

CORRESPONDENCE

Pet peeves

To the editors:

It is one thing to argue the case against anthropomorphism in the treatment of animals by humans. It is quite another to spill over into a misanthropic assault on pets per se. Richard Klein seems far too concerned with how cats and dogs die, rather than how human beings choose to live. The fact that a few unpleasant politicians have had famous pets, or that some advertisers exceed the boundaries of good taste in marketing, should hardly generate a liberal backlash against the ownership and love of pets. Dogs and cats uniformly repay love, kindness and loyalty with the same. When human beings show a similar disposition toward one another, then Klein's concerns of narcissism might have some relevance. Is it possible that liberal causes have reached such a state that our furry friends have displaced our furless enemies as objects of political assault?

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ
New Brunswick, New Jersey

To the editors:

What qualifications, I wondered, does Richard Klein, a professor of French at Cornell, possess that he should write an article on America's "misplaced obsession" ("The Power of Pets," July 10)? None, it turns out. His article is exceedingly trite, having been resurrected routinely about every ten years ever since disposable income became a factor in the sermons of society's watchdogs. Klein, taking a dog-in-the-manger attitude, presents a hodgepodge of historical snippets and hysterical cautionaries.

I was edified only to learn that I am a cynic, having the highest, most unrealizable ideals. Imagine my dismay, then, to learn that this makes me also a subscriber to a Nazi philosophy that blurs distinctions between humans and animals and leads, Klein opines, to the "worst forms of biologist racism or naturalism."

Klein misses the whole point. His subjective argument is dependent on placement of emphasis, not logic. In addition to his speciousness, Klein grates with his cloying insistence on bad puns in his sometimes cute and cuddly, sometimes sober discourse.

I never anthropomorphized a dog, nor do most pet owners. Rather, I enrich my life by opening my mind to the possibilities of the consciousness of other ani-

mals. My dog's superior senses provided a continual learning experience for me, and the delight she took in little canine pleasures brought me joy. I just held her in my arms while the vet put her out of the misery she suffered with herniated disks. I loved her dearly, and I'll cry if I want to. Richard Klein can bite me.

JUDY KOHLER
Reno, Nevada

To the editors:

In "The Power of Pets," Richard Klein writes: "Cynicism, from *cunis*, the Greek word for dog, referred originally to post-Platonic philosophers, like Diogenes Laertes, who adopted a doglike attitude toward life."

First, the Greek word for dog is *kuon*.

Second, Klein seems to be thinking of Diogenes Laertius, author of *The Lives of Eminent Authors*.

Third, Diogenes Laertius was not a cynic. There was, however, a famous cynic named Diogenes, a contemporary of Plato's whose biography is recorded in Diogenes's *Lives*.

Three mistakes in one sentence—doggone!

JACOB HOWLAND
Tulsa, Oklahoma

To the editors:

Richard Klein, in his article about the American passion for pets, complains about the way we anthropomorphize animals and implies, incorrectly, that this a modern aberration. Human beings have anthropomorphized the world around them for millennia in an attempt to make sense of it. Animals were chosen as totems and kept as pets by hunter-gatherer societies as well as by modern technocrats (the Detroit Lions and Exxon's tiger). Animals were used by Aesop and the brothers Grimm in the same way that they are used by Disney and more recent authors of children's literature.

I fail to see what is wrong with giving love and affection to companion animals and even grieving their passing. It is true that some people love animals and regard other people with suspicion and even loathing. This is unfortunate, but perhaps they do so because the animals reciprocate their regard without question or judgment, while other people are far less trustworthy. Who is to blame because Hitler grew up to be an animal-loving and human-hating megalomaniac—Hitler, the animals or his fellow human beings? Hitler notwithstanding, recent research indicates the worse we treat animals the worse we treat our fellow human beings.

Finally, research indicates that a dog makes one appear more likable and trustworthy in the eyes of strangers. Many politicians have exploited this and

have photos of themselves in the company of an appropriate dog. Cats do not do as well, and I would bet that Clinton could improve his standing among the public by several points simply by acquiring a German shepherd from the local shelter.

ANDREW N. ROWAN
North Grafton, Massachusetts

Upping the ante

To the editors:

If the purpose of foreign affairs columns is "confronting evil" and suggesting policy for political decisionmakers, I can understand Nader Mousavizadeh's frustration with Thomas Friedman ("Not Two Cents," July 10).

Friedman is alone (or at least lonely) in the press in his appreciation of the forces at work in the global economy (credit markets, individuals' thirst for economic advancement, etc.) that can and do have more of a bearing on the prosperity and peacefulness of a nation's people than the causes adopted and actions taken by political leaders, ethnic-identity campaigns and so forth. I don't find this so much "rampant economism" as a recognition of the limits of centralized political power and a persistent, unblinking questioning of the purposes of violent conflict.

Perhaps not a point of view that has much relevance for powerful political leaders seeking foreign policy advice. But maybe one with much to say to citizens as to their expectations of themselves and their leaders.

TOM LUSSENHOP
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To the editors:

While your occasional debunking of celebrities in the scatological fashion of Lytton Strachey fails to enthrall me, I must admit that the piece by Nader Mousavizadeh on Thomas Friedman's foreign policy writings made me understand why this distinguished *Times* columnist has often left me flabbergasted even when he writes, as he does frequently, on international economic questions.

The moral insensitivity that is charged to Friedman, and is illustrated with his remarkable commentary on Bosnia and the Kurds, can be seen as scarring Friedman's views on trade policy as well. He has taken uncritically to the confrontational "geoeconomics" that provides a thin veneer of pseudo-Hobbesian intellectualism to Washington's current pre-occupations driven by petty politics and puerile economics. It is particularly evident in the unceasing fulminations against Japan that explode like a burst of gunfire in his columns.

Japan, in these columns, becomes a gigantic conspiracy practicing predatory exports and exclusionary imports: there is no nuance, no regard for the complexity of the question at hand, no doubt. Friedman's Japan is an ahistorical, unscholarly abstraction that must be confronted and its evil trade empire destroyed. One fails to see here a judicious probing, thoughtful, liberal temperament, mindful of crossing the line into, and fueling, morally indefensible paranoia and prejudice; the affinity with Pat Buchanan is much too plain.

Indeed, the story that he started a column with once, to rejoice how Japan, fanned with a continually rising yen, has been coping with the heat without opening its "closed" markets but will finally have no option except to do so, reveals more than he intends. He recalls an experiment in his school where a frog is being boiled alive. The heat rises; the frog jumps but not enough to escape the confining glass; things get hotter, the frog leaps and leaps, lingering in the glass until the boiling water makes him finally jump to safety.

As I read this column, my thoughts turned, not to Japan or its trade, but to Friedman himself. What kind of school did this kid go to where they boiled frogs?

JAGDISH BHAGWATI
New York, New York

Puerile

To the editors:

TNR editors should take Nader Mousavizadeh's sermon on the peevisish and self-congratulatory journalism of Thomas Friedman to heart, for it is blatantly reproduced in the editorial of July 10, "Forget Yeltsin." Your foot-stamping criticism of Russia and its benighted leader is complemented by the most awesomely puerile recommendations such as get rid of Yeltsin and wait for "genuine democratization, which will take time." And what happens in the meantime to a de facto headless nation with the second-largest nuclear arsenal, a nation you describe as on the verge of collapse? What happens to the vast underbelly of Russia, the Central Asiatic lands?

The truth is that Yeltsin has outlasted all predictions of his imminent demise. Name another world leader who would last a month at the top of the incredible mess that is the former Soviet Union. As for his appearance at the G-7 conference, a proper sense of proportion dictated that decision rather than hysterical reactions to Budyonovsk. Your editors share Friedman's haughty attitude toward formerly great powers, and that is very shortsighted, indeed. Russia will

rebound, and we should help it to do so without lectures and timetables regarding democratization.

KEN WHELAN
San Francisco, California

Cut and run

To the editors:

I could not agree more with Matthew Miller's thesis in "Kinder Cuts" (July 10). Without question, Clinton, or anyone in the current White House, should be focusing on balancing the budget and practicing fiscal responsibility.

Of course, the reason Clinton was the '92 Democratic candidate instead of Paul Tsongas was because he knew better than to promise toil and blood.

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THE POWER OF PETS
AMERICA'S MISPLACED OBSESSION
BY RICHARD KLEIN



Showing that sort of responsible leadership may get you the editorial praise of THE NEW REPUBLIC, but it doesn't win elections.

DOUG WEISKOPF
Cincinnati, Ohio

Climate control

To the editors:

I was glad to read skepticism of the skeptics' opposition to global climate change in Robert Wright's TRB column ("Chaos Theory," July 10). As the data mount, Wright's argument that doing nothing is fairly likely to bring a fairly bad outcome and somewhat likely to bring a terrible outcome becomes increasingly persuasive, if optimistic.

The data suggest that the policy of doing nothing is already generating fairly bad results on a local scale. It is likely to bring terrible results on a regional or global scale in the not-so-

distant future. The real issues seem to be how quickly will the negative impacts of rapidly changing patterns in global climate spread and whether science is able to document them quickly and thoroughly enough to convince anyone (i.e., everyone) to do something.

MICHAEL DELAPA
Monterey, California

Parts of speech

To the editors:

In praising the Supreme Court's recent opinion upholding the right of the Boston St. Patrick's Day parade organizers to control the parade's message (Notebook, July 10), you remark how sad it was that it "took two years and nine Supreme Court justices to remind the birthplace of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. about the meaning of free speech." I am afraid that you, too, need a reminder—not about the meaning of free speech, but about Holmes's free speech record. As a justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, Holmes declared that because the state held title to public property it could "absolutely or conditionally ... forbid speaking in a highway or public park." Later, on the United States Supreme Court, Holmes wrote an opinion affirming a ten-year prison sentence imposed upon socialist presidential candidate Eugene Debs for a speech criticizing American involvement in World War I. Not until quite late in his career did Holmes become the eloquent defender of free speech for which he is now lionized.

JAMES WEINSTEIN
Phoenix, Arizona

Fair Harvard

To the editors:

I am responding to William Storrer's correspondence (July 10) that Gina Grant was denied Harvard matriculation because she "lied" on her admission form and not for murdering her mother, and for his gratuitous slur against Tufts University. I would offer this: get real! Grant was denied because her presence would upset the elitist atmosphere that exists in Cambridge. Harvard didn't want to confront the messy situation she presented. "Veritas" be damned! We Tufts alums were taught that, although at times doing the right thing may leave us feeling uncomfortable, we nonetheless must abide by governing principles of right and wrong, character and cowardice.

JOHN PETER SUAREZ
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

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