



Jeanne Gomoll '87

NUMBER EIGHT

Reading over my last issue of Allargando was more than a bit frustrating. It seems that I needn't have spent all that time examining the bad aspects of motion #1 (which concerned limiting reprints in the apa) because Andy swept that motion away before most people had voted and nobody except me had really talked about it. And then--more frustration--I poured all that time, sweat and energy into answering (once and for all, I thought) Ray Russell, and then I get my copy of the Turboapa and find out that he's resigned. I had been just talking to the wind. Or to you guys.

So I xeroxed Allargando and sent Ray a copy of it. He may not actually enjoy reading it, but damn it, I wrote it for him and he's damn well going to see it.

Also. Will all of you please get out a bottle of white-out and obliterate the number "9" on the logo and in the text of the colophone of the last issue of Allargando? Got that done? Thank you. Now, just take a black felt-tip marker and write in #7. (Oops. It must run in the family.) If you are not collecting these zines or don't mind the dubious numbering system, just leave it, but note that this is really and truly the 8th issue of the apazine, Allargando, and #~~82~~⁸³, or thereabouts, in the progression of Obsessive Press publications.

This issue comes to you with apologies from Jeanne Gomoll, Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701-1443. (Phone, 608-255-9909). All contents by and © by Jeanne Gomoll, May 1987.

An apa picnic/softball game sounds like a fun thing to do. As promoter of it, **Bill Boden**, you are obviously the one to organize it. You should call the city clerk's office and find out if a softball field can be reserved on a Saturday or Sunday, choose 2 or 3 dates and run those dates through the apa to get votes on which ones would be convenient for the most people. Then you'd announce the date and place, and organize the food: Either tell everyone to bring their own picnics, or get people to "sign up" to bring stuff (casseroles, desserts, utensils/plates, salads, x amount of money for beverages or x amount of money for meat to grill, etc.) You may have to organize rides and riders if the field is inconveniently located. Make sure there will be enough baseball equipment and a minimum amount of first aid supplies. Have fun!! Let us all know how arrangements are going.

Here is a name and address for you **David Busch** for a D.C. area SF group. They put on DisCon, which is an old and respected East coast convention, they meet regularly, and they could probably give you information on D&D activities in the area.

Alexis and Dolly Gilliland
4030 8th Street, S.
Arlington, VA 22204

You mentioned that you sometimes got into trouble with your writing, **DuCharme**, with people who didn't know you well... And you said that you thought your writing sounded like your voice. Wrong! Your writing does not sound like the way you speak. Written DuCharme misses the giggles which punctuate nearly every verbal DuCharme sentence. As a result, DuCharme writing is a great deal more serious-- or at least more credible, because everything is not constantly being undercut by laughter. (The DuCharme giggle says, in efect, "This is a joke." Or "I'm not really serious about this." Or "I don't really mean this.") So... maybe in verbal

communication, you've gotten in the habit of "insulting" people on a regular basis, but the insults + giggles defuse the insult and people understand that you're joking or that you mean well. (They also figure, sometimes, that even when you are serious, that you must be kidding, or must be making a spurious comment.) Then, when you write those same insults down without the defusing sputter of giggles, people are more likely to misunderstand your comment. You could either add the laughter to your written comments ("Haha," "Only kidding," or whatever. I seem to remember a fannish abbreviation, but I'm not sure what it is... "HNOK"--?) --or, you could learn to say what you meant without needing to constantly undercut your meaning with giggles.

This would probably be a good skill to learn for job interviews.

There are lots of ways to write sarcastically, but they involve sentence structure and word choice rather than nonverbal gestures and laughter. Read Kim Nash's zines for lessons. If you learned these patterns in verbal conversations, they'd probably work themselves into your writing as well, and you wouldn't risk being misunderstood so often.

Sorry I missed Making Mr. Right. The plot description ^{didn't} appeal to me very much as I recall. At least not enough. But I loved the movie you recommended, Raising Arizona. It's one of the few movies I liked for its voice-over, rather than in spite of it. (Others are To Kill a Mockingbird and Radio Days.)

I'll join your sister, Barb, **Cathy Gilligan**, and urge you to try making more use of your gears on your 10-speed. Maybe you should have your bike checked out at a bicycle repair shop before you begin, because it seems possible that there's something wrong with it if the chain falls off so easily. But once everything checks out, and you get the hang of the gears, I think you'll find that riding with the gears is much, much easier than not. Going from riding on a flat surface in 9th gear to going to riding up a hill in ninth, is like going from a 10-pound bench press to a 120 pound with no intermediate workouts on the weights inbetween. The theory of 10-speeds is that you should try to peddle at a constant rate, so that you peddle just as hard on a flat surface as you are on a gentle hill (going up or down). (Obviously a steep hill will call for more muscle power no matter what gear you're in; or going down, will call for no muscle power no matter what gear your in.) But once you've learned to adjust the gears depending on the grade, you'll find that your aerobic capacity will gradually increase. Just as in weight-lifting, when you lift heavy weights (exploding lactic acids in anaerobic exertions) not ever building up any aerobic capacity, you'll never build it up either if you only exert yourself in bursts of anearobic, up-hill sprints in 9th gear.

Congratulations on getting the bands off your teeth. And thanks for the "Cerebral Stimulator" ad! It was hillarious.

Hi **Julie/Crash**! It was great fun to read your account of being a Catholic in the Gomoll family and the St. Luke parish. I hope mom never gets ahold of your zine though. It will validate all of her worst suspicions about me and how I corrupted you. Hey, all I told you was that I thought it was all a crock of fairy tales... I told you that I didn't believe in monogamy too. Did that stop you from settling down? Did it stop me? ... What am I talking about? Everyone is going to think they're reading a David Lawson zine.

...It seems like I once told you a long time ago that I thought you should take some self-defense courses. No way, you said. Well, obviously I'm still influential in your life, but it just takes longer nowadays for the recommendations to be acted upon. When you were young I managed to convince you pretty quick to skip mass. Now it takes a few years. Are you listening, Julie? This is my next piece of advice to you: You should start sending your older sister half of your income. She deserves it. I figure that in four or five years when this recommendation sinks in, you'll be earning Big Bucks... Seriously, Julie, I'm glad your karate classes are working out so well for you and Rachel. It sounds like a really good idea, both for exercise and personal safety.

I liked the description of the baseball day outing, **Andy Hooper**. And I was going to just skim the baseball team descriptions but you caught me with the similes, even though I wasn't familiar with a lot of the SF titles. Very funny, thanks. On the other hand, I didn't get the part about doing simulation league picks at all. But a lovely recounting of the conversation you and I had on the trip home from Minicon. I'm glad that my apathy for the game gave you something more than frustration to carry home with you. You might be surprised that my comments that afternoon probably show more interest in baseball than I've shown in practically any other time in my life. I've been to two games now, with my Family and Scott--last summer and the summer before, and they were fun, but they were definitely fun for the company I was with and for the way they enjoyed the game. By they, I mean specifically, Scott. Somehow, when you really care about someone, you tend to want to share a thing that they care for as well. And Scott really likes the game. So, I guess I'll be paying more attention to it than I have in the past, though I probably won't ever go what anybody would call overboard on it... **Nevenah** said something about this in a past issue of her apazine, and I guess I feel the same way. Just as she's paying more attention to baseball because Bill is so involved with it, the same thing is happening to me. At least I'm not ignoring it totally, like I used to. But I'll never feel the way you obviously feel. However, I still read your whole zine cover to cover and enjoyed it the whole time.

Congratulations on the job and the apartment, **Hope Kiefer**! You're doing better than people who have lived there for more than a year and still haven't found a job or suitable apartment! I'm really surprised that you've settled in so quickly, but am very glad for you. Hope you connect with Brit fandom and have some fun and help out with the convention.

I see that already some Britishisms are creeping into your vocabulary. "I washed it...straight away." That's not American! I'll be alert to your accent when I see you in August to see if you've acquired a Brit accent. Actually, I should think you might like to do that. A Brit accent is much more chic than a Texas accent, for example.

Your comment to **Julie** was very well put. I've moved far away from home only once, when I left my parent's home in New Berlin to go to school in Madison, and I didn't get very homesick then, mainly because I didn't have any very close friends there. My best friend was moving out to Madison with me and in fact, was going to share a room in the Cochrane House with me. But several close friends of mine have moved out of Madison, away from me, and I've corresponded with several of them through the period in which they adjusted to living in a new place. The most painful, difficult part of those moves seemed to be the loss of intimate friendship (and I'm not talking about sex here). As you say, you just can't walk up to a stranger on the street and ask them to care for you, to be your friend. Well, you can, but it probably wouldn't have the effect you might want. You can find a job. You can find an apartment. But it's hard to find friends. So many people that you might like to know better already have spread their time thin with friends they already have, and actively resist getting deeply involved, even as a friend, with someone who is obviously so needy because she knows so few people in a new place. It takes great courage not to let that need show and to make use of occasions to do things with casual acquaintances, to go to parties, to speak to strangers at those parties and meetings, and to act confident and happy even though one is pretty lonely in reality. Gradually, people become attracted to this happy, confident person, and friendships grow. Sort of the Vonnegut philosophy from Mother Night: you become the person you're pretending to be. If you pretend to be a happy, confident person with whom people would like to make friends, that is exactly what you become. It is a good experience, as you say in your comment to **Julie**. I've learned it to some extent at conventions, especially at conventions at which I knew very few people. And I've learned it by watching my father who is very good at it, so good that he's forgotten that it's a skill. He just seems to really love to meet new people, and so of course, people like to meet him.

I've got a Tex-Mex cookbook here at home, **Hope**. (Tex-Mex is Mexican cooking only hotter. They use more jalapeno peppers. I like Tex-Mex better than traditional Mexican cooking, and indeed most Americans are actually more exposed to the Texas variant in restaurants like ChiChi's etc.) Anyway, would you like me to xerox some recipes from it for you? You say that Brit cooking is lacking in good Mexican cooking. I should think so; I hear that they are lacking in spicy cooking, in general... Someday if you get to know the Pickersgills better, maybe they will treat you to Linda's specialties, Cajun cooking. (Linda is, after all, from New Orleans.) Sorry, though, I can't do anything about Diet Pepsi. Perhaps you should consider switching to Coke?

Good account of Coast Guard Hell, **David Lawson**! I like this much better than stream of conscious philosophizing. Stream of conscious anecdote-spinning is fun and your use of mariners' vocabulary made the stories vivid and fun to read. (But "superlativize reality"...??) Thank you.

Congratulations on the new addition to your family, **Lorelei Manney**! I knew that you were really real, but your image in my head assumes more solidity now that I know where you come from and that you like Star Trek reruns. Any hints to someone about to embark on househunting hell? (*shudder*)

More great stuff from **Kim Nash**...But what is this bullshit about not wanting to talk about anything you write about in the apa? Pretty soon we will all be suspecting that you are employing a ghost-writer to do your apazine, and that you fear being caught in errors or contradictions if you talk about the stuff that you didn't actually write. "Oh, how is Wild Cards?" you might say in a conversation at Nick's when someone starts talking about having read it. "Didn't you say in Random Thoughts that you read it and Wild Cards 2, as well? Why ask what it's about...?" we ask suspiciously.

Which reminds me that I actually just read the first Wild Cards book. I really liked the idea, and I liked most of the stories quite a lot. (One story I disliked quite a lot ("The Long, Dark Night of Fortunato" by Lewis Shiner) because it seemed to me that the story was really a quick and dirty re-write of a fantasy written about a black man living in the ghetto and how his politics get changed and radicalized when he learns how to do tantric magic. Shiner tacked on the bit about the wild card catalyzing the tantric sex stuff, and replaced the awareness of racism for an awareness of aceism. It seemed to me that the wild card stuff could have been edited out of the story with the omission of only a couple paragraphs and the story not changed at all for the omission... I felt like it belonged on **Dick Russell**'s "cheating" SF.) But as I said, I enjoyed most of the stories individually. Finally, though, I was worn down, saddened, and irritated by the fact that there were absolutely no female aces used as viewpoint characters. There were two minor women aces. (One of them did not act, but absorbed the minds of others, and finally went crazy because of her ability. The other one had almost completely lost the ability to communicate with other human beings, so absorbed was she in communications with animals.) Any one of these stories with no or minor female characters would have been fine with me. But I felt gradually offended by the cumulative vision of all these artists that the aces, the "supermen" were definitely seen, for the most part, as men, and mostly white men at that. (There is only one black ace who is a viewpoint character. The other lives nobly, is treated shabbily, and retires to anonymity, never to be seen again.) I would have liked to immerse myself in these stories. When I was younger, I could have immersed myself in these stories, simply by identifying with the male characters. I can't do that anymore. I just gradually got the feeling that these stories weren't about me, and that the authors didn't consider women to make very interesting aces. I hope the second book does better. What did you think?

What age do I think of myself as? Well, ever since I was seven, which was the only age that I knew, absolutely that I was, and could answer without thinking when someone asked me how old I was ("I'm seven," instantly)...ever since then, I've had to subtract the date from my year of birth. And sometimes it takes me a second or two to remember what year it is at present. So the age that I think of myself is usually a generality. It's an age that I can keep in my mind for several years, because a year is not enough to really and truly believe. So I think, "I am in my twenties," or "I am in my thirties." The decade birthday becomes a big thing to me, therefore, because it entails so much radical, number-relearning business. I usually start the year before. When I was 29, I would usually say that I was going on 30, if anyone asked. (This also forestalled the cute reply to anyone who says they're 29 that they must be lying. "How many years have you been 29?") I'll probably do the same thing when I hit 39.

I'm ... let's see it's... 1987. Subtract 51 from 87. 36. I'll be 36 in September. I'm in my thirties.

Welcome to the apa **Lucy Nash!** Good to see you here.

John Peacock, good zine and good comments in particular to **Ray Russell's** SDI stuff. Does it frustrate you too, to have put all that energy into replying to him and researching his quotations, etc., only to find that he's not a member of the apa anymore? Well, I found the information very interesting. Thanks.

Good for you, **Julie Shivers**, for speaking sternly with **DuCharme** about his obligations as **Nigel's** and **Hope's** agent. Somebody had to do it, and I bet he's learned his lesson now!

There's another possibility you could think of regarding your bicycle... You could get it fixed up and learn to ride it so that you had a greater area of the city where you could look for a job. If you'd like some help learning how to ride a 10-speed I'd be glad to help you. I've been commuting back and forth to work for 5 years now (at least through the non-icy months of the year, 9 months out of 12). Just ask.

After reading the latest installment of **Nevenah Smith's** Russian travelogue, I found myself wishing that it would continue next time, even if that would mean forgoing the mailing comments... You're doing a beautiful job writing out your experiences. It all sounds like the core of a lovely, passionate, rite-of-passage, fin de cicle, short story.

So, **Spike**, should we propose that SF³ buy the Orson Scott Card tape and then do an end-of-the-month-meeting as a secular humanist revival meeting? Everyone should dress for "church." What a weird costume party that would be!

Pete Winz, your comment to **Dave Lawson**, re "stupidity" reminded me of an article that Patrick Nielsen Hayden sent to me, which Explains Everything. It is also the last word on stupidity. (It follows this page.)

I'm also including another poem from Luis D'Antin Van Rooten's Mots D'Heures: Gousse, Rames. Some of you haven't figured out the joke yet. To do so, say the poem OUT LOUD. Or, if you have no French, ask a friend who has to read it out loud for you. You don't have to understand the meaning to get the joke. In fact, you can't really get the meaning. That's part of the joke.

Jeane

Et qui rit des curés d'Oc?¹
De Meuse raines,² houp! de cloques.³
De quelles loques ce turque coin.⁴
Et ne d'ânes ni rennes,
Écuries des curés d'Oc.⁵

¹ Oc (or Languedoc), ancient region of France, with its capital at Toulouse. Its monks and curates were, it seems, a singularly humble and holy group. This little poem is a graceful tribute to their virtues.

² Meuse, or Maas, River, 560 miles long, traversing France, Belgium, and the Netherlands; Raines, old French word for frogs (from the L., *ranae*). Here is a beautiful example of Gothic imagery: He who laughs at the curés of Oc will have frogs leap at him from the Meuse river and

³ infect him with a scrofulous disease! This is particularly interesting when we consider the widespread superstition in America that frogs and toads cause warts.

⁴ "Turkish corners" were introduced into Western Europe by returning Crusaders, among other luxuries and refinements of Oriental living. Our good monks made a concession to the fashion, but N.B. their Turkish corner was made of rags! This affectation of interior decorating had a widespread revival in the U.S.A. at the turn of the century. Ah, the Tsar's bazaars' bizarre beaux-arts.

⁵ So strict were the monks that they didn't even indulge themselves in their arduous travels. No fancy mules nor reindeer in *their* stables. They just rode around on their plain French asses.

THE FIRST BASIC LAW

The First Basic Law of Human Stupidity asserts without ambiguity that

Always and inevitably everyone underestimates the number of stupid individuals in circulation.

At first, the statement sounds trivial, vague and horribly ungenerous. Closer scrutiny will however reveal its realistic veracity. No matter how high are one's estimates of human stupidity, one is repeatedly and recurrently startled by the fact that:

a) people whom one had once judged rational and intelligent turn out to be unashamedly stupid.

b) day after day, with unceasing monotony, one is harassed in one's activities by stupid individuals who appear suddenly and unexpectedly in the most inconvenient places and at the most improbable moments.

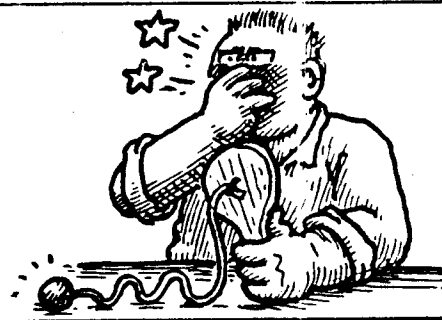
The First Basic Law prevents me from attributing a specific numerical value to the fraction of stupid people within the total population: any numerical estimate would turn out to be an underestimate. Thus in the following pages I will denote the fraction of stupid people within a population by the symbol σ .

THE BASIC LAWS OF OF HUMAN STUPIDITY

by Carlo M. Cipolla



Illustrate 1 by James Donnelly



THE SECOND BASIC LAW

Cultural trends now fashionable in the West favour an egalitarian approach to life. People like to think of human beings as the output of a perfectly engineered mass production machine. Geneticists and sociologists especially go out of their way to prove, with an impressive apparatus of scientific data and formulations that all men are naturally equal and if some are more equal than others, this is attributable to nurture and not to nature.

I take an exception to this general view. It is my firm conviction, supported by years of observation and experimentation, that men are not equal, that some are stupid and others are not, and that the difference is determined by nature and not by cultural forces or factors. One is stupid in the same way one is red-haired; one belongs to the stupid set as one belongs to a blood group. A stupid man is born a stupid man by an act of Providence.

Although convinced that fraction σ of human beings are stupid and that they are so because of genetic traits, I am not a reactionary trying to reintroduce surreptitiously class or race discrimination. I firmly believe that stupidity

is an indiscriminate privilege of all human groups and is uniformly distributed according to a constant proportion. This fact is scientifically expressed by the Second Basic Law which states that

The probability that a certain person be stupid is independent of any other characteristic of that person.

In this regard, Nature seems indeed to have outdone herself. It is well known that Nature manages, rather mysteriously, to keep constant the relative frequency of certain natural phenomena. For instance, whether men proliferate at the Northern Pole or at the Equator, whether the matching couples are developed or underdeveloped, whether they are black, red, white or yellow the female to male ratio among the newly born is a constant, with a very slight prevalence of males. We do not know how Nature achieves this remarkable result but we know that in order to achieve it Nature must operate with large numbers. The most remarkable fact about the frequency of stupidity is that Nature succeeds in making this frequency equal to the probability σ quite independently from the size of the group.

Thus one finds the same percentage of stupid people whether one is considering very large groups or one is dealing with very small ones. No other set of observable phenomena offers such striking proof of the powers of Nature.

The evidence that education has nothing to do with the probability σ was provided by experiments carried on in a large number of universities all over the world. One may distinguish the composite population which constitutes a university in five major groups, namely the blue-collar workers, the white-collar employees, the students, the administrators and the professors.

Whenever I analyzed the blue-collar workers I found that the fraction σ of them were stupid. As σ 's value was higher than I expected (First Law), paying my tribute to fashion I thought at first that segregation, poverty, lack of education were to be blamed. But moving up the social ladder I found that the same ratio was prevalent among the white-collar employees and among the students. More impressive still were the results among the professors. Whether I considered a large university or a small college, a famous institution or an obscure one, I found that the same fraction σ of the professors are stupid. So bewildered was I by the results, that I made a special point to extend my research

to a specially selected group, to a real elite, the Nobel laureates. The result confirmed Nature's supreme powers: σ fraction of the Nobel laureates are stupid.

This idea was hard to accept and digest but too many experimental results proved its fundamental veracity. The Second Basic Law is an iron law, and it does not admit exceptions. The Women's Liberation Movement will support the Second Basic Law as it shows that stupid individuals are proportionately as numerous among men as among women. The underdeveloped of the Third World will probably take solace at the Second Basic Law as they can find in it the proof that after the developed are not so developed: Whether the Second Basic Law is liked or not, however, its implications are frightening: the Law implies that whether you move in distinguished circles or you take refuge among the head-hunters of Polynesia, whether you lock yourself into a monastery or decide to spend the rest of your life in the company of beautiful and lascivious women, you always have to face the same percentage of stupid people — which percentage (in accordance with the First Law) will always surpass your expectations.

THE THIRD (AND GOLDEN) BASIC LAW

The Third Basic Law assumes, although it does not state it explicitly, that human beings fall into four basic categories: the helpless, the intelligent, the bandit and the stupid. It will be easily recognized by the perspicacious reader that these four categories correspond to the four areas I, H, S, B, of the basic graph (see next page).

If Tom takes an action and suffers a loss while producing a gain to Dick, Tom's mark will fall in field H: Tom acted helplessly. If Tom takes an action by which he makes a gain while yielding a gain also to Dick, Tom's mark will fall in area I: Tom acted intelligently. If Tom takes an action by which he makes a gain causing Dick a loss, Tom's mark will fall in area B: Tom acted as a bandit. Stupidity is related to area S and to all positions on axis Y below point O. As the Third Basic Law explicitly clarifies:

A stupid person is a person who causes losses to another person or to a group of persons while himself deriving no gain and even possibly incurring losses.

When confronted for the first time with the Third Basic Law, rational people instinctively react with feelings of skepticism and incred-

There is genius at work on this thesis. It came round about by way of reader Sam Keen, who sent us a thin grey monograph printed in Bologna, Italy. The trail eventually led to Carlo M. Cipolla, the author, who is currently Professor of Economics at UC Berkeley. —Keen Kelly

ulity. The fact is that reasonable people have difficulty in conceiving and understanding unreasonable behaviour. But let us abandon the lofty plane of theory and let us look pragmatically at our daily life. We all recollect occasions in which a fellow took an action which resulted in his gain and our loss: we had to deal with a bandit. We also recollect cases in which a fellow took an action which resulted in his loss and our gain: we had to deal with a helpless person. We can recollect cases in which a fellow took an action by which both parties gained: he was intelligent. Such cases do indeed occur. But upon thoughtful reflection you must admit that these are not the events which punctuate most frequently our daily life. Our daily life is mostly made of cases in which we lose money and/or time and/or energy and/or appetite, cheerfulness and good health because of the improbable action of some preposterous creature who has nothing to gain and indeed gains nothing from causing us embarrassment, difficulties or harm. Nobody knows, understands or can possibly explain why that preposterous creature does what he

does. In fact there is no explanation — or better, there is only one explanation: the person in question is stupid.

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION

Most people do not act consistently. Under certain circumstances a given person acts intelligently and under different circumstances the same person will act helplessly. The only important exception to the rule is represented by the stupid people who normally show a strong proclivity toward perfect consistency in all fields of human endeavours.

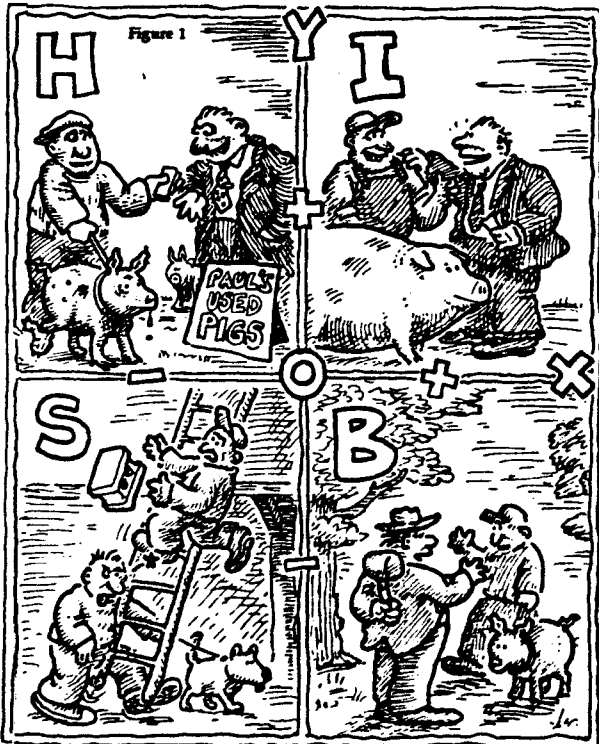
From all that proceeds, it does not follow that we can chart on the basic graph only stupid individuals. We can calculate for each person on his weighted average position in the plane of figure 1 quite independently from his degree of inconsistency. A helpless person may occasionally behave intelligently and on occasion he may perform a bandit's action. But since the person in question is fundamentally helpless most of his action will have the characteristics of helplessness. Thus the overall weighted average position of

all the actions of such a person will place him in the *H* quadrant of the basic graph.

The fact that it is possible to place on the graph individuals instead of their actions allows some digression about the frequency of the bandit and stupid types.

The perfect bandit is one who, with his actions, causes to other individuals losses equal to his gains. The crudest type of banditry is theft. A person who robs you of 100 pounds without causing you an extra loss or harm is a perfect bandit: you lose 100 pounds, he gains 100 pounds. In the basic graph the perfect bandits would appear on a 45-degree diagonal line that divides the area *B* into two perfectly symmetrical sub-areas (line *OM* of figure 2).

However the "perfect" bandits are relatively few. The line *OM* divides the area *B* into two sub-areas, *B*₁ and *B*₂, and by far the largest majority of the bandits falls somewhere in one of these two sub-areas.



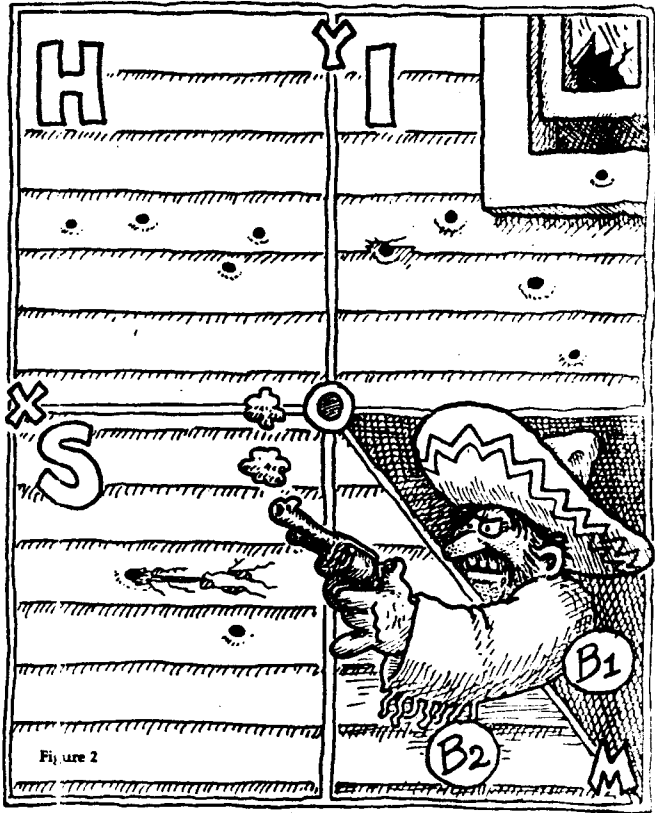
The bandits who fall in area B_1 are those individuals whose actions yield to them profits which are larger than the losses they cause to other people. All bandits who are entitled to a position in area B_1 are bandits with overtones of intelligence and as they get closer to the right side of the X axis they share more and more the characteristics of the intelligent person.

Unfortunately the individuals entitled to a position in the B_1 area are not very numerous. Most bandits actually fall in area B_2 . The individuals who fall in this area are those whose actions yield to them gains inferior to the losses inflicted to other people. If someone kills you in order to rob you of fifty pounds or if he murders you in order to spend a weekend with your wife at Monte Carlo, we can be sure that he is not a perfect bandit. Even by using his values to measure his gains (but still using your values to measure your losses) he

falls in the B_2 area very close to the border of sheer stupidity. Generals who cause vast destruction and innumerable casualties in return for a promotion or a medal fall in the same area.

The frequency distribution of the stupid people is totally different from that of the bandit. While bandits are mostly scattered over an area stupid people are heavily concentrated along one line, specifically on the Y axis below point O. The reason for this is that by far the majority of stupid people are basically and unwaveringly stupid — in other words they perseveringly insist in causing harm and losses to other people without deriving any gain, whether positive or negative.

There are however people who by their improbable actions not only cause damages to other people but in addition hurt themselves. They are a sort of super-stupid who, in our system of accounting, will appear somewhere in the area S to the left of the Y axis.



THE POWER OF STUPIDITY

It is not difficult to understand how social, political and institutional power enhances the damaging potential of a stupid person. But one still has to explain and understand what essentially it is that makes a stupid person dangerous to other people — in other words what constitutes the power of stupidity.

Essentially stupid people are dangerous and damaging because reasonable people find it difficult to imagine and understand unreasonable behaviour. An intelligent person may understand the logic of a bandit. The bandit's actions follow a pattern of rationality: nasty rationality, if you like, but still rationality. The bandit wants a plus on his account. Since he is not intelligent enough to devise ways of obtaining the plus as well as providing you with a plus, he will produce his plus by causing a minus to appear on your account. All this is bad, but it is rational and if you are rational you can predict it. You can foresee a bandit's actions, his nasty man-

oeuvres and ugly aspirations and often can build up your defenses.

With a stupid person all this is absolutely impossible as explained by the Third Basic Law. A stupid creature will harass you for no reason, for no advantage, without any plan or scheme and at the most improbable times and places. You have no rational way of telling if and when and how and why the stupid creature attacks. When confronted with a stupid individual you are completely at his mercy.

Because the stupid person's actions do not conform to the rules of rationality, it follows that:

- a) one is generally caught by surprise by the attack;
- b) even when one becomes aware of the attack, one cannot organize a rational defense, because the attack itself lacks any rational structure.

The fact that the activity and movements of a stupid creature are absolutely erratic and irrational not only makes defense problematic but it also makes any counter-attack extremely difficult — like trying to shoot at an object which is capable of the most improbable and unimaginable movements. This is what both Dickens and Schiller had in mind when the former stated that "with stupidity and sound digestion man may front much" and the latter wrote that "against stupidity the very Gods fight in vain."

THE FOURTH BASIC LAW

That helpless people, namely those who in our accounting system fall into the *H* area, do not normally recognize how dangerous stupid people are, is not at all surprising. Their failure is just another expression of their helplessness. The truly amazing fact, however, is that also intelligent people and bandits often fail to recognize the power to damage inherent in stupidity. It is extremely difficult to explain why this should happen and one can only remark that when confronted with stupid individuals often intelligent men as well as bandits make the mistake of indulging in feelings of self-complacency and contemptuousness instead of immediately secreting adequate quantities of adrenaline and building up defenses.

One is tempted to believe that a stupid man will only do harm to himself but this is confusing stupidity with helplessness. On occasion one is tempted to associate oneself with a stupid individual in order to use him for one's own schemes. Such a manoeuvre cannot but have disastrous effects because a) it

is based on a complete misunderstanding of the essential nature of stupidity and b) it gives the stupid person added scope for the exercise of his gifts. One may hope to outmanoeuvre the stupid and, up to a point, one may actually do so. But because of the erratic behaviour of the stupid, one cannot foresee all the stupid's actions and reactions and before long one will be pulverized by the unpredictable moves of the stupid partner.

This is clearly summarized in the Fourth Basic Law which states that:

Non-stupid people always underestimate the damaging power of stupid individuals. In particular non-stupid people constantly forget that at all times and places and under any circumstances to deal and/or associate with stupid people always turns out to be a costly mistake.

Through centuries and millenia, in public as in private life, countless individuals have failed to take account of the Fourth Basic Law and the failure has caused mankind incalculable losses.

THE FIFTH BASIC LAW

Instead of considering the welfare of the individual let us consider the welfare of the society, regarded in this context as the algebraic sum of the individual conditions. A full understanding of the Fifth Basic Law is essential to the analysis. It may be parenthetically added here that of the Five Basic Laws, the Fifth is certainly the best known and its corollary is quoted very frequently. The Fifth Basic Law states that

A stupid person is the most dangerous type of person.

The corollary of the Law is that

A stupid person is more dangerous than a bandit. The result of the action of a perfect bandit (the person who falls on line *OM* of figure 2) is purely and simply a transfer of wealth and/or welfare. After the action of a perfect bandit, the bandit has a plus on his account which plus is exactly equivalent to the minus he has caused to another person. The society as a whole is neither better nor worse off. If all members of a society were perfect bandits the society would remain stagnant but there would be no major disaster. The whole business would amount to massive transfers of wealth and welfare in favour of those who would take action. If all members of the society would take action in regular turns, not only the society as a whole but also individuals would find themselves in a perfectly steady state of no change.

When stupid people are at work, the story is totally different. Stupid people cause losses to other people with no counterpart of gains on their own account. Thus the society as a whole is impoverished.

The system of accounting which finds expression in the basic graphs shows that while all actions of individuals falling to the right of the line POM (see fig. 3) add to the welfare of a society, although in different degrees, the actions of all individuals falling to the left of the same line POM cause a deterioration.

In other words the helpless with overtones of intelligence (area H_1), the bandits with overtones of intelligence (area B_1) and above all the intelligent (area I) all contribute, though in different degrees, to accrue to the welfare of a society. On

the other hand the bandits with overtones of stupidity (area B_2) and the helpless with overtones of stupidity (area H_2) manage to add losses to those caused by stupid people thus enhancing the nefarious destructive power of the latter group.

All this suggests some reflection on the performance of societies. According to the Second Basic Law, the fraction of stupid people is a constant σ which is not affected by time, space, race, class or any other socio-cultural or historical variable. It would be a profound mistake to believe the number of stupid people in a declining society is greater than in a developing society. Both such societies are plagued by the same percentage of stupid people. The difference between the two societies is that in the society which performs poorly:

- the stupid members of the society are allowed by the other members to become more active and take more actions;
- there is a change in the composition of the non-stupid section with a relative decline of populations of areas I, H_1 and B_1 and a proportionate increase of populations H_2 and B_2 .

This theoretical presumption is abundantly confirmed by an exhaustive analysis of his-



torical cases. In fact the historical analysis allows us to reformulate the theoretical conclusions in a more factual way and with more realistic detail.

Whether one considers classical, or medieval, or modern or contemporary times one is impressed by the fact that any country moving uphill has its unavoidable σ fraction of stupid people. However the country moving uphill also has an unusually high fraction of intelligent people who manage to keep the σ fraction at bay and at the same time produce enough gains for themselves and the other members of the community to make progress a certainty.

In a country which is moving downhill, the fraction of stupid people is still equal to σ ; however in the remaining population one notices among those in power an alarming proliferation of the bandits with overtones of stupidity (sub-area B_2 of quadrant B in figure 3) and among those not in power an equally alarming growth in the number of helpless individuals (area H in basic graph, fig. 1). Such change in the composition of the non-stupid population inevitably strengthens the destructive power of the σ fraction and makes decline a certainty. And the country goes to Hell. ■