

cious concept of the Japanese-American confrontation.

In another instance, the escalation of the Vietnam War, Janis considers it a major source of error that the decision-makers gave in to pressure for a military rather than a diplomatic or political solution, a course of action that he can explain only in psychologically dynamic terms. He is evidently unaware that military solutions have characterized American foreign relations during and after the 1947-1950 struggle between defense and diplomatic officials for predominance in national policy decisions (which defense won). The use of coercion, including armed force, has become customary in postwar American foreign policy, rather than unusual, and has not been so much the result of poor quality decision-making in various small groups as of the postwar conviction that security—and therefore military—concerns were more pressing than purely political and diplomatic issues.

Despite all these shortcomings, Janis has written a stimulating book. He has systematically and clearly elucidated an aspect of decision-making which political scientists and historians ought to consider. He has avoided overweening and exclusive claims for his conceptual approach, and thus makes it easy to agree that this approach may indeed be one of the factors of decision and policy analysis that scholars should consider. The weakness of the book is a too narrow focus on the decision process, which has led Janis to beg some points that he should have proved. The strength of the book is its coherent organization of novel ideas on a pressing and intensely interesting topic. If there remain lingering doubts about Janis' hypothesis, perhaps it is because at the outset he notes that he developed the hypothesis while conducting a graduate seminar—a small, cohesive group, strongly led. . . .

Reviewed by THOMAS H. ETZOLD

Gynocentric Evolution

The Descent of Woman, by Elaine Morgan, *New York: Stein and Day, 1972.*
258 pp. \$7.95.

WE ARE, Elaine Morgan asserts, members of the small band of species which once forsook the land for the water and then later returned to *terra firma*. This momentous event occurred in the Pliocene epoch, a twelve-million-year-long era of intense desiccation during which the once well-watered African continent turned into a howling wilderness of parched forests and swirling dust storms. In support of her hypothesis that man, or rather woman, evolved as an aquatic mammal, Ms. Morgan points to the alleged absence of hominid skeletal remains. "On the entire African continent," she writes, "no Pliocene fossil bed has ever been found."

Developing with full acknowledgment a theory first advanced by Professor Sir Alister Hardy in 1960, Ms. Morgan speculates that our brachiating ape ancestors were driven by drought from the refuge of the trees. Most of those who became plains animals fell victim to fiercer and swifter predators, but the fortunate few pushed out from incipient interior deserts to the shorelines of surrounding seas where they adapted to their new milieu by becoming wading and swimming mammals.

Elaine Morgan marshals ingenious and persuasive support for this extraordinary theory. First, the fact that man has practically no body hair suggests an adaptation to water, since all aquatic mammals (notably whales, manatees and hippos) and such putatively former ones as elephants lack it. (That these aquatic mammals also lack hair on their heads does not escape Ms. Morgan's attention; she attributes the exceptional position of man, or as she prefers to put it, woman—in this respect, to the infant's need to have something firm to

grasp while suckling in the water.) Second, man's sense of smell has atrophied in favor of acute bifocal vision. Third, the shift from quadruped to biped stance with accompanying somatic structural changes would merely have slowed down a land animal; in a pelagic one, it involved little additional weight stress or loss of speed and contributed to greater range of vision. Fourth, the protected position of the vagina is unique among land animals, but common among marine ones. Fifth, human breast development facilitates suckling while mother and infant are floating on water. (Such sirenians as dugongs and manatees uniquely share this trait with woman.) Sixth, *Homo sapiens* can weep salt tears—a vestige, Ms. Morgan asserts, of human environmental kinship with those birds and animals which hunt in the sea and need a mechanism to reduce the saline content of their blood if they swallow sea water.

Recent evidence has cast a long shadow of doubt on these bold and ingenious conjectures. It simply isn't true that no hominid remains have been found in Africa dating from the Pliocene. Fossils of Dartian man (*Australopithecus africanus* and *robustus*) have very recently been discovered in the Omo Valley of Ethiopia. These date back four million years, well into the Pliocene, and there is a continuous African fossil record of the presence of these two types until *Africanus* evolved into a more human type a million or so years ago and *Robustus* became extinct 500,000 years later. Moreover, there is a good case for evolutionary continuity between *Ramapithecus*, who was found by Leakey in Kenya and potassium-argon dated to 14 million years before the present, and the two Dartian species. All this argues against the hypothesis that woman (accompanied by man) sojourned into the shallow seas during the Pliocene, but it does not refute it, since there is at present an African hominid-fossil gap covering millions of years of the Pliocene.

The fact that the hominids lost body hair, but not head hair, seems to argue for

the traditional view that this change occurred after they had assumed a bipedal position and needed protection from the sun overhead. Similarly, the transition from acute sense of smell to acute vision would become a survival asset after the shift in habitat from dark forests to open plains. Aquatic mammals neither have nor need acute, bifocal, long-range vision. Elaine Morgan points out that face-to-face copulation is characteristic of aquatic mammals. But it is also true that bipedalism, in which man is unique among the primates, caused a gluteal muscular development which made that position possible. As Björn Kurtén points out in his stimulating recent book, *Not From The Apes*, the "missionary position" in sexual intercourse is not a Western foible, but almost universal, as is attested by the ubiquity among primitive peoples of sky-father and earth-mother myths.

If the Morgan theory is correct, desiccation would have proceeded from the core of the African continent and gradually extended toward its coastal areas, where the presence of oceans acted as a brake on desert formation. Man's distressed ancestors would have emigrated radially, retreating from the continental heartland toward the ocean shores, much as the spokes of a wheel diverge from its hub. Enormous territorial isolation of the several hominid population clusters would have thus occurred and would have lasted for millions of years. All this is consistent with the theory of Franz Weidenreich and later Carleton S. Coon that human races arose before man became *Homo sapiens*. However, territorial isolation thus intense and protracted would presumably have caused man to fragment into a variety of mutually non-interfertile different species. Yet, as far as we know (the qualification being based on the fact that certain types of racial hybridization, that between Eskimos and Bushmen, for instance, have never been tried), all human races can interbreed with one another.

Even if critical evidence should refute her aquatic theory, Ms. Morgan has prof-

ferred incisive comments and original theories concerning woman's origin and evolution. She ridicules Robert Ardrey's reliance on aggressive and militaristic baboon-troop behavior as an analogue to primitive human social structure, since the baboon is not even an ape. What she calls the "Tarzan School" of anthropology has ignored the gentle gorilla and, to some extent, the exhibitionistic chimpanzee in its search for keys to our instinctual heritage.

Elaine Morgan has even less use for the Ardrey version of the Cain and Abel story. This is the theory that little, gracile *Australopithecus africanus* came down from the trees to become "an ape with the capacity for murder," to use Ardrey's dramatic phrase, and exterminated his more placid vegetarian cousin, *Robustus*. Thus, we allegedly descend exclusively from killer apes. Ms. Morgan points out that it is improbable that *Africanus* suddenly became a carnivore upon leaving the forests for the plains. All apes kill game and eat meat. Moreover, if *Africanus* killed the *Robustus* males, he probably kept the females for pleasure and mating. If so, Ms. Morgan argues, it is as illogical to claim the fiercer species of Dartian man as our sole ancestor

as it would be to assert that Englishmen are Normans, but not Anglo-Saxons.

In the Morgan gynocentric system, pair-bonding does not arise from man's needs as a hunter. The mother-child relationship, here as elsewhere in the animal kingdom, is the basic bond. Under conditions of prolonged human infancy and cave domicile, families evolved around the protection of stored food, hearths and females from intruder males. The long duration of the intimate mother-child relationship may have implanted in young males attitudes that easily evolved into monogamistic preferences when they became adult.

The jaunty style and somewhat polemical tone of Elaine Morgan's book may persuade some that it is to be taken lightly or even merely as satire. If so, they are mistaken. The long-disparaged sex will read with pleasure a work on anthropology containing such sentences as this:

When the first ancestor of the human race descended from the trees, she had not yet developed the mighty brain that was to distinguish her so sharply from all other species.

Reviewed by NATHANIEL WEYL

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Will Herberg, Andrew V. Stout graduate professor of philosophy and culture at Drew University, is well known for his work in social philosophy and theology. He has written widely on social, cultural, and religious questions. He is a member of the Medieval Academy of America and has been elected to the American Theological Society and the American Judicature Society. "America's Civil Religion: What it is and Whence it comes" is based on a paper presented at the Consultation on Civil Religion held at the Graduate School of Drew University in February 1973.

John Chamberlain, formerly a senior editor with Time, Life, Fortune, Inc., is a widely syndicated columnist and dean of the School of Journalism, Troy State University, Troy, Alabama.

Peter B. Clark is president of The Evening News Association of Detroit and publisher of *The Detroit News*.

Samuel M. Thompson, professor emeritus of philosophy at Monmouth College, is the author of *A Modern Philosophy of Religion* and *The Nature of Philosophy* and has contributed numerous articles to many scholarly journals.

Ellis Sandoz, chairman of the department of political science at East Texas State University, is the author of *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor*.

René Albrecht-Carrié is professor emeritus of history at Columbia University and distinguished visiting professor at Rockford College. He is the author of *Diplomatic History of Europe since the Congress of Vienna* and numerous other books on modern European history.

James E. McGoldrick is instructor of history at West Virginia University.

Nora Lehnhoff, graduate of Reed College, now teaches high school in a remote mountain village in the North Cascades.

The book reviews are contributed by: *Henry Regnery*, founder and chairman of the board of the Henry Regnery Company, Publishers; *Hugh Mercer Curtler*, chairman of the philosophy department at Southwest Minnesota State College; *Haven Bradford Gow*, whose articles have appeared in *The Intercollegiate Review* and other publications; *Joseph P. Boyle*, professor of philosophy at a Florida college; *M. E. Bradford*, chairman of the English department at the University of Dallas; *P. William Filby*, director of the Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore; *Brenton H. Smith*, professor of history, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio; *C. P. Ives*, associate editor of *Studies in Burke and his Time*; *Thomas Molnar*, professor of French literature at the City University of New York and professor of European intellectual history at C. W. Post College; *George A. Panichas*, professor of English, University of Maryland, who has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts of the United Kingdom; *Gabriel Gersh*, professor of English, Hunter College; *Thomas H. Etzold*, professor of history at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio; *Nathaniel Weyl*, professional writer, author of numerous books and articles, residing in Delray Beach, Florida.