

Lewontin, strongly rejected the idea that many patterns of human behavior have a basis in evolution, branding it unscientific and a reprehensible revival of 19th-century social Darwinism. The notion that much human behavior is genetically “hard-wired,” immune to environmental influences, is unacceptable to many others. But liberals ought to calm down and learn to live with it, contends Konner, a professor of anthropology, psychiatry, and neurology at Emory University.

In recent decades, he notes, sociobiological theory has gained “almost universal acceptance...among researchers in natural history and animal behavior and among many psychologists and social scientists.” The theory has not proved useful in all circumstances, he says, but without it, it would be hard to explain, for instance, the research finding that a child is at least 10 times more likely to be assaulted or killed if he or she lives in a household with an unrelated male—a finding that holds true regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, or education, and in at least four countries. Children are much safer in households with men to whom they are genetically related.

“The implications of evolution are not . . . inherently conservative,” Konner maintains. “They are, however, inherently materialist and fraught with conflict.” This makes some

liberals—those with a rosy view of human nature—uneasy. But it would not have bothered America’s Founding Fathers, he says, who had the “gift to be able to take a Hobbesian view of human life without applying a Hobbesian solution.” Scientific materialists with a realistic view of human nature, they nevertheless constructed a liberal order. “In questions of power,” said Thomas Jefferson, “let no more be said of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief, by the chains of the Constitution.”

Though it must seem inadequate to liberals who believe that human nature “is inherently good, unselfish, and cooperative,” the Constitution “has more or less worked for a couple of centuries,” Konner notes. To “those of us who see human nature as the unpleasant product of too many eons of individual selection,” that is a considerable achievement, he says. And this shows what may be “the enduring implication of Darwin’s theory for liberal political philosophy: assume the worst and you can still get something workable.” Precisely because human nature, as designed by evolution, cannot be relied upon to care for the old, the sick, and the very young in a market economy, the case for “programs and supports deliberately designed by a collective, humane, political will” to accomplish that is all the stronger.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

History Begins Again

“Second Thoughts” by Francis Fukuyama, and “Responses to Fukuyama” by Harvey Mansfield et al., in *The National Interest* (Summer 1999), 1112 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Ten years ago, in a new journal called the *National Interest*, an obscure researcher from the RAND Corporation ventured to suggest that with the West’s victory in the Cold War, the end of History was in sight. Not *history*, in the ordinary sense of the unfolding story of man’s sad stumble through the centuries, but capital-H *History*, in the Hegelian-Marxist sense of the progressive evolution of human political and economic institutions. And the “end” that Francis Fukuyama discerned was not socialism, as Marxists had supposed, but bourgeois liberal democracy and capitalism. There would be no more grand world conflicts over ideas and ideologies. His bold thesis still stirs controversy.

Now, Fukuyama says that he was wrong—but not for reasons his critics suggested.

Neither the stalling of reform in Russia nor the economic crisis in Asia, says Fukuyama, now a professor of public policy at George Mason University, invalidate his conclusion “that liberal democracy and a market-oriented economic order are the only viable options for modern societies.” Instead, he writes, the “true weakness” in his argument was this: “History cannot come to an end as long as modern natural science has no end; and we are on the brink of new developments in science that will, in essence, abolish what [philosopher] Alexandre Kojève called

‘mankind as such’” —human nature itself.

Within the next few generations, Fukuyama believes, genetic engineering made possible by the biotechnology revolution will allow “what the radical ideologies of the past . . . were unable to accomplish”: the creation of “a new type of human being.” It may well be possible, for example, “to breed less violent people, or people cured of their propensity for criminal behavior.” Already, he says, there is a foretaste of the Brave New World in the widespread use of behavior-altering drugs such as Ritalin and Prozac.

“For today, any understanding we may have of just political arrangements or a universal moral order is ultimately based on an understanding of human nature,” writes Fukuyama. “To the extent that that nature is something given to us not by God or by our evolutionary inheritance, but by human artifice, then we enter into God’s own realm with all of the frightening powers for good and evil that such an entry implies.” Humans will then be able to “change once and for all the set of genetically

controlled behaviors that have characterized the human race since . . . human beings lived in hunter-gatherer societies.” At that point, human capital-H History will be over, he says, and “a new, posthuman history will begin.”

E. O. Wilson, author of *Consilience* (1998) and *On Human Nature* (1978), and one of a half-dozen commentators on Fukuyama’s reappraisal, doubts that things will reach that pass. “By the time the treacherous waters of possible genomic intervention and replacement are charted, I suspect a moral argument will keep *Homo sapiens* from traveling there except for gene therapy and minor enhancement.”

But the weakness that Fukuyama now sees in his original argument is not the only one, in the view of Robin Fox, a professor of social theory at Rutgers University. It is a theory that, like the Hegelian one on which it is based, applies to only a few thousand years of human development, arbitrarily isolated from the millions of years of human history. For all the grand talk, what Fukuyama (and others) call “history,” Fox says, is really a mere blip on the radar screen.

Uncle Sam, Don’t Preach

From an interview in *The New York Review of Books* (Aug. 12, 1999) with retired American diplomat and author George F. Kennan, the father of the containment doctrine:

I would like to see our government gradually withdraw from its public advocacy of democracy and human rights. Let me stress: I am speaking of governments, not private parties. If others in our country want to advocate democracy or human rights (whatever those terms mean), that’s perfectly all right. But I don’t think any such questions should enter into our diplomatic relations with other countries. If others want to advocate changes in their conditions, fine—no objection. But not the State Department or the White House. They have more important things to do. . . .

I think the executive branch of government has been just as bad, if not worse, than the Congress in this respect. But this whole tendency to see ourselves as the center of political enlightenment and as teachers to a great part of the rest of the world strikes me as unthought-through, vainglorious, and undesirable. If you think that our life here at home has meritorious aspects worthy of emulation by peoples elsewhere, the best way to recommend them is, as John Quincy Adams maintained, not by preaching at others but by the force of example.

Nuremberg Revisited

“Nuremberg, Misremembered” by Jeremy Rabkin, in *SAIS Review* (Summer–Fall 1999), 1619
Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The 1945–46 Nuremberg trials of Nazi leaders are often invoked these days by proponents of the recently created International Criminal Court or the