



**This Side of Yesterday: Extinction or Utopia.**

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their native habitat, surrounded by computer tapes and filing cabinets. Meanwhile, back in Calcutta . . .

ALAN MACFARLANE

HENSHAW, PAUL S. *This side of yesterday: extinction or Utopia*. x, 186 pp., illus., map, tables. New York, London: John Wiley, 1971. £3 (cloth), £1.35 (paper)

It took all the millennia before 1650 to reach half a billion living humans; the second half billion took two centuries; the seventh took eight years (1960–68). 'It is apparent to thoughtful people everywhere that human society is on a collision course. Freedom to procreate with abandon, to pollute without restraint, and to exploit with increasing intensity, quite obviously cannot go on indefinitely' (p. 1). Unfortunately this author's analysis of the problems cannot be recommended for it is pretentious and superficial. For example if we turn to 'Quantitation [sic], art, and ritual' we find nine lines of generalised platitude, such as 'Art and rituals are also forms of abstractions, and their use by human beings is much more prevalent than use by other animal types' (p. 56). Definitions are arbitrary; 'cosmology is a term used to connote change in the universe' (p. 13). Conclusions are banal: 'Man is a strange creature and he is a mixture of things; he is different things at different times . . .' (p. 155). There is a strange belief that 'Nature' is purposeful: 'Without any doubt, man is part of a system that is leading somewhere' (p. 13). Nor are the solutions to the crisis of much interest. The first is 'A realistic facing of the population problem together with steps to maintain a growing economy without growth in numbers of people' (p. 175). Such 'growthmania' would, according to most ecologists, be disastrous. How did the book come to be so disappointing? We are told that it 'grew out of experience in preparing . . . broad-scope courses such as "Science and society", "Population behaviour", and "The evolution of man" . . .' (p.v). If anthropologists were to lift their heads from the sand this book would soon make them bury them again.

ALAN MACFARLANE

GUERRA, FRANCISCO. *The pre-Columbian mind: a study into the aberrant nature of sexual drives, drugs affecting behaviour, and the attitude towards life and death, with a survey of psychotherapy, in pre-Columbian America*. xvi, 335 pp., illus., plates, bibliogr. London, New York: Seminar Press, 1971. £4.50

In this book the works of authoritative churchmen and administrators in Spanish America of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have been compared and checked until we have a group of most reliable witnesses who have recorded information upon the health and morality of the pre-Columbian Indian populations.

The author has set out to re-examine the realities behind the ancient accusation that the Indians were not truly human. He shows the wide range of local variations in practice of morality, discusses cannibalism, human sacrifice, and the whole range of unusual sexual deviations revealed by his authorities. What emerges is a new vindication of the Indians as psychologically close to their accusers. In fact the book through its corpus of quotations gives us as much material for grasping the reality of European thought on these matters as about the practice among the Indians. It becomes a very important study of the cultural clash between the two worlds.

A wide geographical diversity in custom is revealed. Tribal custom, obviously important, becomes more concentrated in conditions of geographical separation. The climatic variations lead to Mexican divergence between the highland peoples and the more lax conventions of the people of tropical lowlands. The use of hallucinogens in Mexico was more intended to promote visions and assist in religious ritual than to bring physical relaxation. In Peru the emphasis was the opposite. The high degree of eroticism of the peoples of the Peruvian desert coasts was balanced by an excess of activities which would produce maximum emotional enjoyment without risk of resulting pregnancies. This is seen as greatly influenced by the ecological conditions which would not permit a population explosion.

A very important feature of the book is the evidence that the psyche of the Indian has developed an apparatus of symbols derived from past American Indian cultures, and thus differs somewhat in content from that of the European so strongly influenced by the ancient religious traditions of the Mediterranean. From the mass of evidence quoted in the book we can deduce that the Indian is basically different in outlook because of a quite unconscious accumulation of traditions which were not those of the people who studied him. Some mysteries are cleared up by the book, much obscure evidence is made available to us, and the conclusions are of real importance.

C. A. BURLAND