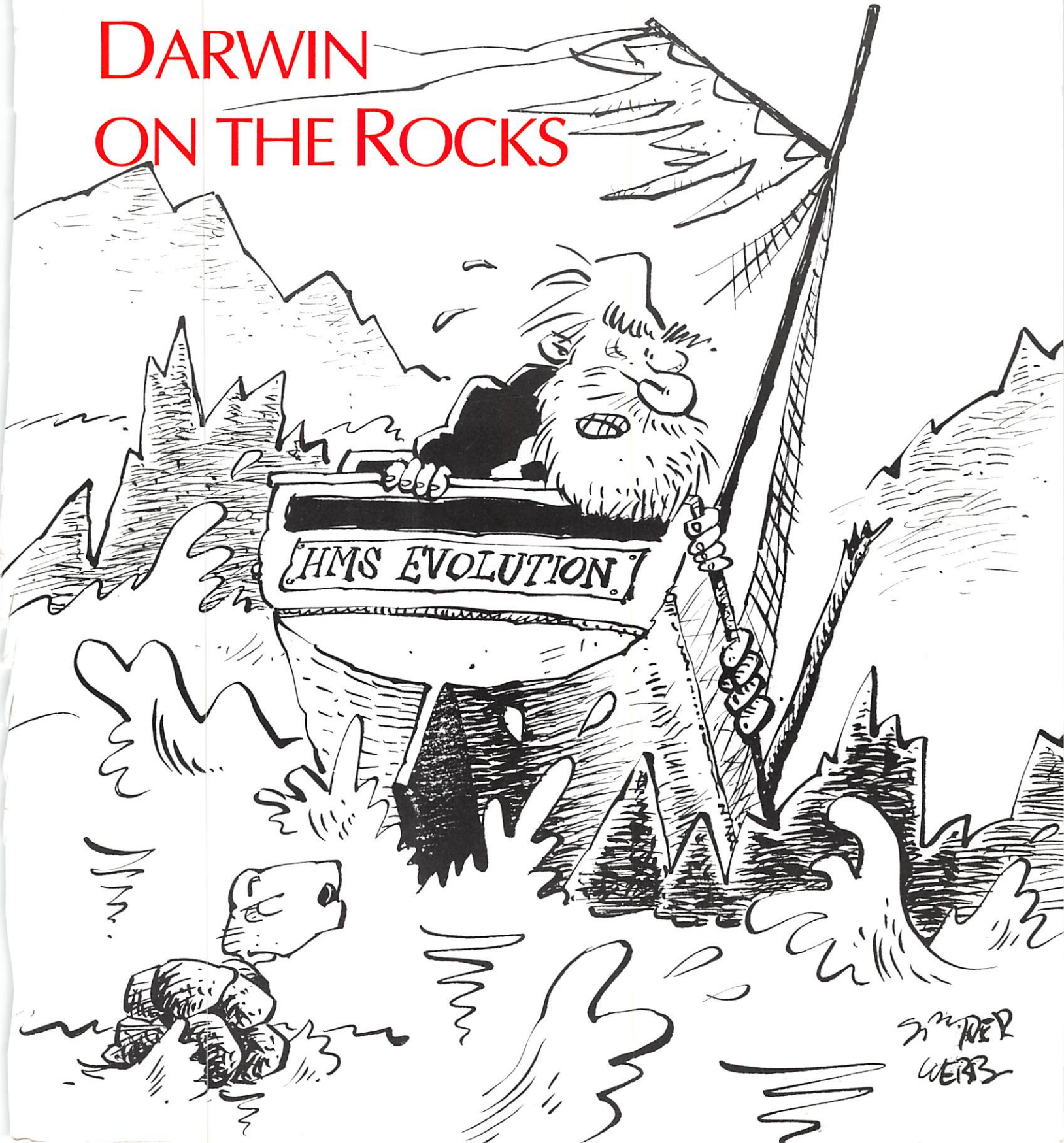


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## DARWIN ON THE ROCKS



# COMMENTARY

## Gay Science

A couple of decades ago, B.F. Skinner, the don of the behaviorist mafia, tried to shake down the body politic for tribute. But at that point in time, the U.S. citizenry was not quite atrophied enough in mind and spirit to assent to having their human nature encoded to the qualities of rat brains. Thus Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* remained an ideology without a praxis. Eventually, however, gross materialism and sex-centered narcissism, aided by the development of powerful biotechnological tools to accompany the discovery of DNA, broke whatever moral synapses remained. And, lo, behavioral neuroscience was born, with its reductionist "scientific" contra-genesis regarding what constitutes a human being: namely, cognition and brain activity. In a word, God and morality were announced Dead On Arrival.

The *ultima ratio* of this proposition, which someday may become a constitutional feature, is that every American, equipped with a schematic rendering of his or her brain, should be able to present it as evidence of non-culpability at any place in the realm, whether it be a good restaurant or a police station. If you must eat human flesh because you possess too much carnivore chemical in one of your lobes, so be it; if you are compelled to rape and dis-

member others because one of your hemispheres is a millimeter off or suffused with too much or too little of something analogous to the action of baking powder or cream of tartar, then who can really blame you?

The above is a necessarily contentious introduction of the appearance of Dr. Simon LeVay's mind boggling assertion, carried all over the realm's front pages on August 30, 1991, that the size of the hypothalamus determines sexual orientation, namely homosexuality. But don't be alarmed and take this "news" at face value. By LeVay's own bold admission, the data of his experiments is fairly worthless. Since LeVay's venue, in part, was rats, it is not unjust to say that his research most resembles a good Lorraine swiss cheese. It is, in other words, full of holes.

Of course, its relative worthlessness is what made it so newsworthy. For the more occult and devoid of authentic science theories wax, the more prominent become their progenitors. Like Nazi science, whether it was phrenology or animal magnetism, LeVay's work has an ideologically driven syntax.

Therefore, analyzing its subtext is easy. To begin with, LeVay is a self-admitted homo-

sexual. Interestingly, this fact was omitted from many of the reports in papers around the country. In terms of journalistic ethics, the point is newsworthy because it brings up the usually ironclad rule on conflict of interest. What no reporter would have been able to do was unquestioningly sanctioned for LeVay by the press. Even *The New York Times*, bastion of rigorous journalistic ethics and thoroughness, passed off the fact without seeking any comment from journalism deans or publishers on its inherent controversy.

Related to this fact about LeVay are his purely anecdotal, self-congratulatory comments on the alleged reaction of gays to his "findings." Writes *The Times'* reporter: "Dr. LeVay, who is a homosexual himself, said the gay men he has discussed his work with are in general pleased by the idea that sexual orientation may be at least partly inborn." Says LeVay: "They say their sexual personality is something very deeply ingrained in them, so they're not surprised to be told there are structural differences in the brain."

There is no clue in LeVay's comment as to the identity of this yea-saying *claque*. It turns out that they are not the central spokesmen for the gay community. *The Pittsburgh Press* article on the same day, August 30, that LeVay's research was reported in *The New York Times*, revealed there was skepticism in the capital of Sodom, that is, at the national headquarters of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington:

Some gay leaders, however, have expressed concern that LeVay's findings would be used as ammunition against homosexuals, saying such discoveries could lead to 'finding defects' or developing *in utero* screening of fetuses to discriminate against gays.

In the same article, Robert Bray, spokesman for the Task Force, was quoted as saying, "There are people who will have the notion that society could cure or repair gays if they realign this chromosome or tweak that cell." Hyper-liberal papers like *The New York Times*, usually avid to relate the feelings of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force, chose to omit their perspective in this instance, going instead with LeVay's shadowy homosexuals. Or, in parody of *The New York Times'* motto: "All the news that fits."

And well should Mr. Bray be fearful. Simon "The Magus" LeVay's speciality, behavioral neuroscience, and its social darwinian blood cousin, genetics, are the two most influential engines powering the totally biologically oriented view of human beings. Behavioral neuroscience and genetics not only conjured up the idea of perfection and the impermissibil-

ity of mental or physical incurable conditions in a modern biocratic oligarchical State, they also developed the biological tools to support selective abortion at one end of the life spectrum and gave life to the arguments for euthanasia at the other.

But LeVay is imperturbable in the face of current persecution. It turns out that his hubris may have been informed by his delight at what was coming out of Holland, that epicenter of decadence.

In December, researchers from Amsterdam reported that they had found differences between homosexual and heterosexual men in a part of the brain, the superchiasmatic antenucleus, that is very near the region examined by Dr. LeVay. . . .

This note leads to an examination of another subtextual element in LeVay's gambit: the spec-

ter of AIDS. As is well known, gay rights activism, until now, has insured that the natural laws and traditions of epidemiology have not been applied to homosexual transmitters of the HIV virus, which has been spread by gays to other gays and to heterosexuals by bisexuals. LeVay, and perhaps his Dutch counterparts, may be looking for a way to keep on keeping on with this death dance. Except now the rationalization is complete with the excuse that the hypothalamus being too small, the sexual activity can't be helped.

But this could actually exacerbate the already high resentment against homosexuals for spreading AIDS. Liberals who don't care about homosexuals enough to encourage them to change their lives ought to realize that it's only a matter of time before the actuaries take charge. Here we pan the camera back to Holland. The Scottish journal,

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— Mary E. LeVoir  
*Sacred Music*, Winter 1989

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5. Sacred Heart of Jesus
6. Hail Mary (Ave Maria)
7. Mary, Mother of Our Redeemer (Ave, O Redemptoris Mater)
8. (O, Saint Joseph) Patron of the Universal Church
9. Mary, Mother of the Church
10. People of God
11. Protectress of Christendom
12. Jesus, the Lord of Life



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*Ethics and Medicine*, published in its Spring, 1990 issue an article by Dutch cardiologist Richard Fenigan, titled, "A Case Against Dutch Euthanasia." Fenigan reports that "In Holland, the causes of death of people suffering from AIDS are different from those of patients with AIDS in other countries as 11.2 percent of Dutch patients die by active euthanasia." This means that they are involuntarily killed by their doctors because of the cost to their State.

What LeVay seems to be betting on is that his "proof" of the brain as the source of homosexuality will quash any recalcitrant disapproval of gay transmission of AIDS as supremely irresponsible. Yet here we must pause for a reality break. The Catholic Church, as well as other orthodox traditions, has long held that there may be an a priori orientation toward homosexuality. But it has also held that this does not condemn the person to active homosexuality. In other words, it still believes that, in spite of the element of "fatalism," the person still can and should exercise his will away from homosexual activity.

This observation leads to another. Science now believes that schizophrenia, alcoholism and depression all may have chemical etiologies whose seat is the brain. However, in these cases no one is suggesting that the biological basis of the disorder necessarily means that the disorder cannot be treated or overcome. But the coverage of LeVay's "research" reveals that in the case of gays, liberals are quite happy to consign them to their "fate," and not even introduce the idea that it need not be so if the other faculties of the human person are invoked.

The next point in the subtextual analysis of LeVay's report has to do with his basic reason for doing his study: LeVay is primarily motivated, not by a search for truth about the etiology

of homosexuality, but by professional gang warfare against the competition. In turn, this motivation seems to be driven by his own deeper psychological needs. His comment on why he sought out the hypothalamus as locus for his experiment is this:

The main result of this research is to show that it is possible to study sexual orientation at the biological level. It's not just the province of psychologists and psychoanalysts anymore.

This seems to be a strange statement, considering that in the 70s, homosexuality was taken off the list of diagnosable psychiatric disorders. However, this may have been done *de jure* by the psychiatric community at the same time that, *de facto*, the opinion was kept alive and even passed on in therapeutic interludes with homosexual patients. That this might be so was confirmed by a local newspaper report here earlier this year covering the gay men's health collective, Persad, which was itself founded in the 70s and offers therapy to homosexual men and women. The spokesman for Persad related that its counselors give more approbation and support for the "gay lifestyle" than might be had from a straight therapist.

LeVay seems to want to obviate such matters as familial psychodynamics, or any genuinely psychiatric diagnosis of the underlying causes of any individual homosexual's conduct which might suggest neurosis and its correction. Settling the question with a totally fatalistic, behaviorally brain driven answer would obviously quiet whatever doubts LeVay might have about his own homosexuality. By quashing psychiatric perspective on homosexuality, LeVay can abdicate responsibility for his own actions. Here again, his own case seems to speak clearly out of the cracks of the articles on him. Yet the cracks



were ignored because the message suited a growingly atavistic strain in medicine and the population.

Finally we come to Dr. LeVay's protocols for his experiment. One of the reasons I decided to write this commentary is because, as a journalist, I was outraged by the latitude accorded LeVay's methods. No journalist could get away with the sloppy "evidence" he provides and have it lauded by anyone more distantly related than his or her mother. LeVay's letter to the world that never wrote to him is laced with inexactitude, self-admitted flaws, and waste dumps of ambiguities filled in with the garbage of LeVay's own interpretation.

Too, there is the usual leap of faith that is demanded when the behavior of a rat is supposed to have some intrinsic meaning for humans. "In studies of male rats and monkeys," LeVay tells us, "researchers have found that injury



to this portion of the brain causes males to have interest in females while continuing to express sexual vigor by such activities as masturbation." But there is a radical difference it seems between behavior resulting from injury to the hypothalamus and what LeVay is contending in terms of size of the hypothalamus. Additionally, the relationship between this information and LeVay's contentions seems remote. And further, who cares, in the existential realm, how a rat or a monkey reacts to injury to the hypothalamus? Rats and monkeys are not humans, they do not have to live in a society with a social contract that pertains to selfhood and otherness, nor are they the products of three thousand years of civilization.

Next there is the problem arising from the sort of human brains he studied. He examined the brains of gay men who died of AIDS. AIDS infiltrates the central nervous system and the brain, as the article notes. Is it not possible, then, that the size of the hypothalamus is affected by the disease? The rest of the brain certainly is.

The other group of brains came from men who died of AIDS but contracted it, so they said, from intravenous drug use. LeVay at once claims that these men

were "heterosexuals" at the same time that he freely admits that he has no idea whether or not the fact that they were intravenous drug users means that they were not homosexuals. Why didn't LeVay compare the brains of homosexual men who did not die of AIDS with those of homosexuals who did? No one asked LeVay this question.

Despite its front page position, a thorough reading of the article demonstrates that even the behavioral neuroscience community is skeptical, perhaps even worried, about the delusional pretensions of LeVay's "results." Even LeVay himself described his results as "tentative." Dr. Richard Nakamura, "chief of the cognitive and behavioral neuroscience research branch of the National Institute of Mental Health," would only guardedly say, "Biology is clearly not destiny, and this shouldn't be taken to mean that you're automatically homosexual if you have a structure of one size versus a structure of another size." Actually it's pretty funny considering that men have always been rather fixated on the size of their penises as reflecting their sexual prowess. Now they have a new anxiety that can only be allayed with a pricey x-ray of their hypothalamus.

Some other neuroscientists who were shaken down for comments for *The Times*, who can't think in broader terms as does at least Nakamura, had concerns which I suppose pass as "philosophical" in the skewed world of behavioral neuroscience. Dr. Sandra F. Witelson wanted to bring up her *bete noir*, hormones: "But it doesn't mean that other anatomical differences aren't also present. I'm sure additional biological factors, perhaps related to hormones, will also be found." What a bold thought that! Of course, the aggregate effect will be that LeVay will be getting more grants and the usual cottage in-

dustry ready to put its shoulder to the wheel of this flotsam resulting from LeVay's mental accident will be generated. LeVay has effectively founded a new branch of the behavioral neuroscience mafioso.

Inscribed in the heart of LeVay's research is the new hegemony of the brain as the definition of what it means to be a human being. The entire brain centrality was put on its feet with the notion of "brain death" as constituting the termination of a human being's life. In this event, the totality of the human person was reduced to his brain and cognitive activity.

Before brain death became the reigning criterion of life and death, a "person" was defined as a multiple complex of faculties. Legal certifiable death, as in a doctor's death certificate, meant that the entire person's soma, body and organs, was devoid of life. This changed criterion generated arguments against the unborn, with little actual but enormous prospective cognition at one end of the life cycle, and fueled euthanasia at the other. It brought us the words to describe the infirm or diminished as being in a "vegetative state." This facile phrase went a long way in diminishing the ideal that it is how *we* take care of the impaired as much as *their* state which matters.

Behind the facade of the scientific sounding words "behavioral neuroscience" lies ideology. The not-so-hidden agenda is to obviate Genesis. C. S. Lewis' book, *The Discarded Image*, describes this process for another age: the medieval one. Most philosophical and theological argumentation then sought to "save the image" codified in mediocrity. But new ideas eventually sought to "discard it." That always becomes the struggle for the dissidents, a

struggle that was lost once in great part and could be lost again. Now in the "post modern" period we see the total effort, through "science" and its social uses, to discard the remnants of the image brought forward from the foundations of the Church and its past in Judaism. This is the widest context in which men like Simon LeVay operate. LeVay's skills at *The New York Times*, who share his ideological quest, were very very careful not to consult or quote anyone who would seek to "save the image."

But LeVay is not the first of his syndicate to discard the image. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, October 10, 1990, carried "An Interpretation of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* Based on Neuroanatomy" by Frank Lynn Meshberger, M.D. Briefly, Meshberger took Dr. F. Netter's illustrations of the nervous system and compared them to Michaelangelo's fresco which lives at the heart of Christendom and is in its center in Rome in the Sistine Chapel. He also compared the segment of God creating Adam with the artist's sonnet:

After the divine part is well conceived

Man's face and gesture, soon both mind and hand,

With a cheap model, first, at their command,

Give life to stone, but this is not achieved

By skill. In painting, too, this is perceived:

Only after the intellect has planned the best and highest, can the ready hand

Take up the brush and try all things received.

Meshberger saw in this sonnet and in figures of God, Adam and the Angels, a code transmitted by Michelangelo for future generations to crack. The figures,

Meshberger purports, follow exactly the lines of the human brain and nervous system. He points to the historical fact that Michelangelo did dissection of human cadavers to be able to draft the realistic human figure and then purports that, as per his sonnet, Michelangelo was an early devotee of the brain and the intellect—and not the soul—as what God infused into Adam at the moment that their fingers touch in the renowned painting.

In other words, Michelangelo Buarnarotti was a religious dissident and a crypto- or proto-behaviorist. In this scheme, God is subsumed into Meshberger's interpretation, for He is cast as merely a necessary figure that is really the *sulcus cinguli*. Although at the same time, as with LeVay's double talk, Meshberger speaks of "God" infusing Adam with "intellect," which he sees as an interchangeable term for the brain.

Although Meshberger uses a long passage from Genesis as the frontispiece quote to his article, he cuts off Genesis with the story of how the serpent tried to confuse Eve, telling her that although God told her not to eat of the tree of knowledge "lest ye die," the truth was the opposite:

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die;

for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

This is exactly the passage upon which the earliest Gnostics set up shop, believing as they did that the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge was the work of some mischievous demiurge set loose accidentally by God, who lied to Adam and Eve and was able also to turn them out of the Garden and created the hoax of the Fall. (For a good account of this Gnostic interpretation of Genesis, see Carl Raschke's *The Interruption of Eternity*.)

It is important to note that this Gnostic recitation by Meshberger was also treated to prominent coverage in *The New York Times* in October of 1990. Straight from the Gnostic alembic now called "behavioral neuroscience" and into the increasingly accommodating pages of the press.

Thus, behavioral neuroscience is a most adequate definition of neo-Gnosticism because it glorifies cognition—downgraded these days from the old Gnostic definition of knowledge—over morality. For Christians, Genesis is about the Fall via the eating of the tree of knowledge. In other words, Christians heed to the warning of



falsely believing that they can be divine through knowledge. In Meshberger's neo-Gnostic rendering, the brain itself is equated with divinity, indeed it is a God-substitute.

The "old" Christian image, the doctrine of man being created in God's image and likeness, is sought to be discarded in favor of God giving Adam the essence of divinity, the brain. The brain, then, automatically supplants the "old" image of the soul and is immediately cast as a good in and of itself. It cannot be second guessed in terms of something now become as "relative" as morality. The brain is the new, evolutionary, absolute value. In fact, according to behavioral neuroscience, morality was always nonexistent, the very notion of it was merely a bad and controlling joke played on mankind by a cruel and naughty demiurge and kept going by the agents of Judaeo-Christianity.

But as e.e. cummings once said, "the single secret will still be man." The neo-Gnostic, behavioral neuroscientists cannot, in fact, make anything true. This single secret is reserved for God, Who through Revelation and the sufferings of Christ for our sins, shows us the Way back to Him as being through virtue, faith, charity, hope, love, penance, humility. The role of our intellect is important but also small: it is to conform our rational nature to faith. Only by so doing will we enter by the "strait gate," which bears no resemblance to the door of a rat cage. Desperados like Simon "The Magus" LeVay and Frank "sulcus cinguli" Meshberger ought, like Al Capone, be put in some literal or figurative slammer for tax fraud. Not as with Capone, that is for not paying his taxes, but for using ours to devalue human life.

Suzanne Rini

## The Polish Proposal: The Worst of Both Worlds

In a recent editorial, "Poland Outcapitalisms America" (July 8, 1991), the *New York Times* lauded a proposal by the government of Poland to hand over ownership in four hundred state-owned factories to every Pole over the age of eighteen. The expectation is that this will result in widespread ownership of the means of production and increase the efficiency of the economy. However, since the plan appears to ignore the questions of justice and simple practicality, the actual end result would be concentrated capital ownership and inefficiency in the economy.

According to the information in the editorial, the factories, which represent 25 percent of the country's industrial sales, could not be privatized reasonably in any other way. The government would be unable to sell them because allegedly there are no markets to establish fair values, no Pole has sufficient savings to purchase a meaningful share of any company, and any sales effort would take decades.

Instead of a sale, the Government would hand over a portion of the equity in each of four hundred companies to about twenty investment funds. Ownership of the funds, in turn, would be handed over to every Pole over 18 through a voucher system, thus supposedly avoiding a "give-away." The investment funds would be run by financial experts from the West and operate similarly to mutual funds.

Most of the equity of all the companies would be concentrated in one investment fund. Thirty percent of the equity of each company would be retained by the state, and the workers would get ten percent. Over time, the proposal would allow for the investment funds to trade shares in companies. This would lead to a stock market where individuals could buy and sell shares on their own.

Such a program would have disastrous effects on the Polish economy. The plan provides for an unworkable amalgam of the worst aspects of capitalism and socialism, two systems which embody injustice from different angles.

The impression is given that the Polish plan would far outstrip the United States in creating owners of productive assets. This sounds plausible because most of the corporate equity in the United States is concentrated in a few hands. The Polish government's plan would make "instant capitalists" of every Pole through a massive give-away.

Past experience of the United States, however, demonstrates a far more effective approach for broadening the base of capital ownership. In the 1860s, Lincoln's Homestead Act turned thousands of people into owners of land, the single most valuable productive asset at the time, by giving them the opportunity to