

Death to All Humans!

The Church of Euthanasia's Modest Proposal

Mark Dery

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What the world needs now is suicide, abortion, cannibalism, and sodomy. That, at least, is the Church of Euthanasia's modest proposal. A tax-exempt "educational foundation" dedicated to the proposition that all men (and women) are created superfluous, the Church has staked its claim on the far fringes of the negative population growth movement, alongside neo-Malthusians like the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement and deep ecologists like the Gaia Liberation Front. According to a Church spokesperson, "The Church is devoted to restoring balance between humans and the remaining species, through voluntary population reduction."¹

The Church, which claims "hundreds" of card-carrying members as well as a thousand "e-members" scattered across the Net, is based in the Somerville, Massachusetts, apartment of its cross-dressing cleric, the Reverend Chris Korda.² It was there, on a hot summer night in 1992, that she (though male, Korda prefers the female pronoun) had the fateful dream that set her on a mission from God—or, more precisely, from the alien entity she calls the Being, a cheery mix of Klaatu and Kevorkian who noted the dire state of the global ecosystem and advised, "Save the planet; kill yourself!"

Or, less messily, evangelize *others* to kill *themselves*. Thus was born the Church of Euthanasia, whose theological cornerstone is the single commandment "Thou shalt not procreate" and whose four pillars of wisdom are its radical solutions to the population explosion: suicide, abortion, cannibalism, and sodomy. This doesn't mean, by the way, that sodomy is a "Euthanist" sacrament; the Church uses the term in the biblical sense, meaning any sex act not intended for procreation, such as anal or oral sex. Nor does the zealously vegetarian Church condone Hannibal Lecter's idea of frugal-gourmet fare; its endorsement of cannibalism is merely a special dispensation for those "godless flesh-eaters" who can't kick the habit.³ As the credo on the Church's website states, anthropophagy, Euthanist-style, is "strictly limited to consumption of the already dead."⁴ Even so, Korda, a strict vegan, can't resist suggesting that cannibalism is also environmentally friendly. "We have 60,000 auto-accident fatalities a year," she says. "That meat is getting buried in the ground. It should go straight to McDonald's, where the food is already so processed I don't think anybody would notice the difference."⁵

As mordant social satire and neo-Situationist street theater, the Church is a howl: God's revenge on Operation Rescue, in a universe ruled by Abbie Hoffman. Korda has clearly inherited her father Michael's gene for media manipulation. (Korda senior is a onetime titan of the publishing industry, the former power-lunching editor in chief of

¹ Chris Korda, private e-mail to the author, May 26, 1999.

² "Church of Euthanasia FAQ," Church of Euthanasia website, February 2004, <http://www.churchofeuthanasia.org>.

³ "E-sermon #14," undated, archived on the Church of Euthanasia website, <http://www.churchofeuthanasia.org>.

⁴ "Church of Euthanasia FAQ."

⁵ Quoted in David Grad, "Eat Me: Rev. Chris Korda Dines for Our Sins," *New York Press*, March 6–12, 1996, 22.

Simon & Schuster and author of best-selling Nietzsche lite such as *Power! How to Get It, How to Use It* and *Success!*)

Tastefully turned out in silver bangles and a chic little cocktail dress, the reverend has led her troops into battle against pro-lifers, Buchananites, and Jerry Springer. Rallying around a banner emblazoned with the admonition “Eat a queer fetus for Jesus,” the Church has serenaded horrified Operation Rescue protesters with its marching song, “All We Are Saying / Is Fetus Paté.” Under the guise of Pedophile Priests for Life, Korda and her true-believing troops have waged guerrilla media war against the Catholic activists Our Lady’s Crusaders for Life, brandishing an inflatable sex doll nailed to a life-sized crucifix and squirting the Crusaders with a water pistol shaped like a humongous penis. Anti-abortion protesters “try to intimidate everyone with shock tactics and disgusting props,” says Korda, “but we can out-shock and out-disgust them any day. We’re seizing the moral low ground right out from under them.”⁶

And when they’re doing it, Korda and her Euthanasians are unquestionably on the side of the angels, not to mention social satirists like Abbie Hoffman (an acknowledged influence). But the laughter curdles when Korda extols the virtues of the Unabomber, rationalizing the murder of a timber industry lobbyist and father of two who wasn’t even the bomber’s intended victim as a “worthy target, when the goal is correctly understood.”⁷

Moreover, the misanthropy that lies just beneath the surface of the Church’s baby loathing and breeder bashing aligns it with unhappy bedfellows like Randall Phillip and Jim and Debbie Goad, all of whom are listed as “contacts” in the Church’s house organ, *Snuff It*.⁸ Phillip’s ’zine *Fuck* is an echo chamber for his white-supremacist ravings about the joys of thinning the herd through infanticide and mass murder (“I smile wide all day in the sunshine that glistens off your mutilated bodies”).⁹ The Goads’ self-described “bible of hatred,” *Answer Me!*, is a bullhorn for spleen-soaked rants such as “You Turn Me Off,” in which Jim Goad declares, “Sex is merely the continuance of the species, so I’m dead-set against it. The only bodies I want to see are yours burning.”¹⁰

Asked about the connection between the Church and a toxic misanthrope like Phillip, Korda replies, “Randall’s descriptions of humanity as a ‘Martian invasion’ have much in common with my view... I tend to view humans the way a being from outer space would: as a species, housed among many other species... Humans are behaving

⁶ Quoted in “Church News: Lydia Eccles Interviews Rev. Chris Korda,” *Snuff It: The Journal of the Church of Euthanasia*, no. 4, undated, unpaginated, archived on the Church of Euthanasia website, <http://www.churchofeuthanasia.org>.

⁷ Korda, private e-mail to the author, June 1, 1999.

⁸ “Contacts,” *Snuff It: The Journal of the Church of Euthanasia*, no. 4, undated, unpaginated, archived on the Church of Euthanasia website, <http://www.churchofeuthanasia.org>.

⁹ Randall Phillip, “Shit from the Womb,” *Fuck*, no. 11, undated, 7.

¹⁰ Jim Goad, “You Turn Me Off,” in *Answer Me! The First Three*, ed. Jim and Debbie Goad (San Francisco: AK Press, 1994), 31.

like bacteria in a petri dish, and if nothing is done their fate will be similar.”¹¹ She clarifies her position: “I can certainly be described as a misanthrope—or, more correctly, an anti-humanist.”¹²

Misanthropy, it turns out, goes hand in glove with the Malthusian gospel that the Church preaches. In Thomas Malthus’s *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), the ur-text of population apocalypticism, the good reverend recoils in gothic horror at the engulfing poor. (William Hazlitt, that sharp-tongued observer of English society, saw Malthus for what he was: a “conscience-keeper to the rich and great” who salved the consciences of the manor-born with a philosophy that relieved them of any social responsibility. “Many who would have shrunk from denying ‘the poor’ came almost to feel that they were doing a virtuous thing in denying the ‘surplus’ population a morsel out of their superfluity,” writes Hazlitt. “It is a fearful thing to insult human need with formulas like these.”)¹³ Like Malthus, Paul Ehrlich can barely suppress a shudder of revulsion, in his 1968 best seller *The Population Bomb*, at the locustlike masses swarming around his taxi during a ride through Delhi: “My wife and daughter and I were returning to our hotel in an ancient taxi... The seats were hopping with fleas... The streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrusting their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people.”¹⁴

It’s no coincidence that Ehrlich’s panic attack happens as his taxi is surrounded by a sea of brown-skinned Others—creatures who, to the white eye, are hardly more human than the animals they herd (how primitive!) and no more distinguishable, one from another, than the fleas overrunning their verminous land. Historically, when the voices who’ve dominated the cultural conversation in the West have turned their attention to race, gender, and sexuality, they’ve used those terms to mean black, female, and queer, since their own attributes—whiteness, maleness, presumptive straightness—were simply those of any speaker whose opinions mattered, and were therefore so “natural” as to be unremarkable. Likewise, when the Ehrlichs of the world spin gothic tales about overpopulation, their bogeymen assume the predictable form of a flood of dirty, dark-skinned Third Worlders, threatening to swamp the taxi where the White Man and his terrified womenfolk prepare to make civilization’s last stand.

George Orwell’s 1939 essay “Marrakech” lays bare the subtext lurking in the Ehrlich passage. Orwell, who lanced the abscesses of his own soul as unflinchingly as he did

¹¹ Korda, private e-mail to the author, June 2, 1999.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ William Hazlitt, “Malthus and the Liberties of the Poor,” in *Hazlitt Painted by Himself*, presented by Catherine Macdonald Maclean (London: Temple, 1948), archived by Peter Landry at BluPete.com, <http://www.blupete.com>.

¹⁴ Quoted in Amanda Macintosh, “Who’s Afraid of Population Growth?,” *Living Marxism*, no. 71 (September 1994): 28, archived at <http://classic-web.archive.org>.

society's, gives us a white man's view of empire's colonial subjects, their dark, dirty faces the face of a Malthusian nightmare:

When you walk through a town like this—two hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom at least twenty thousand own literally nothing except the rags they stand up in—when you see how the people live, and how easily they die, it is always difficult to believe that you are walking among human beings. All colonial empires are in reality founded upon that fact. The people have brown faces—besides, there are so many of them! Are they really the same flesh as yourself? Do they even have names? Or are they merely a kind of undifferentiated brown stuff, about as individual as bees or coral insects?¹⁵

Here, then, is Dorian Gray's true face: the racism, classism, and virulent misanthropy that too often hide behind the dream of a preindustrial, nay, prehuman Paradise Regained, a world emptied at last of the eating, washing, sleeping, visiting, arguing, screaming, begging, defecating, urinating masses. And the masses, naturally, are always the teeming, undifferentiated others—everyone, that is, but me.

¹⁵ George Orwell, "Marrakech," in *Facing Unpleasant Facts: Narrative Essays* (Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, 2008), 44–45.

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