

‘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

European efforts to prosecute former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. It was at Nuremberg, claimed journalist Tina Rosenberg, writing last January in the *New York Times Magazine*, that the principle “that how a nation treats its own citizens is everybody’s business . . . was established.” But it wasn’t, argues Rabkin, a political scientist at Cornell University. The Nuremberg trials “were more flawed than we like to remember.”



*Hermann Goering, standing beside other Nazi leaders in the prisoners’ box, makes his final plea as the Nuremberg proceedings neared an end.*

At the time, many Americans regarded the Nuremberg proceedings—which were conducted not by disinterested bystanders but by the victorious Big Four Allied Powers—as political “show trials.” Supreme Court chief justice Harlan Fiske Stone, privately calling the trials “a high-grade lynching party,” refused to take part in a swearing-in ceremony for the U.S.-appointed judges. A few years later, Supreme Court justice William O. Douglas protested that the leading Nazis had been tried under “an ex post facto law,” and said that “their guilt did not justify us in substituting power for principle.”

What has since come to be called the Holocaust did not figure as prominently in the Nuremberg proceedings as it does in people’s minds today, Rabkin notes. Nearly all the Nazis on trial claimed to know nothing about the death camps, and with only a few exceptions, they had not been in situations that required them to know about them. American prosecutors were intent, not upon fixing responsibility for the mass murder of European Jews, but upon showing that the defendants had committed “crimes against peace” by conspiring to launch a war of aggression.

Though early trial planning resulted in the inclusion of a “crimes against humanity” category, such offenses were never clearly distinguished from other “war crimes.” The Nazi regime’s prewar perse-

cutions were not prosecuted. “American trial planners were well aware that international law, at that time, provided no basis for holding government officials personally liable for persecution of their own citizens,” Rabkin says.

Nor was the Nuremberg tribunal authorized to look into war crimes generally, certainly not any that might have been committed by the Allies. For the most part, the German defendants were not even allowed to cite Allied practices similar to their own. “While the Germans were charged with initiating an aggressive war against Poland,” Rabkin notes, “the Soviet Union had launched its own conquest of eastern Poland at the same time,” then embarked on aggressive wars against Finland and the Baltic states. The crimes of communist dictator Joseph Stalin’s regime were politely overlooked, along with the earlier Soviet-Nazi collaboration.

In 1945, Rabkin writes, “American leaders were not prepared to make themselves—or anyone else—the guarantors of universal justice. . . . American forces certainly had not battled their way into Germany to stamp out murderous oppression wherever it might be found.” More than a half-century later, however, “we see things differently—or pretend that we do,” forgetting “that effective justice does rest on armed force” and that use of force is often very costly in lives and treasure.