

evince such symptoms of terminal scientism. A Belgian biophysicist recognizes that it is "dangerous" for anyone to be considered "more competent to judge today's society" simply because of scientific acumen, and he firmly disagrees with his skeptical interviewer's dismissal of religion as "irrationality," averring that "religion is a perfectly rational system once one grants its premises." Similarly, an American biochemist from Austria identifies "the idolatry of science" as part of a "new barbarism" destroying "all moralities, all the decalogues of humanity." Sensing that "poetry and music are better indicators of the future than science," he sees the current "crisis in the arts" as an ominous portent. One can only hope that such sane physicians as these can cure the megalomaniac delusions of their colleagues. For if the narrow values of laboratory manuals ever fully replace those of art and Scripture, then the global experiments which must follow will reduce us all to living cadavers. (BC) □

Dodging Bullets and Issues

Roger Rosenblatt: *Children of War*; Anchor/Doubleday; New York.

Among the horrors of war, few are so awful as that of the suffering of children. The most innocent of victims, they are also the least able to understand the causes of conflict or to deal with its agonizing consequences. Certainly, most people who read Roger Rosenblatt's sympathetic but deft portrayal of infants and young people orphaned, wounded, and traumatized by violence will want to do all they can to reduce such tragedy in the world. Contemplation of the plight of Northern Irish, Palestinian, Is-

raeli, Cambodian, and Vietnamese children caught in webs of combat, however, does not necessarily lead to its termination, for among those who have witnessed these children's pain longest and most closely are too many who are causing it. Moreover, the most unspeakable torments en-



dured by these children—forced to execute other children by the Khmer Rouge, reduced to starvation and cannibalism when fleeing Vietnam—were not experienced *during* war but *after* the wrong forces won the war. This is a truth that Mr. Rosenblatt will not face squarely; indeed, as he glosses over the distinctions between war, terrorism, and institutionalized genocide, he ducks many other issues that adults who care about children and their future must confront.

It is not that Mr. Rosenblatt restricts himself to depicting the children he meets and interviews. Far from it. In long, diffuse divagations about his own life, Shakespeare and Homer, his photographers, and the nature of man and history, he displays the skill of a capable essayist and the ideological evasiveness of a liberal journalist. A pacifist by temperament, he only reluctantly comes to suppose that perhaps war is a normal event, not a historical aberration. But in finally blaming war on human nature and choice in general, he avoids the more pertinent question of which contemporary ideologies are worth fighting for and which must be opposed by force, if necessary. To compare the pain

of Palestinian children with that of Israeli children, as though all causes of children's pain had the same philosophic significance, is misleading. The fact, easily deduced even from the fragmented data Mr. Rosenblatt offers, is that the consequences of a Palestinian military triumph would be worse than those of continued hostilities or than those of a settlement favorable to Israel. Palestinians who chant, and teach their offspring to chant, slogans not unlike those now heard in Khomeini's Iran would likely create a state monstrously dehumanizing for both adults and children, a state far inferior to Israel's pluralistic democracy. Nor can ideology be ignored when considering the tragedy of Southeast Asia. Pol Pot's incredible brutality during a time of "peace" is not adequately explained by Mr. Rosenblatt's allusion to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; unlike Kurtz, Pol Pot was guided by something more concrete than wildly romantic notions of bringing enlightenment to benighted people. Like his forerunner Stalin, he adhered to a communist credo whose implementation makes mere war seem paradisiacal by



comparison. Though terrible, the picture Rosenblatt includes of a Palestinian teenager with brain damage caused by an Israeli bomb is finally less depressing than the Cambodian children's description of a communist world in which no one's brain may even formulate—to say nothing of acting on—a humane thought. (BC) □

Of Fossils and Fundamentalists

Science and Creationism;
Edited by Ashley Montagu;
Oxford University Press; New York.

As dedicated anticommunists and tireless advocates of traditional morality, Christian fundamentalists have done much to preserve freedom and decency in America at a time when mainline and liberal congregations are drifting dangerously into ethical anarchy and leftist utopianism. Nonetheless, at times their zeal outruns their wisdom, and the results are embarrassing to those who share many of their convictions. The "Scopes II Trial" over the Arkansas law requiring the teaching of creationism in the public schools was such an embarrassment.

Every sensible observer agrees with fundamentalists that the expulsion of religion and morality from the public schools has left a spiritual vacuum filled by crime, drug abuse, and promiscuity. But the displaced values were never scientific in the first place, so the attempt to reintroduce them through the science classroom was foredoomed. Predictably, the law merely provided the ACLU with an opportunity to humiliate well-meaning religionists publicly by exposing the technical ineptness of their arguments and the disingenuity of their tactics. Their defeat, moreover, also occasioned books like *Science and Creationism* in which scholarly contributors demolish the creationists' credibility as scientists while largely evading the critical *nonscientific* questions that the devout should be raising concerning our declining schools and the culture that supports them.

The truth is that although only humans do science, science itself can tell us almost nothing

about what it means to be human. With bigoted arrogance, some of these essayists implausibly posit that the muteness of science on metaphysical issues constitutes an objective proof for materialistic naturalism. Fortunately, a few of the contributors, more honest and humble in victory, concede that as an explanation of the *hows* of life, science can say nothing about the *whys*, not necessarily because there are none, but rather because such questions "transcend the limitations of [science's] epistemological field." Indeed, a philosopher of science who testified against the creationists expresses his relief that no one pressed him on how he intuitively "moral values as objective realities," since he has no idea "what that means."

The writers of Scripture knew what objective moral values meant, but through the Holy Ghost, not through science: they left lesser mortals to cultivate that narrow epistemological field. The question then is, Why are the fundamentalists, who quote these writers so frequently, now shamelessly yoking Moses and Peter to the scientific plow? Why, for instance, is Peter's insight that "a day with God is as a thousand years with man" not openly proclaimed as a *religious* revelation of the relationship between the eternal God and temporal man instead of surreptitiously advanced through distorted geological data as a scientific formula for calculating the age of the earth? A partial explanation is suggested by a perceptive contributor who notes that the fundamentalist hermeneutic principle "literal where possible" is "not derived from the Bible itself, but from some alien philosophical sources," specifically from Enlightenment Baconianism. The troubling implication of this critique is that in their literalist preservation of the words of Scripture, fundamentalists have no access to or do

not trust the Spirit who inspired those words. Fundamentalism thus apparently abandons the most important of fundamentals. Hence, the devious attempt to transform Scripture into an alternative science is actually an awkward capitulation to the scientific spirit of the age and a mute confession that those so involved lack something animating those who openly testify of their religion *as* religion, revelation from God, not discovery of man. With justice, fundamentalists apply to our time Hosea's lament, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." But if they suppose that the spiritual knowledge necessary to forestall destruction can or should be enclosed in a science textbook, then, to quote Isaiah: "The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed." (BC) □

Perceptibles

Michael Novak: *Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age*; Thomas Nelson; Nashville, TN.

Demands for a nuclear freeze are frequent these days, in the halls of Congress, in university classrooms, in the streets, and in churches. In particular, the American Catholic Bishops' pastoral Letter on War and Peace, with its call for a "halt" to the production and deployment of nuclear weaponry, has received wide attention. In this collection of intelligent essays, Michael Novak, himself a Catholic, examines that document in its historical, ecclesiastical, and political context. He reveals that from 1968 to 1982, the United States *did* freeze its nuclear-weapons manufacture, producing not a single new delivery system for missiles and no new strategic bombers during that 14-year period. During this same time, the Soviets built up their

nuclear forces relentlessly, surpassing the U.S. in virtually every category, especially in the European theater. The call for a freeze now, at a time when America is belatedly trying to rectify this imbalance, can only mean that the grey matter of many Westerners, including that beneath many miters, is in permafrost. □

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Michael D. Aeschliman: *The Restitution of Man: C. S. Lewis and the Case Against Scientism*; William B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.

While remarkable efforts have helped bring such creatures as the sandhill crane and the American alligator back from the edge of extinction, far too little has been done to save a more important endangered species: man. Considered simply as a biological organism, *Homo sapiens* appear to be flourishing, with more than 4 billion specimens to be found on earth. But precisely because mankind is now often considered merely scientifically and not philosophically, morally, or re-

ligiously, man is ceasing to be man. Forty years ago, in *The Abolition of Man*, Christian apologist and literary critic C. S. Lewis warned that the triumph of scientism over traditional metaphysics could only give us "men without



chests," arbitrary, inhuman, and partial men. Because Lewis's book has found tens of thousands of readers, including perceptive analysts like Michael Aeschliman, there is some reason to hope that his warning was heeded. If so, we may anticipate future evidence of man's survival to take forms more meaningful than wildlife photos in *National Geographic*. □

WASTE OF MONEY

Psycho-Babble

Judith Rossner: *August*; Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

by Keith Bower

'A woman who writes well never writes much.'

—Max Beerbohm, *Ouida*

Chapter 10 in Judith Rossner's latest novel begins: "In her first

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months with Dr. Shinefeld that September, Dawn was cheerful. . . ." This curious handling of time isn't on a par with Rossner's confusion of the Immaculate Conception with the Virgin Birth in *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, but it does show that Rossner is as perceptive as ever. The book is mostly the transcript of young Dawn Henley's psychiatric sessions with Dr. Lulu Shinefeld. And it reads, or rather sprawls, like a transcript, anacoluthons abounding, with dodges and