From the editor

A mix of motives

This issue of *PLS*, nominally the March 2003 issue, is in reality going to press in February 2004, in the frigid heat of America's presidential primary-election season and in the surreal shadow of a pre-emptive war that pre-empted far less than expected.

Robert Gilbert opens *PLS* 22:1 with a fresh reanalysis of presidential disability, a topic whose intricacies have long defied comprehensive anticipation. He argues against a prominently proposed reform: the establishment of a presidential disability commission for each newly inaugurated administration.

Peter Balint reviews an embittered confrontation between two camps of natural and social scientists, one camp warning that environmental degradation is worsening at a dangerous pace and the other arguing to the contrary. He finds for both camps that antecedent moral-philosophical attitudes predict the interpretation of evidence.

William J. Long and Peter Brecke consider recurrent international conflicts — destructive, dangerous, common — and find them poorly explained in standard international-relations scholarship, locked as ever in the neoclassical thrall of rational-choice theory. Long and Brecke explore emotive explanations, ones built on psycho-behavioral observation rather than systemic presumption; they describe three discrete models and explain how each could be tested prospectively.

Michelle Cristiani, winner of the 2002 APLS Graduate Student Award, presents an empirical analysis of mating strategies in 158 heterosexual high school girls in New Mexico. She finds that strategies favoring earlier or later pair-bonding and procreation are easily distinguishable, by researcher and subjects alike, and that choice of strategy does tend to be consequential.

David Wasserman, in a guest commentary, reacts to recent suggestions — serious suggestions, evidently — that the human genome and human body be considered objects for "historic preservation," as if they were exemplary old houses. He finds this preservationist metaphor ill-formed and ill-fitting, but in ways more thought-provoking than might at first be forseen.

The third in our Harrison Symposium series asks anew a classic question: How well adapted is evolutionary ethics? From the earliest days of modern biology, evolution's implications for ethics have disoriented traditionalists by demystifying customs, pre-empted moralists by explicating sentiments, emboldened opportunists by ratifying advantage, and enticed empiricists by suggesting authority. Never has "is" more regularly been tempted toward "ought" — and "ought," as well, toward "is" — than in the evolutionary-ethics literature. But this literature is itself evolving, moving from clearer insights to better arguments, then selecting the best from among these for transmission to an incrementally more consensual future. Now is a fine time to assess this process. In fact, now is a pivotal time to assess it. Biologists, paradoxically for arch-demystifiers, have found in evolutionary ethics a compelling *story* — less a mystery now than a romance, one thick with protagonists and ripe with plot, if not purpose, and punctuated by predicament. Recently, after years of language study, biologists have cast themselves in this story as supporting characters, hoping to ensure the happiest feasible intermediate endings for the species, families, and individuals they have not-so-naturally selected. Biologists have begun the alteration of the very tradition they so admired in its original form. They are, just here and there, revising the epic; rewriting natural history, as time travelers might do. None of this has escaped introspection — or the Harrison Symposium. Dennis Pirages has invited Peter Corning to address the Symposium's question and has followed the answer with six commentaries, including his own.

Finally, Richard Sherlock brings the solicited book review back to our pages — stylishly and to stay.

R. H. Sprinkle
Editor-in-chief