mind about other matters must be lying or confused. We easily confuse what is obvious to us with what is rationally self-evident. Because we think ourselves rational we think the foreign is irrational.

'The first principle is that nobody should be ashamed of thinking a thing funny because it is foreign; the second is that he should be ashamed of thinking it wrong because it is funny.'[20] Chesterton, because he was, in a sense, a nationalist, was not a chauvinist. Nationalists like that, as I shall argue later, are better models for the cosmopolitan: to find oneself a citizen of the cosmos it is necessary to recognise one's loyalty to smaller groups, and others' loyalty to theirs.

The smallest practical nation, as I hinted earlier, is one large enough for most marriages to be internal affairs without drastically limiting the available gene pool, and large enough to make it possible for most vital human specialisms to be found within its bounds. Gellner draws particular attention to the need to provide an expert educational system if the would-be nation-state is to play any large, or long-lasting, part in the world community.[21] It may be, of course, that the people concerned don't wish to. Local nationalism, of the kind discussed by Chesterton, requires us to respect the dignity of other nations, but to involve ourselves with them only in so far as a new, larger national grouping can be formed. There is no single rank order of nations to be imposed on different peoples: the Southern English may feel mingled alarm and admiration for the Scots, amused affection for the Welsh and panic contempt for the Irish, but it can be acknowledged at once that each other national group within the kingdom has its own priorities. Local nationalists do not want the Welsh to be amused by themselves, but rather to be faintly contemptuous of the English. Imperialists, on the other hand, do want each

national group to judge itself by the standards of the dominant national group. A purely egalitarian empire, of the kind that the French preferred to think they founded, would be dedicated to expunging other national customs. All subjects of the Empire should be French, and forget the past. An empire of the kind the English preferred to think they ran makes little attempt to eliminate the nations, but insists that everyone agree upon a particular rank order – very much as Hindu civilisation has required all castes to agree upon the rules that define their status, even arguing that the very same 'untouchables' whom they have excluded from 'decent society' should lend support to Hindu nationalism.

Democracy against the world

Nations have played a vital, and even a terrible, role in human history (sometimes under the label 'Democracy, rule by The People'). In agrarian societies the ruling classes (warriors, priests and merchants) may identify themselves with their peers across their notional borders, while the labouring masses are chiefly aware of their own local or blood loyalties. In Hindu India, similarly, only the superior castes had organisations that extended beyond their immediate locale; only the professional castes are designated by the name of their craft (and thereby united, for example, with academics across the kingdom), while the lower castes are named for their locality.[22] If the mass of the people overthrow their former rulers it is as a nation united in experience.

My own sympathies, as you may have gathered, are often with nationalists rather than with the doctrinaire imperialists who prate of the 'historic right of superior civilizations' to tear, as it might be, 'the splendid land of California from the lazy Mexicans' (as Engels does).[23] Or consider President McKinley's decision to 'uplift and civilize the Filipinos'.[24] Or the Argentinian wish to 'liberate' (which is, incorporate) the Falklands....Chesterton understood the Crusades as a defence of the mystery of locality, incarnation, art against 'a devouring giant out of the deserts to whom all places were the same', 'a quarrel between one man who wanted [Jerusalem] and another man who could not see why it was wanted'.[25] He was probably wrong about Islam: the Prophet spoke in favour of the love of place, and there are holy places for all Islamic traditions, but he was perhaps right to notice that Islam was a form of universal religion, civilised values, that must make loyalty to a particular nation (even the Arab Nation) dubious. Time brings its revenges: it is now the imperial West that looks like the devouring giant to whom all places are the same – and who will make them all the same if he has his way.

Liberal philosophers have confused chauvinism and nationalism. The point is not one that Hobbesian analysis could mock: the leaders of my party are statesmen, the leaders of yours are politicians, and hers are demagogues.[26] Chauvinism is the name of a recurrent set of human motives; nationalism of a political theory about

how best to deal with those motives. A chauvinist, like an egotist, believes or acts as if she believes that what is hers is best, that everyone should do, or be made to do, what she or her kin require. There is something of the chauvinist, or egotist, in us all, and most clearly in imperial humanism. Nationalism is a doctrine about the proper ordering of human affairs: the claim that things are managed best when people who share national identities can manage their own affairs without undue interference. Nationalists are opposed to chauvinists, as much as liberals oppose mere egotists. In Adam Wayne's words: 'Notting Hill is a nation. Why should it condescend to be a mere Empire?'[27] Egotism is ridiculous, but it does not follow that I should not be allowed to manage my own affairs; chauvinism is ridiculous, but it does not follow that a nation might not rightly resent oppression. The best world order is a network of federated nations, and not an empire founded on the suppression of all kinds of folk but one. The distinction is one recognised by Gellner, though he goes on to mock the idea of an 'impartial, general, sweetly reasonable nationalism' (is a sweetly reasonable internationalism any likelier?).[28]

The land we live in embodies a story of who we are, and that is, by itself, often a very good reason to preserve it in good health and order, and to offer similar protection to the lands of other historical communities. Even if a particular landscape offers *us* no story, we know that it may be the context of another tribe. So we may move from valuing only *our* land, to valuing the land of other communities, because we value them. Historical conservation societies have similar goals to those of wildlife or woodland preservation societies. Wildlife preservation societies and those organisations like Survival International, who aim to protect the welfare and identity of relatively powerless or 'primitive' societies, also have a lot in common. Helping Native American tribes to maintain themselves in beauty, and in their land, is a project that good liberals endorse: they are not always so eager to endorse what they can call 'nationalistic' or 'atavistic' impulses. But why should an Amerindian tribe be entitled to demand respect for its historical identity and involvement with its land, and a European nation not be? Why are Amerindians entitled to resist the approaches of missionaries or immigrant farmers, and European nationals not so entitled to preserve their being? In both cases there may be cause for conflict, since the 'same' land may be the home, and embody the story, of quite different tribes.[29] In both cases a concern for our own homeland may branch out into a disdain for all other lands, or into a renewed appreciation of those 'other' lands.

> Brooding over the Boer War, [Chesterton] had come to see that the Progressives wanted to destroy the very places that he particularly wanted to preserve. They formed a picture in his mind, where 'there was a row of shops. At one end was a public-house…somewhere a church....There was a

> grocer's…a second-hand bookshop…an old curiosity shop…shops supplying all the spiritual and bodily needs of men'. Chesterton said that he realised suddenly 'how completely lost this bit of Notting Hill was in the modern world'; his Progressive friends, he said, were only interested in 'world-shaking…and making events'. At that point he discovered that he opposed plutocrats and idealists, 'and I drew my sword – in defence of Notting Hill'.[30]

Chesterton gave literary, and critical, expression to this feeling in his first published novel, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904), the original *1984*. It is a work with more depth and more complexity than is usually admitted, but it was of course a very early work. Chesterton's mature understanding of European civilisation gave much less weight to local prejudices, and much more to continental Christendom. It was not just any united Europe that Chesterton hoped for, of course: he had a particular conception of a united Europe that would not be controlled by business men through bureaucrats, but instead be a continent of peasant proprietors, and workers owning their own tools. Such a Europe, though speaking a common symbolic language and sharing such institutions as professional guilds, churches and universities, would also be made up of many self-governing communities, proud of their own small territories and local histories and careful of their local customs.

Those who are willing to live anywhere, sell anything, associate with people of whatever class or caste or sect or national identity, and learn whatever verbal and body language is required to buy and sell in any given area have many admirable qualities. Such peoples have their own stories, culture heroes, tricks of the trade – and probably have their secret stories too, embodying amused contempt, and sometimes fear, for those less-mobile peoples amongst whom they live. They are in fact a nation, or many nations – including diaspora Jews and Gypsies. One of the ways in which such nomads make it easier for themselves is to ensure that they have contacts all around the world, and move in 'cosmopolitan circles'. The other obvious examples of such travellers are, on the one hand, money-men and on the other, academics. Academics are professionally committed to a belief in an international community of scholarship, to being – in principle – transplantable. But we make it easier for ourselves by not mixing with the natives, and taking it for granted that anyone with any professional standing must have abandoned any serious ancestral ties. You have every right to suspect my sincerity. After all, I am myself an academic, consciously removed from the family background that I sketched before, and having rather little in common with the mass of my fellow countrymen. My democratic populism, resting on the conviction that people, by and large, should be trusted to run their own affairs without intrusive oversight

from a self-appointed élite, obviously strikes many people, even on the 'left', as dangerous romanticism. People don't know what they really want, because they show few signs of wanting what the élite says everyone would want if only they reasoned from first principles known to the élite. Bizarrely, populists are generally suspected to be would-be demagogues.

H.G. Wells' account of the problem, written in 1905, is worth attention. The first solution, he says, is 'to assume there is a best race…and to regard all other races as material for extermination'. The second is 'the rather incoherent doctrine that one associates in England with official Liberalism': in this are combined a 'Whiggish' desire to anglicise the native (the version that I have attributed to French imperialism) and a 'democratic' ideal of favouring 'as many petty, loosely allied or quite independent nationalities as possible, just as many languages as possible'.[31] This second strand seems very like the ideal that, like Chesterton, I favour. Wells regarded it as insufficiently disciplined, overly sentimental. His preferred solution, so far as I understand it, was to move from particular treaties between would-be friendly states towards a synthetic civilisation, sharing a common tongue and literature. I suspect that his notion of that civilisation would be closer, however, to the imperial than he admitted. He was not, at any rate by 1905, a racist in the strictest sense, but he clearly wished to expunge some nationalities (including the Jewish), and impose his own fantasy of 'men like gods' upon the world. Only a few years earlier, in 1901, he had presented a case for genocide, which was applauded by leading socialists of the time. Even in 1939 he apparently approved of violent dictatorship as a means to global peace, rising on a programme of Anglo-American populism and culminating in an explicit rejection of any merely federalist alternative to the 'Common World Law'.[32] Other, and more reasonable, idealists may prefer to begin from the loyalties that actually exist, and seek to apportion rights and duties between existing tribes, clans, nations, amphictyonies. In this endeavour the rules for Kant's 'Perpetual Peace' may help. Kant himself, after identifying 'the one rational escape from war', added that 'the positive idea of a world republic cannot be realised. If all is not to be lost, this can at best find a negative substitute in the shape of an enduring and gradually expanding federation likely to prevent war'.[33]

What loyalty can we all have, what liberties shall we respect, and what laws shall we all agree to obey? The minimum, convenient laws are those that bar aggression and enforce the keeping of due contracts. These are the laws, the mutual agreements, that Aristotle identified as binding between cities in an economic league. They are also the laws admitted by minimal statists, imposing no further rule of conduct upon citizens. The oddity of modern liberal theory is that such theorists conclude that the state should not require any particular 'moral conduct' from us – except that we should feed the starving, clothe the naked and try to heal

the sick. Everyone should be required to support needy strangers; no-one should be required to support their unborn children. All positive action should be obligatory only by consent, but it is assumed that we have consented to support the 'welfare state'. Children should not be taught contentious doctrines – unless they are ones with which the educational establishment agrees. The laws are to be neutral between different moral opinions – except that the legally preferred opinion has the edge against those who would deny, for example, that one can acquire, by purchase, the right to torment,[34] frustrate or kill those of another species.

The truth is that there are no truly minimal states, unless one chooses to think that the world order itself is such a nascent thing. If it were, and if it attempted to restrict the right of local states to enforce their moral codes, it would not receive much loyal support except from those who despised those moral codes in the unadmitted name of another. It follows that the only world order that could evoke loyalty in the minds of local citizens would be one that embodied a particular moral order – and any such order is bound to be contentious. The order preferred by modern liberals of a Whiggish kind is one that aims to 'anglicise' (or the equivalent); Wells's order, however disguised by rhetoric about 'common sense', was fascist; the *dar al-islam* is already identified by many liberals as their greatest enemy now that the communist mirage has been so utterly discredited. My own conviction, such as it is, is that the other kind of liberals were right: our best bet is to allow the federation of humankind – even of animalkind – and not expect a singular world state, world order, empire to absorb our loyalties. That is the only sovereign it would make Hobbesian sense to obey – but its creation would involve us in more than Hobbesian wars, and in insolent oppression. I agree with the American 'anti-federalists' ('federalists' in my sense of the word):

> the same government pervading a vast extent of territory terrifies the minds of individuals into meanness and submission. All human authority, however organised, must have confined limits, or insolence and oppression will prove the offspring of its grandeur, and the difficulty or rather impossibility of escape prevents resistance.[35]

And what about ethnic cleansing? Even if true nationalists are the opposite of imperialists, how can they secure a territory for themselves to govern if there are other, alien nationalists amongst them? It is one thing to demand more territory, and another to insist upon the territory we already have – but both demands breed war. The options for a minor nation are limited. The one preferred by liberal imperialists must be that they forget themselves, learn the dominant tongue and culture and practise their ancient pastimes only on the sly. Wells' account of the

Holy Terror (which I recalled before) is critical of his imagined, all too familiar, tyrant's wish to destroy the Jewish people – but only because he thought it easier to let them be forgotten, even by themselves. A disreputable alternative is the ghetto – where a minor nation can conduct itself in peace, on the solitary condition that it abandon any attempt to influence the larger nation towards more than grudging tolerance. A third is simply to recognise the truth that I announced much earlier: being a member of one minor nation does not prevent my membership of another larger nation, born in the day-to-day exchanges of many minor nations. Nations need to be nested in each other: too great a dissonance prevents an easy congruence. It has taken us centuries for Welsh, English, Scottish, Irish, Romany and the rest even to endure each other, and our being 'British' is all too often interpreted, even by us, as another name for Englishness. But though the task is difficult, there is some chance of seeing it through – as long as we don't demolish too many of our shared symbols, or harass each other's sensitivities.

Nested nations need not be strictly territorial – for human beings are not as territorial as popular writers have suggested. 'Territory' is an ethological term that first gained currency in the study of birds – who have some hope of overseeing a continuous area, and defending it. Mammalian territories (and therefore human ones) are better conceived as networks of paths and significant objects, which may intersect and have quite different significances without being occasions for rivalry. The Romany are a nation that weave in and out of settled British life; they don't need a separate (avian-style) territory, but only secure roads and sites. The exercise of accommodating such a national group within a larger nation, and allowing them their proper representation in the assembly of that nation, would be good practice for the larger issue. Grouping people into parishes, counties, kingdoms has its merits; but there has always been another option – to group them by their actual loyalties and customs, wherever they may choose to settle. National boundaries, as we have understood them in the last few centuries, are obsolete and (literally) indefensible. It does not follow that we should therefore struggle to construct a super-state (an empire), with even less defensible boundaries, even less openness to minor nations.[36] What we need to survive (and what we need in order to survive) is an understanding of nested, national loyalties not altogether unlike the caste system,[37] though without its manifest corruption. The error in vulgar nationalism is not its *nationalism,* but its imperial tendencies and its jealous refusal to allow the same land to have many different meanings. Imperial humanism shares those last two faults. What we need is not to have fewer nations, but better ones; not the unchecked rule of one impe rial power, masquerading as a 'really rational mind', but a world of careful accommodations between self-conscious nations. I would indeed much rather be a subject of this kingdom than a citizen of

the great world empire. And by the same token I would much rather that this kingdom was woven from many more threads than merely mine.

Notes

1. *European Journal of Philosophy* 3. 1996, pp. 63–80
2. 1787: Borden 1965, p. 2.
3. Chesterton 1932, pp. 188 f.; see also Kearney 1989, pp. 65 f.
4. Kearney 1989, p. 59.
5. 'Even amongst nationalists, the love of one's own valley or neighbourhood usually runs deeper than love of Wales as such': G. Evans and I. Rhys in Edwards *et al.* 1968, p. 215.
6. G. Evans and I. Rhys in Edwards *et al.* 1968, p. 216.
7. Chesterton 1932, p. 182.
8. Fischer (1989) is a fascinating study of four earlier waves of emigration from Britain to North America, and the abiding influence of the four different folkways.
9. Even apparently serious academics succumb to this nonsense: consider L.L. Snyder's remark about the Scots' 'rugged Highland culture' as contrasted with that of the English (Snyder 1982, p. 26) – which is like attributing Yorkshire mannerisms to denizens of the Home Counties. Snyder later, as absurdly, says that 'most Scotsmen consider their culture to be primarily English' (*Ibid.,* p. 31). He is also under the impression that North Irish Protestants are English, and that the Welsh were happily seduced by the English gift for pageantry.
10. A. Khomeyni, Kashf Asras 221 (Rajaee 1983, p. 76). The popular picture of Khomeyni as a 'nationalist' actually seems to be to be entirely wrong. Islam is far more Kantian and universalist than that.
11. Berkeley 1948, vol. vi, p. 55.
12. Kipling 1927, p. 534.
13. My family's non-conformist, North-West English, background is very similar to the one described by Fischer 1989, pp. 419 ff., in his account of the settlement of Delaware: by contrast I find it difficult to sympathise with the waves that settled New England, Virginia and the Appalachians (from East Anglia, Wessex and the Anglo-Scottish Borders).
14. Once upon a time, these were the same: the border between England and Wales is an artefact, and 'Wales' itself is a unit only in the eyes of Anglo-Saxons to the east (Kearney 1989, pp. 3, 55 f., 71). So perhaps I should claim to be a Powysian.
15. Onora O'Neill has rightly observed in conversation that we have no general, inoffensive word for citizens of the United Kingdom. One reason, of course, is that the (southern) English have so long dominated the Union that they have forgotten what the rest of us remember (see Kearney 1989, p. 2).
16. Though the Laws of Manu do provide for lawful marriage between *varnas* (Dumont 1972, pp. 170 f.).

17. See, for example, the case of the righteous gentiles examined by Geras 1995.
18. Chesterton 1946, p. 24.
19. Wayne speaks (Chesterton 1946, p. 57).
20. *What I Saw in America* 1922, p. 2, cited in Dale 1982, p. 235.
21. Gellner 1983, p. 38.
22. Dumont 1972, pp. 198 ff.
23. Walicki 1982, p. 376.
24. Walicki 1982, p. 99.
25. Chesterton 1917, pp. 64 f.
26. A.P. Herbert, cited by O.D. Edwards in Edwards *et al.* 1968, p. 5.
27. Chesterton 1946, p. 143.
28. Gellner 1983, p. 2. Why is nationalism mocked because nationalists are sometimes misled into acts of imperialist aggression, while global humanism, whose essence is imperialistic, goes unmocked?
29. Consider, for example, the problem faced by Navaho and Hopi Amerindians (Hillerman 1982); see also MacIntyre 1985.
30. Titterton 1936, pp. 44 f., cited in Dale 1982, pp. 90 f.
31. Wells 1905, Chapter 10.
32. See Wells 1939, p. 294 *et al.*
33. Kant 1970, p. 105.
34. That right of course is *not* nowadays conceded to just any private person: it is a privilege afforded to those who can show that they have what passes for a good reason.
35. 1788: Borden 1965, p. 8.
36. I find it very puzzling that people who despise the pretensions of existing nation-states so often wish to construct a larger version of exactly the same thing: 'Down with the United Kingdom; up with the United States of Europe' – and wait for the civil wars to start!
37. It seems that castes were once much more territorially divided, and have now spread, as one effect of British rule, across a wider area, thereby intermingling, of necessity, with other castes; see Dumont 1972, pp. 198 f.

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