



**F.** McEACHRAN was born in 1900 and was educated at Manchester Grammar School and Oxford. A schoolmaster by profession, he became interested in economics during the inter-war slump and, like many other people, was bewildered at the problems of that period, to which the standard

books on political economy gave no clue. In 1930 he met Dr. S. Vere Pearson, a prominent member of the Georgeist group in Norfolk, and realised for the first time why the Western world was being forced into Socialism. It seemed to him at the time, and still seems, that the Henry George point of view has suffered by being treated purely as a financial theory for making taxation more just (which it is), instead of being presented as a way of life (which it is still more).

This extract from his book *Freedom The Only End* (yet to be published) is an attempt to widen the issue and the whole book tries to do for George what has been done for Marx *ad nauseam* by many writers (i.e. to show how the doctrine applies to all aspects of human life).

Mr. McEachran's interests are philosophical and literary. Other publications include *The Civilised Man*, *The Future of Europe* (both Faber and Faber), *The Life and Philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder* (O.U.P.) and, most recently, an anthology of European poetry of a strongly individualistic tendency entitled *Spells* (Basil Blackwell, 12s. 6d.).

**T**HE doctrine of the uniformity of nature, on which the superstructure of science has been built, was criticised by Hume in the eighteenth century from the point of view of causality. Hume showed that the sequence of cause and effect which was observed to operate in natural events was merely a sequence, and no amount of observation, however often repeated, could prove it to be more. B follows A in the sense that the billiard ball rolls after being pushed by the player, but the judgment made by the mind that A *causes* B is unfounded. Every time the billiard player pushes the ball the latter moves, it is true, but we can only infer, not prove, that it will always move in a similar case.

Hume would admit, of course, that you could repeat this operation many times with invariably the same result on each occasion. What you cannot do is to do it so often that you can assume the invariable result, since to do that you would obviously need to perform it an infinite number of times. You can assume it for practical purposes of oxygen will produce the liquid called water; the law

# THE LAW

By F.

First of a series of extracts

that when water is boiled it will become steam — all of which are based ultimately on the same principle of repeated experiment and observation. Every time that man has tried these out the same result has occurred, and he is, therefore, inclined to believe that every time he tries them in the future he will obtain the same result.

Another way of putting the matter is to say that nature presents definite patterns of events and that these events are the laws we are discussing. Man can observe these patterns and note them down and by doing so he obtains a mastery over nature and is able, to some extent, to change it. Thus by observing and repeating the natural patterns man can harness nature to his own ends and carry evolution a step or two further. He is not contradicting nature, or even improving it, but carrying it further in *his* or *its* own direction.

Now the different laws we have mentioned — if they really are different in a final analysis — suggest to the thinker the obvious point that there is an *order* in nature which gives nature its particular meaning to man. They show that not only in inanimate nature, as in the case of H<sub>2</sub>O and the radioactive substances, but also in animate and human sociological spheres the same sort of ordering prevails. The human organism, for example, like that of posers, and you clearly have to do so in ordinary life, but this is far from constituting a proof of the causal category. Nature may be uniform throughout or she may not. We shall never know for certain. The mind ends here in a scepticism which cannot be overcome.

The important thing is that certain sequences do happen often enough, and often enough in isolation, for us to assume that nature is shot through with "patterns" on the recurrence of which we can rely. These patterns are the objective background on which the scientist, asking his hypotheses, builds up his theory of the universe. They are the laws of nature as we know them today.

The best way then to define a law of nature is to say that it formulates — for all practical purposes — the sequence of events in the objective world which gives man the illusion, if illusion it be, of causal sequence, and its great virtue is that it enables man to profit by past experience.

As illustration of what is meant by a law of nature in this sense we can instance the law of gravitation, by which bodies tend to fall to the ground; the chemical law that two molecules of hydrogen combined with one the fish and the dog, lives by nutrition and breathing, and

# OF NATURE

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ts from *Freedom The Only End*

nature has so arranged it that it has the means of feeding and breathing.

If anything has gone wrong in either system, the likelihood is not that nature has been harsh or cruel, foolish or perverse, but that in some way nature has been interfered with, hindered in her process and prevented from functioning in her own peculiar way. The art of medicine illustrates this very aptly: if any part of the organism fails to function, the doctor proceeds at once to *restore* the "nature" which has been in some way disturbed. The doctor's art may be summed up as an observation of how nature works, an experimentation on her own lines and a healing process which repeats her methods on a new level. The point is, and it is a very important one, that *nature* is always right, even, paradoxically, when she is making mistakes. Even when she produces "Siamese" twins, it is done exceptionally on a mass background of normal babyhood. The norm is always there.

The point which follows from this example of man's interference with natural process is that there are really two sorts of interference which are radically different. The first is, as we have seen, when a doctor or surgeon sets out to restore nature which has misfired in some individual case, e.g. a man suffering from a disease or even a Siamese twin as a baby misfired. This sort of interference is natural and good and is a permanent part of our heritage. It is quite a different thing, however, when man attempts to change a whole "pattern" and to impose upon nature a "law" or "pattern" which is not her own.

Man by himself in society never attempts to do this, but he does attempt it as "the state," i.e. he tries as a class to get a monopoly advantage by the imposition of unnatural law. An obvious example in economics is the man-made "law" of "protection" which purports to change the natural and general pattern of free trade and so upset the universal social order. Now it is in fact by producing specialised articles and freely exchanging the surplus that civilisation has grown up and it rests on the tacit assumption

that men are free to produce and exchange in this way. If then some government official comes along waving a flag and trying to stop it, the trader instinctively feels that this is not what nature meant and reacts accordingly.



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Indeed, as most human organisms always retain, even under the worst conditions, some vestige of natural feeling, the attempt to trade freely will go on, even in the form which is picturesquely known as smuggling. Examples of this kind of thing are legion, and some of them are quoted below. The moral is simply that man should and must interfere with nature's *exceptions*, such as sick men, deformed babies and so on, but never with her *general patterns*. If the latter is done the result will be disaster, individual and social, for all involved.



There is a Latin tag to the effect that if you "cast nature out with a pitch-fork, she will return again in the end," and it holds true in this connection. If you disobey or thwart the general patterns, punishment will follow of its own accord and, like the crime, will be of a general and public kind.

In the case of monopoly economics, the punishment is mass poverty, unemployment, class and national conflict — all brought about on a mass basis by the slow, relentless logic of events (not by the wickedness of the individual man). *Deorum injurice diis causa*, the Emperor Tiberius used to say: "Insults to the gods are the gods" 'look-out,' and it applies exactly here. Yet when man comes at last to have the knowledge it may be that he will cease to insult the gods.

If the question be asked: what about nature "red in tooth and claw," the answer is simple. The killing that goes on in nature is more often a minimum killing and a killing for a natural and necessary end, such as the preservation of the species. There is a story of a missionary expatiating to a cannibal chief on the greatness of western civilisation, in the course of which he mentioned the fact that some ten million men were killed in the First World War. The cannibal chief, aghast at the incredible figure, showed hesitation in believing the story since, as he pointed out, it would be well-nigh impossible to eat so many corpses. The missionary, aghast in his turn, said they were *killed*, not *eaten*, a thing which the western powers would not think of doing. But, asked the cannibal chief, looking puzzled, in that case, why did they kill them? If they didn't kill them to eat, what then was the point of killing?

The cannibal chief was right. If killing were for eating, there would be some point in it. It would exemplify a natural law, the law that man must eat to live (like all other animals). Even man, apart from a few vegetarians (whose ideals may ultimately be established), preys on the lower animals without scruple and obeys nature in doing it. But the slaughter of ten million men for no biological purpose at all was more than the cannibal chief could stomach.

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Actually the killing in nature is mainly of individuals by individuals for the sake of food and even when done in packs, as in the case of wolves, it is again rarely productive of large-scale slaughter. Large-scale organisation of killing comes from the "state," which is unnatural, not from the natural law. It is man, in the grip of unnatural, who is "red in tooth and claw" far more than the beasts that perish.

We return them to nature, to the pattern which runs through the universe and to the order which this pattern reveals. It exists both objectively in nature outside man, and subjectively in man himself, and in both error and evil are possible. Natural laws can be overlooked, they can be misapplied and perverted, and only time and experience can put right what is continually put wrong. Nevertheless, the infringement of laws does not mean that law does not exist; and in actual practice as soon as a law is known, there is hope of its application. All evil is parasitic on good, all error on accuracy, and if evolution means anything at all it must mean the triumph of law over "unlaw." When errors are committed — such as the institution of chattel slavery—certain results will follow and have followed in the past. Nature provides an end for unnatural, and the gods restore their own. *Deorum injurias dis causa.*

It is easier to expatiate on natural law in the usual objective sense than to establish its operation in the more human individual sphere, but the task is not an impossible one. Certain sciences, of course, such as physiology, are obviously sciences of the individual and yet display, no less than the non-individual sciences, the mark of a universal pattern. There is a morphology of man just as there is a morphology of the plant and we know that nature, following her morphological pattern, is always trying to perfect it. Imperfect embryos are born, monstrosities even, but the pattern remains marvellously uniform.

Even when deliberate attempts at interference are made, as when the Chinese bound up the feet of their girl children, it seems that finally, perhaps inevitably, the mistake is admitted. Once more we realise that, on the statistical average, nature is always right and her order the right order. We admit a flaw in nature, just as we admit a flaw in man, but it does not upset the pattern. It is *inside* not *outside* nature's ring of destiny.

Coming nearer to the subjective sphere we have finally the science of psychology, which is perhaps as close to the real *ego* as we shall ever get. Here, too, in this most subjective sphere of all we find conation, cognition and affection, all the same human faculties and even the subconscious mind and super-ego conforming to the same statistical average throughout the universe. Here, too, there is a permanent pattern which applies to all men and, despite occasional variations, remains generally constant to type.

The upshot of our argument is that if *natural law* is

allowed to operate without *unnatural let or hindrance* the error and the evil in the world will be reduced to the minimum degree at any given stage of civilisation. By natural law we include the active co-operation of man in nature, but we define this co-operation as itself forming and following patterns suggested by nature, not by the state. We imply that the old theory of an evil nature being put right by man is completely unfounded in the sphere of natural law, *although it may and does have reference to individual deficiencies.*

We do not mean, of course, that the mistakes which nature makes in forming her patterns should not be righted by man as far as possible, but that even when doing that, man should find out the law she is following and help her to implement it more fully. He should not, in order to heal one partial evil effect of a law that has been distorted, interfere with that law, but find out how the law has been mishandled and apply it correctly, helping nature to achieve her own end.

Thus there is only one way to prevent smuggling and this is not to increase the number of coastguards, but simply to restore free trade. There is only one way to prevent unemployment, and that is not to force employers to employ men (as was done in the Fascist countries) since that will lead to further evils. It is to *restore* free production, which will cure unemployment at its source for good. Again seen from the psychological angle, there is one great solution for the vast majority of neurotic and disappointed people in the world today and that is to restore lost opportunity and remove resentment. The fact that nature's pattern of economics is constantly crossed by the property laws of mankind is a source of psychological unrest which is largely unconscious but always in evidence.

It is of the almost importance to grasp what the statement implies when we say that nature is always right. It is one evil, for example, for a child to be born epileptic of epileptic parents, but it is also an evil, and a far greater one, for the state to have the power to sterilise whole groups of people. It is one evil for a man to murder another man in a fit of anger, but it is another and a far greater for a state to organise a police force and armies to kill people against whom no anger has been felt. It is one evil for man to be out of work through no fault of his own, but it is another and far worse one for the state to send him to a labour camp or conscript him into the army against his will. The point at issue is not that some individuals might not temporarily benefit by the remedy applied, but *that the remedy is not one of nature's patterns and leads to evil later.*

There is an organisation and a co-operation in the world which is natural and biological and beyond which no man can go with impunity. There is also an organisation which is anti-natural, unbiological, throttling and parasitic, which reflects nothing in evolution excepting the attempt to bar its way. This organisation leads towards death, and it must go.