

## *Ethics Selections*

### Three Character Types—Carly, Tonya, and Jane

1. *Carly*: As a student, Carly worked hard and received good grades. Upon graduation she took a job, but at the same time saved money and worked on her business plan. When she was ready, she took the entrepreneurial plunge and started her own business, which she developed successfully, and then, a few years later, sold for \$10 million. She is now living the good life of travel, building her dream home, raising her family, and managing her portfolio of investments.

2. *Tonya*: Tonya also worked hard in college and, upon graduation, took a job in a financial institution. She discovered a flaw in its funds-routing procedures, which enabled her anonymously to divert \$10 million to an offshore bank, from which it was quickly re-routed through several Caribbean and Swiss banks, ending up in an account known only to Tonya. One year later, Tonya resigned her position at the financial institution and is now living in discreet luxury somewhere in Europe.

3. *Jane*. While in college, Jane studied liberal arts and graduated with a good degree. Unfortunately, the summer after her graduation Jane's parents died suddenly. Fortunately, they left her \$10 million in their wills, of which Jane immediately donated \$9.9 million to charities devoted to the homeless, victims of floods, and to the planting of trees in the Brazilian rainforest. Jane invested the remaining \$100,000 in a certificate of deposit earning 8% annually, the proceeds enabling her to live frugally and without too much discomfort.

Let us now ask the ethics question: Which of the three women is the most moral? Whom should we uphold as the ideal? Should we teach our children and students to admire and strive to be like Carly, Tonya, or Jane? All three require strength: It is not easy to build a successful business. It is not easy to figure out a con and get away with it. And it is not easy to give away all of one's money.

Tonya is representative of a *predatory* ethic: she harms others and uses the proceeds to benefit herself. She is representative of the zero-sum, gain-at-the-expense-of-others practices widely condemned in the ethics literature.

Jane is representative of an *altruistic* ethic: she is selfless, and she places what she has at the disposal of others in society, keeping only the minimum for herself. She is representative of the "social justice" practices widely praised in the ethics literature.

Carly is the prototypical entrepreneur and is representative of a self-realization, *egoistic* ethic. She creates value, trades with others, and lives her dream life. Yet she is rarely discussed in the ethics literature. She is the invisible woman.

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## *Ethical Principles*

	<i>Egoism</i>	<i>Altruism</i>	<i>Predation</i>
<b><i>Intent</i></b>	Self interest	Selfless	Self interest
<b><i>Action</i></b>	Produce	Give	Take
<b><i>Consequence to self</i></b>	Benefit	Sacrifice	Benefit
<b><i>Consequence to other(s)</i></b>	Benefit or neutral	Benefit	Sacrifice
	“Carly”	“Jane”	“Tonya”

<b><i>Heroes</i></b>			
<b><i>Sports</i></b>			
<b><i>Money</i></b>			
<b><i>Sex</i></b>			
<b><i>Gifts</i></b>			

## Universalism versus Relativism

1. **Treatment of the dead:** Darius, a king of ancient Persia, was intrigued by the variety of cultures he had encountered in his travels. He had found, for example, that the Callatians (a tribe of Indian) customarily ate the bodies of their dead fathers. When he told Greeks about this funerary practice, they were shocked and appalled. When Darius told Callatians that Greeks cremated the dead, they were no less horrified.
2. **Deformed children:** The members of a tribe in Sudan throw their deformed children into the river because of their belief that such infants *belong* to the hippopotamus, the god of the river.
3. **Wife-sharing, infanticide, and the elderly:** Until the beginning of [the twentieth] century, Eskimo customs were very different from our own. The men often had more than one wife, and they would share their wives with guests, lending them for the night as a sign of hospitality. Within the community a dominant male might demand—and get—regular sexual access to other men’s wives. The women, however, were free to break these arrangements simply by leaving their husbands and taking up with new partners. Eskimos also seemed to have less regard for human life. Infanticide, for example, was common. An early explorer reported that he met one woman who had borne twenty children but had killed ten of them at birth. Female babies, he found, were especially liable to be destroyed, and this was permitted simply at the parents’ discretion, with no social disapproval attached to it. Old people also, when they became too feeble to contribute to the family, were left out in the snow to die. (Source for the above three: James Rachels, “Morality Is Not Relative.” Reprinted in Louis Pojman (ed.), *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth* (New York: Wadsworth) 2002.)
4. **Human sacrifices for the Crops (Central and South America):** The Indians of Guayaquil, in Ecuador, used to sacrifice human blood and the hearts of men when they sowed their fields. The people of Cañar (now Cuenca in Ecuador) used to sacrifice a hundred children annually at harvest. The kings of Quito, the Incas of Peru, and for a long time the Spaniards were unable to suppress the bloody rite. At a Mexican harvest-festival, when the first fruits of the season were offered to the sun, a criminal was placed between two immense stones, balanced opposite each other, and was crushed by them as they fell together. His remains were buried, and a feast and dance followed. This sacrifice was known as “the meeting of the stones.” We have seen that the ancient Mexicans also sacrificed human beings at all the various stages in the growth of the maize, the age of the victims corresponding to the age of the corn; for they sacrificed new-born babes at sowing, older children when the grain had sprouted, and so on till it was fully ripe, when they sacrificed old men. No doubt the correspondence between the ages of the victims and the state of the corn was supposed to enhance the efficacy of the sacrifice. (Source: Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*.)
5. **Human sacrifices for the Crops (North America):** The Pawnees annually sacrificed a human victim in spring when they sowed their fields. The sacrifice was believed to have been enjoined on them by the Morning Star, or by a certain bird which the Morning Star had sent to them as its messenger. The bird was stuffed and preserved as a powerful talisman. They thought that an omission of this sacrifice would be followed by the total failure of the crops of maize, beans, and pumpkins. The victim was a captive of either sex. He was clad in the gayest and most costly attire, was fattened on the choicest food, and carefully kept in ignorance of his doom. When he was fat enough, they bound him to a cross in the presence of the multitude, danced a solemn dance, then cleft his head with a tomahawk and shot him with arrows. According to one trader,

the squaws then cut pieces of flesh from the victim's body, with which they greased their hoes; but this was denied by another trader who had been present at the ceremony. Immediately after the sacrifice the people proceeded to plant their fields. A particular account has been preserved of the sacrifice of a Sioux girl by the Pawnees in April 1837 or 1838. The girl was fourteen or fifteen years old and had been kept for six months and well treated. Two days before the sacrifice she was led from wigwam to wigwam, accompanied by the whole council of chiefs and warriors. At each lodge she received a small billet of wood and a little paint, which she handed to the warrior next to her. In this way she called at every wigwam, receiving at each the same present of wood and paint. On the twenty-second of April she was taken out to be sacrificed, attended by the warriors, each of whom carried two pieces of wood which he had received from her hands. Her body having been painted half red and half black, she was attached to a sort of gibbet and roasted for some time over a slow fire, then shot to death with arrows. The chief sacrificer next tore out her heart and devoured it. While her flesh was still warm it was cut in small pieces from the bones, put in little baskets, and taken to a neighboring corn-field. There the head chief took a piece of the flesh from a basket and squeezed a drop of blood at the head of each row of corn." (Source: Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*.)

6. **Suttee:** The British prohibited the Hindu practice of suttee (a widow's sacrificing herself on her husband's funeral pyre) in India. "In a more culturally confident age, the British in India were faced with the practice of "suttee"—the tradition of burning widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Gen. Sir Charles Napier was impeccably multicultural: "You say that it is your custom to burn widows. Very well. We also have a custom: When men burn a woman alive, we tie a rope around their necks, and we hang them. Build your funeral pyre; beside it, my carpenters will build a gallows. You may follow your custom. And then we will follow ours." ([Source](#).)
7. **Motherhood:** In the highlands of Papua New Guinea, a woman traditionally gives birth to her first child in the jungle. She then bashes its head against a rock, bring sows to the spot, the first of which to eat the corpse becomes the co-mother of the woman, who then suckles at her own breast a piglet from the sow's litter. Doing this demonstrates her worth as a mother.

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## *Human Nature—Good, Bad, or Tabula Rasa?*

### **Genesis: Adam and Eve**

<sup>15</sup>The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

<sup>16</sup>And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup>but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

<sup>18</sup>The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”  
...

<sup>21</sup>So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs<sup>[a]</sup> and then closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib<sup>[a]</sup> he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ...

<sup>3</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

<sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup>but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup>“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. <sup>5</sup>“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup>When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

### **Genesis: Cain and Abel**

<sup>4</sup>Adam<sup>[a]</sup> made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.<sup>[b]</sup> She said, “With the help of the Lord I have brought forth<sup>[a]</sup> a man.” <sup>2</sup>Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. <sup>3</sup>In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. <sup>4</sup>And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup>but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

<sup>6</sup>Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup>If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

<sup>8</sup>Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”<sup>[a]</sup> While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup>Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

**St. Paul:** “I am physical, sold into slavery to sin. I do not understand what I am doing, for I do not do what I want to do; I do the things that I hate ... What a wretched man I am! Who can save me from this doomed body?”

**Pope Innocent III** (1160-1216) and disgust at human body: “impure begetting, disgusting means of nutrition in his mother’s womb, baseness of matter out of which man evolves, hideous stink, secretion of saliva, urine, and filth.”

**Martin Luther** in 1520: “Man has a twofold nature, a spiritual one and a bodily one. According to the spiritual nature, which men refer to as the soul, he is called a spiritual, inner, or new man. According to the bodily nature, which men refer to as flesh, he is called a carnal, outward, or old man, of whom the Apostle writes in 2 Cor. 4 [:16], ‘Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day.’ Because of this diversity of nature the Scriptures assert contradictory things concerning the same man, since these two men in the same man contradict each other, ‘for the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh,’ according to Gal. 5 [:17].”

**Plato, *The Myth of Gyges*:** “According to the tradition, Gyges was a shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia; there was a great storm, and an earthquake made an opening in the earth at the place where he was feeding his flock. Amazed at the sight, he descended into the opening, where, among other marvels, he beheld a hollow brazen horse, having doors, at which he stooping and looking in saw a dead body of stature, as appeared to him, more than human, and having nothing on but a gold ring; this he took from the finger of the dead and re-ascended. Now the shepherds met together, according to custom, that they might send their monthly report about the flocks to the king; into their assembly he came having the ring on his finger, and as he was sitting among them he chanced to turn the collet of the ring inside his hand, when instantly he became invisible to the rest of the company and they began to speak of him as if he were no longer present. He was astonished at this, and again touching the ring he turned the collet outwards and reappeared; he made several trials of the ring, and always with the same result-when he turned the collet inwards he became invisible, when outwards he reappeared. Whereupon he contrived to be chosen one of the messengers who were sent to the court; where as soon as he arrived he seduced the queen, and with her help conspired against the king and slew him, and took the kingdom. Suppose now that there were two such magic rings, and the just put on one of them and the unjust the other; no man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market, or go into houses and lie with any one at his pleasure, or kill or release from prison whom he would, and in all respects be like a God among men.”

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## *World Hunger and Sacrifice*

Peter Singer

### **Some Facts**

Consider these facts: by the most cautious estimates, 400 million people lack the calories, protein, vitamins and minerals needed for a normally healthy life. Millions are constantly hungry; others suffer from deficiency diseases and from infections they would be able to resist on a better diet. Children are worst affected. According to one estimate, 15 million children under five die every year from the combined effects of malnutrition and infection. In some areas, half the children born can be expected to die before their fifth birthday.

Nor is lack of food the only hardship of the poor. To give a broader picture, Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, has suggested the term "absolute poverty." The poverty we are familiar with in industrialized nations is relative poverty—meaning that some citizens are poor, relative to the wealth enjoyed by their neighbours. People living in relative poverty in Australia might be quite comfortably off by comparison with old-age pensioners in Britain, and British old-age pensioners are not poor in comparison with the poverty that exists in Mali or Ethiopia. Absolute poverty, on the other hand, is poverty by any standard. In McNamara's words:

"Poverty at the absolute level ... is life at the very margin of existence. The absolute poor are severely deprived human beings struggling to survive in a set of squalid and degraded circumstances almost beyond the power of our sophisticated imaginations and privileged circumstances to conceive."

Compared to those fortunate enough to live in developed countries individuals in the poorest nations have

- An infant mortality rate eight times higher
- A life expectancy one-third lower
- An adult literacy rate 60% less
- A nutritional level, for one out of every two in the population, below acceptable standards; and for millions of infants, less protein than is sufficient to permit optimum development of the brain.

And McNamara has summed up absolute poverty as:

- a condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, squalid surroundings, high infant mortality and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency

Absolute poverty is, as McNamara has said, responsible for the loss of countless lives, especially among infants and young children. When absolute poverty does not cause death it still causes misery of a kind not often seen in the affluent nations. Malnutrition in young children stunts both physical and mental development. It has been estimated that the health, growth and learning capacity of nearly half the young children in developing countries are affected by malnutrition. Millions of people on poor diets suffer from deficiency diseases, like goitre, or blindness caused by a lack of vitamin A. The food value of what the poor eat is further reduced by parasites such as hookworm and ringworm, which are endemic in conditions of poor sanitation and health education.

Death and disease apart, absolute poverty remains a miserable condition of life, with inadequate food, shelter, clothing, sanitation, health services and education. According to World Bank estimates which define absolute poverty in terms of income levels insufficient to provide adequate nutrition, something like 800 million people—almost 40% of the people of developing countries—live in absolute poverty. Absolute poverty is probably the principal cause of human misery today.

This is the background situation, the situation that prevails on our planet all the time. It does not make headlines. People died from malnutrition and related diseases yesterday, and more will die tomorrow. The occasional droughts, cyclones, earthquakes and floods that take the lives of tens of thousands in one place and at one time are more newsworthy. They add greatly to the total amount of human suffering; but it is wrong to assume that when there are no major calamities reported, all is well.

The problem is not that the world cannot produce enough to feed and shelter its people. People in the poor countries consume, on average, 400 lbs. of grain a year, while North Americans average more than 2000 lbs. The difference is caused by the fact that in the rich countries we feed most of our grain to animals, converting it into meat, milk and eggs. Because this is an inefficient process, wasting up to 95% of the food value of the animal feed, people in rich countries are responsible for the consumption of far more food than those in poor countries who eat few animal products. If we stopped feeding animals on grains, soybeans and fishmeal the amount of food saved would – if distributed to those who need it – be more than enough to end hunger throughout the world.

These facts about animal food do not mean that we can easily solve the world food problem by cutting down on animal products, but they show that the problem is essentially one of distribution rather than production. The world does produce enough food. Moreover the poorer nations themselves could produce for themselves more if they made more use of improved agricultural techniques.

So why are people hungry? Poor people cannot afford to buy grain grown by American farmers. Poor farmers cannot afford to buy improved seeds, or fertilizers, or the machinery needed for drilling wells and pumping water. Only by transferring some of the wealth of the developed nations to the poor of the underdeveloped nations can the situation be changed.

That this wealth exists is clear. Against the picture of absolute poverty that McNamara has painted, one might pose a picture of “absolute affluence.” Those who are absolutely affluent are not necessarily affluent by comparison with their neighbours, but they are affluent by any reasonable definition of human needs. This means that they have more income than they need to provide themselves adequately with all the basic necessities of life: After buying food, shelter, clothing, necessary health services and education { the absolutely affluent are still able to spend money on luxuries. The absolutely affluent choose their food for the pleasures of the palate, not to stop hunger; they buy new clothes to look fashionable, not to keep warm; they move house to be in a better neighbourhood or have a play room for the children, not to keep out the rain; and after all this there is still money to spend on books and records, colour television, and overseas holidays.

At this stage I am making no ethical judgments about absolute affluence, merely pointing out that it exists. Its defining characteristic is a significant amount of income above the level necessary to provide for the basic human needs of oneself and one's dependents. By this standard Western Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the oil-rich Middle Eastern states are all absolutely affluent, and so are many, if not all, of their citizens. The USSR and Eastern Europe might also be included on this list. To quote McNamara once more:



“The average citizen of a developed country enjoys wealth beyond the wildest dreams of the one billion people in countries with per capita incomes under \$200....”

These, therefore, are the countries—and individuals—who have wealth which they could, without threatening their own basic welfare, transfer to the absolutely poor.

At present, very little is being transferred. Members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries lead the way, giving an average of 2.1% of their Gross National Product. Apart from them, only Sweden, The Netherlands and Norway have reached the modest UN target of 0.7% of GNP. Britain gives 0.38% of its GNP in official development assistance and a small additional amount in unofficial aid from voluntary organizations. The total comes to less than £1 per month per person, and compares with 5.5% of GNP spent on alcohol, and 3% on tobacco. Other, even wealthier nations, give still less: Germany gives 0.27%, the United States 0.22% and Japan 0.21%.

### **The Moral Equivalent of Murder?**

If these are the facts, we cannot avoid concluding that by not giving more than we do, people in rich countries are allowing those in poor countries to suffer from absolute poverty with consequent malnutrition, ill health and death. This is not a conclusion which applies only to governments. It applies to each absolutely affluent individual, for each of us has the opportunity to do something about the situation; for instance, to give our time or money to voluntary organizations like Oxfam, War on Want, Freedom from Hunger, and so on. If, then, allowing someone to die is not intrinsically different from killing someone, it would seem that we are all murderers.

Is this verdict too harsh? Many will reject it as self-evidently absurd. They would sooner take it as showing that allowing to die cannot be equivalent to killing than as showing that living in an affluent style without contributing to Oxfam is ethically equivalent to going over to India and shooting a few peasants. And no doubt, put as bluntly as that, the verdict is too harsh.

There are several significant differences between spending money on luxuries instead of using it to save lives, and deliberately shooting people.

First, the motivation will normally be different. Those who deliberately shoot others go out of their way to kill; they presumably want their victims dead, from malice, sadism, or some equally unpleasant motive. A person who buys a colour television set presumably wants to watch television in colour—not in itself a terrible thing. At worst, spending money on luxuries instead of giving it away indicates selfishness and indifference to the sufferings of others, characteristics which may be understandable but are not comparable with actual malice or similar motives.

Second, it is not difficult for most of us to act in accordance with a rule against killing people: it is, on the other hand, very difficult to obey a rule which commands us to save all the lives we can. To live a comfortable, or even luxurious life it is not necessary to kill anyone; but it is necessary to allow some to die whom we might have saved, for the money that we need to live comfortably could have been given away. Thus the duty to avoid killing is much easier to discharge completely than the duty to save. Saving every life we could would mean cutting our standard of living down to the bare essentials needed to keep us alive.\* To discharge this duty completely would require a degree of moral heroism utterly different from what is required by mere avoidance of killing.

A third difference is the greater certainty of the outcome of shooting when compared with not giving aid. If I point a loaded gun at someone and pull the trigger, it is virtually certain that the person will be injured, if not killed; whereas the money that I could give might be spent on a project that turns out to be unsuccessful and helps no one.

\* Strictly, we would need to cut down to the minimum level compatible with earning the income which, after providing for our needs, left us most to give away. Thus if my present position earns me, say £10,000 a year, but requires me to spend £1,000 a year on dressing respectably and maintaining a car, I cannot save more people by giving away the car and clothes if that will mean taking a job which, although it does not involve me in these expenses, earns me only £5,000.

Fourth, when people are shot there are identifiable individuals who have been harmed. We can point to them and to their grieving families. When I buy my colour television, I cannot know who my money would have saved if I had given it away. In a time of famine I may see dead bodies and grieving families on my new television, and I might not doubt that my money would have saved some of them; even then it is impossible to point to a body and say that had I not bought the set, that person would have survived.

Fifth, it might be said that the plight of the hungry is not my doing, and so I cannot be held responsible for it. The starving would have been starving if I had never existed. If I kill, however, I am responsible for my victims' deaths, for those people would not have died if I had not killed them....

Do the five differences not only explain, but also justify, our attitudes? Let us consider them one by one:

1. Take the lack of an identifiable victim first. Suppose that I am a travelling salesman, selling tinned food, and I learn that a batch of tins contains a contaminant, the known effect of which when consumed is to double the risk that the consumer will die from stomach cancer. Suppose I continue to sell the tins. My decision may have no identifiable victims. Some of those who eat the food will die from cancer. The proportion of consumers dying in this way will be twice that of the community at large, but which among the consumers died because they ate what I sold, and which would have contracted the disease anyway? It is impossible to tell; but surely this impossibility makes my decision no less reprehensible than it would have been had the contaminant had more readily detectable, though equally fatal, effects.
2. The lack of certainty that by giving money I could save a life does reduce the wrongness of not giving, by comparison with deliberate killing; but it is insufficient to show that not giving is acceptable conduct. The motorist who speeds through pedestrian crossings, heedless of anyone who might be on them, is not a murderer. She may never actually hit a pedestrian; yet what she does is very wrong indeed.
3. The notion of responsibility for acts rather than omissions is more puzzling. On the one hand we feel ourselves to be under a greater obligation to help those whose misfortunes we have caused. (It is for this reason that advocates of overseas aid often argue that Western nations have created the poverty of third World nations, through forms of economic exploitation which go back to the colonial system.) On the other hand any consequentialist would insist that we are responsible for all the consequences of our actions, and if a consequence of my spending money on a luxury item is that someone dies, I am responsible for that death. It is true that the person would have died even if I had never existed, but what is the relevance of that? The fact is that I do exist, and the consequentialist will say that our responsibilities derive from the world as it is, not as it might have been.

One way of making sense of the nonconsequentialist view of responsibility is by basing it on a theory of rights of the kind proposed by John Locke or, more recently, Robert Nozick. If everyone has a

right to life, and this right is a right against others who might threaten my life, but not a right to assistance from others when my life is in danger, then we can understand the feeling that we are responsible for acting to kill but not for omitting to save. The former violates the rights of others, the latter does not.

Should we accept such a theory of rights? If we build up our theory of rights by imagining, as Locke and Nozick do, individuals living independently from each other in a 'state of nature,' it may seem natural to adopt a conception of rights in which as long as each leaves the other alone, no rights are violated. I might, on this view, quite properly have maintained my independent existence if I had wished to do so. So if I do not make you any worse off than you would have been if I had had nothing at all to do with you, how can I have violated your rights? But why start from such an unhistorical, abstract and ultimately inexplicable idea as an independent individual? We now know that our ancestors were social beings long before they were human beings, and could not have developed the abilities and capacities of human beings if they had not been social beings first. In any case we are not, now, isolated individuals. If we consider people living together in a community, it is less easy to assume that rights must be restricted to rights against interference. We might, instead, adopt the view that taking rights to life seriously is incompatible with standing by and watching people die when one could easily save them.

4. What of the difference in motivation? That a person does not positively wish for the death of another lessens the severity of the blame she deserves; but not by as much as our present attitudes to giving aid suggest. The behaviour of the speeding motorist is again comparable, for such motorists usually have no desire at all to kill anyone. They merely enjoy speeding and are indifferent to the consequences. Despite their lack of malice, those who kill with cars deserve not only blame but also severe punishment.

5. Finally, the fact that to avoid killing people is normally not difficult, whereas to save all one possibly could save is heroic, must make an important difference.

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Source: *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

*Lifeboat Ethics:*  
*The Case against Helping the Poor*  
by Garrett Hardin

Environmentalists use the metaphor of the earth as a "spaceship" in trying to persuade countries, industries and people to stop wasting and polluting our natural resources. Since we all share life on this planet, they argue, no single person or institution has the right to destroy, waste, or use more than a fair share of its resources.

But does everyone on earth have an equal right to an equal share of its resources? The spaceship metaphor can be dangerous when used by misguided idealists to justify suicidal policies for sharing our resources through uncontrolled immigration and foreign aid. In their enthusiastic but unrealistic generosity, they confuse the ethics of a spaceship with those of a lifeboat.

A true spaceship would have to be under the control of a captain, since no ship could possibly survive if its course were determined by committee. Spaceship Earth certainly has no captain; the United Nations is merely a toothless tiger, with little power to enforce any policy upon its bickering members.

If we divide the world crudely into rich nations and poor nations, two thirds of them are desperately poor, and only one third comparatively rich, with the United States the wealthiest of all. Metaphorically each rich nation can be seen as a lifeboat full of comparatively rich people. In the ocean outside each lifeboat swim the poor of the world, who would like to get in, or at least to share some of the wealth. What should the lifeboat passengers do?

First, we must recognize the limited capacity of any lifeboat. For example, a nation's land has a limited capacity to support a population and as the current energy crisis has shown us, in some ways we have already exceeded the carrying capacity of our land.

### **Adrift in a Moral Sea**

So here we sit, say 50 people in our lifeboat. To be generous, let us assume it has room for 10 more, making a total capacity of 60. Suppose the 50 of us in the lifeboat see 100 others swimming in the water outside, begging for admission to our boat or for handouts. We have several options: we may be tempted to try to live by the Christian ideal of being "our brother's keeper," or by the Marxist ideal of "to each according to his needs." Since the needs of all in the water are the same, and since they can all be seen as "our brothers," we could take them all into our boat, making a total of 150 in a boat designed for 60. The boat swamps, everyone drowns. Complete justice, complete catastrophe.

Since the boat has an unused excess capacity of 10 more passengers, we could admit just 10 more to it. But which 10 do we let in? How do we choose? Do we pick the best 10, "first come, first served"? And what do we say to the 90 we exclude? If we do let an extra 10 into our lifeboat, we will have lost our "safety factor," an engineering principle of critical importance. For example, if we don't leave room for excess capacity as a safety factor in our country's agriculture, a new plant disease or a bad change in the weather could have disastrous consequences.

Suppose we decide to preserve our small safety factor and admit no more to the lifeboat. Our survival is then possible although we shall have to be constantly on guard against boarding parties.

While this last solution clearly offers the only means of our survival, it is morally abhorrent to many people. Some say they feel guilty about their good luck. My reply is simple: "Get out and yield your place to others." This may solve the problem of the guilt-ridden person's conscience, but it does not change the ethics of the lifeboat. The needy person to whom the guilt-ridden person yields his place will not himself feel guilty about his good luck. If he did, he would not climb aboard. The net result of conscience-stricken people giving up their unjustly held seats is the elimination of that sort of conscience from the lifeboat.

This is the basic metaphor within which we must work out our solutions. Let us now enrich the image, step by step, with substantive additions from the real world, a world that must solve real and pressing problems of overpopulation and hunger.

The harsh ethics of the lifeboat become even harsher when we consider the reproductive differences between the rich nations and the poor nations. The people inside the lifeboats are doubling in numbers every 87 years; those swimming around outside are doubling, on the average, every 35 years, more than twice as fast as the rich. And since the world's resources are dwindling, the difference in prosperity between the rich and the poor can only increase. ...

### **Learning the Hard Way**

What happens if some organizations or countries budget for accidents and others do not? If each country is solely responsible for its own well-being, poorly managed ones will suffer. But they can learn from experience. They may mend their ways, and learn to budget for infrequent but certain emergencies. For example, the weather varies from year to year, and periodic crop failures are certain. A wise and competent government saves out of the production of the good years in anticipation of bad years to come. Joseph taught this policy to Pharaoh in Egypt more than 2,000 years ago. Yet the great majority of the governments in the world today do not follow such a policy. They lack either the wisdom or the competence, or both. Should those nations that do manage to put something aside be forced to come to the rescue each time an emergency occurs among the poor nations?

"But it isn't their fault!" Some kind-hearted liberals argue. "How can we blame the poor people who are caught in an emergency? Why must they suffer for the sins of their governments?" The concept of blame is simply not relevant here. The real question is, what are the operational consequences of establishing a world food bank? If it is open to every country every time a need develops, slovenly rulers will not be motivated to take Joseph's advice. Someone will always come to their aid. Some countries will deposit food in the world food bank, and others will withdraw it. There will be almost no overlap. As a result of such solutions to food shortage emergencies, the poor countries will not learn to mend their ways, and will suffer progressively greater emergencies as their populations grow. ...

### **Chinese Fish and Miracle Rice**

The modern approach to foreign aid stresses the export of technology and advice, rather than money and food. As an ancient Chinese proverb goes: "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach him how to fish and he will eat for the rest of his days." Acting on this advice, the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations have financed a number of programs for improving agriculture in the hungry nations. Known as the "Green Revolution," these programs have led to the development of "miracle rice" and "miracle wheat," new strains that offer bigger harvests and greater resistance to crop

damage. Norman Borlaug, the Nobel Prize winning agronomist who, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, developed "miracle wheat," is one of the most prominent advocates of a world food bank.

Whether or not the Green Revolution can increase food production as much as its champions claim is a debatable but possibly irrelevant point. Those who support this well-intended humanitarian effort should first consider some of the fundamentals of human ecology. Ironically, one man who did was the late Alan Gregg, a vice president of the Rockefeller Foundation. Two decades ago he expressed strong doubts about the wisdom of such attempts to increase food production. He likened the growth and spread of humanity over the surface of the earth to the spread of cancer in the human body, remarking that "cancerous growths demand food; but, as far as I know, they have never been cured by getting it."

### **Overloading the Environment**

Every human born constitutes a draft on all aspects of the environment: food, air, water, forests, beaches, wildlife, scenery and solitude. Food can, perhaps, be significantly increased to meet a growing demand. But what about clean beaches, unspoiled forests, and solitude? If we satisfy a growing population's need for food, we necessarily decrease its per capita supply of the other resources needed by men.

India, for example, now has a population of 600 million, which increases by 15 million each year. This population already puts a huge load on a relatively impoverished environment. The country's forests are now only a small fraction of what they were three centuries ago and floods and erosion continually destroy the insufficient farmland that remains. Every one of the 15 million new lives added to India's population puts an additional burden on the environment, and increases the economic and social costs of crowding. However humanitarian our intent, every Indian life saved through medical or nutritional assistance from abroad diminishes the quality of life for those who remain, and for subsequent generations. If rich countries make it possible, through foreign aid, for 600 million Indians to swell to 1.2 billion in a mere 28 years, as their current growth rate threatens, will future generations of Indians thank us for hastening the destruction of their environment? Will our good intentions be sufficient excuse for the consequences of our actions? ...

To be generous with one's own possessions is quite different from being generous with those of posterity. We should call this point to the attention of those who from a commendable love of justice and equality, would institute a system of the commons, either in the form of a world food bank, or of unrestricted immigration. We must convince them if we wish to save at least some parts of the world from environmental ruin.

Without a true world government to control reproduction and the use of available resources, the sharing ethic of the spaceship is impossible. For the foreseeable future, our survival demands that we govern our actions by the ethics of a lifeboat, harsh though they may be. Posterity will be satisfied with nothing less.

\* \* \*

*Psychology Today*, September 1974

[http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art\\_lifeboat\\_ethics\\_case\\_against\\_helping\\_poor.html](http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_lifeboat_ethics_case_against_helping_poor.html)

## *Nine Billion Mouths to Feed*

By Ronald Bailey

The author is sympathetic to anti-globalization activists. But history amply shows that limiting people to local crops is a recipe for famine.

*The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 18, 2015

In the late 18th century, Robert Thomas Malthus argued that human population growth would always outstrip food production, thus perpetually condemning some portion of humanity to famine. His disciples today are now pointing to recent steep increases in food prices as harbingers of a new age of scarcity. Global food prices have indeed been soaring, along with other commodity prices, since 2005. In real terms, the Food and Agriculture Organization's price index crested in 2011 at 60% above its 2005 price levels. Farmers around the world predictably reacted to the higher prices by growing more food. World cereal production rose from 2,348 million tons in 2011 to 2,540 million tons today. Since the 2011 peak, food prices have been drifting downward, although they remain 18% higher than they were a decade or so ago.

Cue the prophets of doom. Richard Heinberg of the Post Carbon Institute has said that the world is now at "peak everything." He has further warned that humanity is "waking up to a century of declines." In 2013, Earth Policy Institute founder Lester Brown asserted: "The world is in transition from an era of food abundance to one of scarcity." Journalist Joel K. Bourne Jr. declared earlier this year, in his book "The End of Plenty," that "the world is running out of food."

Now comes the neo-Malthusian journalist David Rieff. He argues in "The Reproach of Hunger: Food, Justice, and Money in the Twenty-First Century" that "if significant changes to the global food system are not made, a crisis of absolute global food supply could occur sometime between 2030 and 2050." Mr. Rieff's argument is halfhearted in comparison to Stanford University biologist Paul Ehrlich's bold 1968 pronouncement, in "The Population Bomb," that "the battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now."

The chief question for Mr. Rieff is: Will it be possible to feed the nine billion people who will most likely be living on the planet by the middle of this century? He writes that, "in the main," his "own views are pessimistic." But he immediately acknowledges the possibility of predictive failure and declares: "I insist that it is entirely possible that twenty years from now, it is the optimists who will be proven right."

Mr. Rieff spends most of the book excoriating in turgid prose those he designates as "optimists," who argue that hunger and poverty are technically solvable problems. He accuses them of "an overreliance verging on mystical faith in the application of scientific breakthroughs that will give farmers in the poor world the technological inputs and market savvy needed to grow enough food to comfortably feed the nine or ten billion human beings who will be alive on this earth by 2050." He has particular disdain for philanthro-capitalists as personified by Bill Gates. When Mr. Gates's foundation advocates harnessing technology to feed the hungry and reduce poverty, Mr. Rieff sees only ideology. "Perhaps twenty-first century liberal capitalism's greatest trick has been convincing so much of the world that it is not an ideology, and as it did so, convincing itself as well," he writes.

The author's sympathy rests with anti-globalization activists and their demands for "food sovereignty," which amounts essentially to autarkic agriculture by peasant farmers. As history amply shows, limiting people to local crops is a recipe for periodic famine.

Mr. Rieff denounces what he sees as the global development "consensus" that "only transformative power of liberal capitalism in combination with science and technological innovation can end hunger and extreme poverty." He finds that the "only feasible" answer to the problems of hunger and poverty "is to be found in the strengthening of the state and in the promise and burden of democratic politics." Ultimately, politics is the key to fixing the "broken" global food system.

Broken? It is true that far too many people are still hungry, but poverty is receding around the globe. Earlier this month the World Bank released projections that the number of people living in absolute poverty (defined as \$1.90 per day) will have fallen from 902 million people (or 12.8% of the global population) in 2012 to 702 million people (or 9.6% of the global population) this year. According to the World Bank, these figures provide "fresh evidence that a quarter-century-long sustained reduction in poverty is moving the world closer to the historic goal of ending poverty by 2030."

In any case, what Mr. Rieff means by politics is not at all clear. He hand-waves in the direction of peasant and smallholder farmer movements and is all in favor of some kind of democratic accountability. Surely protecting the property rights of small farmers and establishing honest democratic political institutions in poor countries would go a long way toward addressing hunger and poverty.

But Mr. Rieff hasn't a clue about how to achieve those goals. In fact, neither does anyone else. "You can't engineer prosperity," asserted MIT economist Daron Acemoglu and Harvard economist James Robinson in their 2012 book, "Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty." Politics does indeed affect food security. A quick glance at the Economist magazine's Intelligence Unit's Global Democracy and Food Security Indices finds that of the 15 countries that rank lowest on food security, all but two score below five points on the Unit's 10-point democracy index. Conversely, the 24 countries ranked as full democracies (scoring above eight points) all tally high on the Food Security Index.

The recipe for prosperity is known: strong property rights, a free press, the rule of law, free trade, honest bureaucracies, limited government and democratic politics. In other words: liberal capitalism. If more of humanity adopts this recipe, the optimists will indeed be proved right and Mr. Rieff wrong.

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## *Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior*

By Amy Chua

Can a regimen of no playdates, no TV, no computer games and hours of music practice create happy kids? And what happens when they fight back?

*The Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 2011

A lot of people wonder how Chinese parents raise such stereotypically successful kids. They wonder what these parents do to produce so many math whizzes and music prodigies, what it's like inside the family, and whether they could do it too. Well, I can tell them, because I've done it. Here are some things my daughters, Sophia and Louisa, were never allowed to do:

- attend a sleepover
- have a playdate
- be in a school play
- complain about not being in a school play
- watch TV or play computer games
- choose their own extracurricular activities
- get any grade less than an A
- not be the No. 1 student in every subject except gym and drama
- play any instrument other than the piano or violin
- not play the piano or violin.

I'm using the term "Chinese mother" loosely. I know some Korean, Indian, Jamaican, Irish and Ghanaian parents who qualify too. Conversely, I know some mothers of Chinese heritage, almost always born in the West, who are not Chinese mothers, by choice or otherwise. I'm also using the term "Western parents" loosely. Western parents come in all varieties.

All the same, even when Western parents think they're being strict, they usually don't come close to being Chinese mothers. For example, my Western friends who consider themselves strict make their children practice their instruments 30 minutes every day. An hour at most. For a Chinese mother, the first hour is the easy part. It's hours two and three that get tough.

Despite our squeamishness about cultural stereotypes, there are tons of studies out there showing marked and quantifiable differences between Chinese and Westerners when it comes to parenting. In one study of 50 Western American mothers and 48 Chinese immigrant mothers, almost 70% of the Western mothers said either that "stressing academic success is not good for children" or that "parents need to foster the idea that learning is fun." By contrast, roughly 0% of the Chinese mothers felt the same way. Instead, the vast majority of the Chinese mothers said that they believe their children can be "the best" students, that "academic achievement reflects successful parenting," and that if children did not excel at school then there was "a problem" and parents "were not doing their job." Other studies indicate that compared to Western parents, Chinese parents spend approximately 10 times as long every day drilling academic activities with their children. By contrast, Western kids are more likely to participate in sports teams.

What Chinese parents understand is that nothing is fun until you're good at it. To get good at anything you have to work, and children on their own never want to work, which is why it is crucial to override their preferences. This often requires fortitude on the part of the parents because the

child will resist; things are always hardest at the beginning, which is where Western parents tend to give up. But if done properly, the Chinese strategy produces a virtuous circle. Tenacious practice, practice, practice is crucial for excellence; rote repetition is underrated in America. Once a child starts to excel at something—whether it's math, piano, pitching or ballet—he or she gets praise, admiration and satisfaction. This builds confidence and makes the once not-fun activity fun. This in turn makes it easier for the parent to get the child to work even more.

Chinese parents can get away with things that Western parents can't. Once when I was young—maybe more than once—when I was extremely disrespectful to my mother, my father angrily called me “garbage” in our native Hokkien dialect. It worked really well. I felt terrible and deeply ashamed of what I had done. But it didn't damage my self-esteem or anything like that. I knew exactly how highly he thought of me. I didn't actually think I was worthless or feel like a piece of garbage.

As an adult, I once did the same thing to Sophia, calling her garbage in English when she acted extremely disrespectfully toward me. When I mentioned that I had done this at a dinner party, I was immediately ostracized. One guest named Marcy got so upset she broke down in tears and had to leave early. My friend Susan, the host, tried to rehabilitate me with the remaining guests.

The fact is that Chinese parents can do things that would seem unimaginable—even legally actionable—to Westerners. Chinese mothers can say to their daughters, “Hey fatty—lose some weight.” By contrast, Western parents have to tiptoe around the issue, talking in terms of “health” and never ever mentioning the f-word, and their kids still end up in therapy for eating disorders and negative self-image. (I also once heard a Western father toast his adult daughter by calling her “beautiful and incredibly competent.” She later told me that made her feel like garbage.)

Chinese parents can order their kids to get straight As. Western parents can only ask their kids to try their best. Chinese parents can say, “You're lazy. All your classmates are getting ahead of you.” By contrast, Western parents have to struggle with their own conflicted feelings about achievement, and try to persuade themselves that they're not disappointed about how their kids turned out.

I've thought long and hard about how Chinese parents can get away with what they do. I think there are three big differences between the Chinese and Western parental mind-sets.

First, I've noticed that Western parents are extremely anxious about their children's self-esteem. They worry about how their children will feel if they fail at something, and they constantly try to reassure their children about how good they are notwithstanding a mediocre performance on a test or at a recital. In other words, Western parents are concerned about their children's psyches. Chinese parents aren't. They assume strength, not fragility, and as a result they behave very differently.

For example, if a child comes home with an A-minus on a test, a Western parent will most likely praise the child. The Chinese mother will gasp in horror and ask what went wrong. If the child comes home with a B on the test, some Western parents will still praise the child. Other Western parents will sit their child down and express disapproval, but they will be careful not to make their child feel inadequate or insecure, and they will not call their child “stupid,” “worthless” or “a disgrace.” Privately, the Western parents may worry that their child does not test well or have aptitude in the subject or that there is something wrong with the curriculum and possibly the whole school. If the child's grades do not improve, they may eventually schedule a meeting with the school principal to challenge the way the subject is being taught or to call into question the teacher's credentials.

If a Chinese child gets a B—which would never happen—there would first be a screaming, hair-tearing explosion. The devastated Chinese mother would then get dozens, maybe hundreds of

practice tests and work through them with her child for as long as it takes to get the grade up to an A.

Chinese parents demand perfect grades because they believe that their child can get them. If their child doesn't get them, the Chinese parent assumes it's because the child didn't work hard enough. That's why the solution to substandard performance is always to excoriate, punish and shame the child. The Chinese parent believes that their child will be strong enough to take the shaming and to improve from it. (And when Chinese kids do excel, there is plenty of ego-inflating parental praise lavished in the privacy of the home.)

Second, Chinese parents believe that their kids owe them everything. The reason for this is a little unclear, but it's probably a combination of Confucian filial piety and the fact that the parents have sacrificed and done so much for their children. (And it's true that Chinese mothers get in the trenches, putting in long grueling hours personally tutoring, training, interrogating and spying on their kids.) Anyway, the understanding is that Chinese children must spend their lives repaying their parents by obeying them and making them proud.

By contrast, I don't think most Westerners have the same view of children being permanently indebted to their parents. My husband, Jed, actually has the opposite view. "Children don't choose their parents," he once said to me. "They don't even choose to be born. It's parents who foist life on their kids, so it's the parents' responsibility to provide for them. Kids don't owe their parents anything. Their duty will be to their own kids." This strikes me as a terrible deal for the Western parent.

Third, Chinese parents believe that they know what is best for their children and therefore override all of their children's own desires and preferences. That's why Chinese daughters can't have boyfriends in high school and why Chinese kids can't go to sleepaway camp. It's also why no Chinese kid would ever dare say to their mother, "I got a part in the school play! I'm Villager Number Six. I'll have to stay after school for rehearsal every day from 3:00 to 7:00, and I'll also need a ride on weekends." God help any Chinese kid who tried that one.

Don't get me wrong: It's not that Chinese parents don't care about their children. Just the opposite. They would give up anything for their children. It's just an entirely different parenting model.

Here's a story in favor of coercion, Chinese-style. Lulu was about 7, still playing two instruments, and working on a piano piece called "The Little White Donkey" by the French composer Jacques Ibert. The piece is really cute—you can just imagine a little donkey ambling along a country road with its master—but it's also incredibly difficult for young players because the two hands have to keep schizophrenically different rhythms.

Lulu couldn't do it. We worked on it nonstop for a week, drilling each of her hands separately, over and over. But whenever we tried putting the hands together, one always morphed into the other, and everything fell apart. Finally, the day before her lesson, Lulu announced in exasperation that she was giving up and stomped off.

"Get back to the piano now," I ordered.

"You can't make me."

"Oh yes, I can."

Back at the piano, Lulu made me pay. She punched, thrashed and kicked. She grabbed the music score and tore it to shreds. I taped the score back together and encased it in a plastic shield so that it

could never be destroyed again. Then I hauled Lulu's dollhouse to the car and told her I'd donate it to the Salvation Army piece by piece if she didn't have "The Little White Donkey" perfect by the next day. When Lulu said, "I thought you were going to the Salvation Army, why are you still here?" I threatened her with no lunch, no dinner, no Christmas or Hanukkah presents, no birthday parties for two, three, four years. When she still kept playing it wrong, I told her she was purposely working herself into a frenzy because she was secretly afraid she couldn't do it. I told her to stop being lazy, cowardly, self-indulgent and pathetic.

Jed took me aside. He told me to stop insulting Lulu—which I wasn't even doing, I was just motivating her—and that he didn't think threatening Lulu was helpful. Also, he said, maybe Lulu really just couldn't do the technique—perhaps she didn't have the coordination yet—had I considered that possibility?

"You just don't believe in her," I accused.

"That's ridiculous," Jed said scornfully. "Of course I do."

"Sophia could play the piece when she was this age."

"But Lulu and Sophia are different people," Jed pointed out.

"Oh no, not this," I said, rolling my eyes. "Everyone is special in their special own way," I mimicked sarcastically. "Even losers are special in their own special way. Well don't worry, you don't have to lift a finger. I'm willing to put in as long as it takes, and I'm happy to be the one hated. And you can be the one they adore because you make them pancakes and take them to Yankees games."

I rolled up my sleeves and went back to Lulu. I used every weapon and tactic I could think of. We worked right through dinner into the night, and I wouldn't let Lulu get up, not for water, not even to go to the bathroom. The house became a war zone, and I lost my voice yelling, but still there seemed to be only negative progress, and even I began to have doubts.

Then, out of the blue, Lulu did it. Her hands suddenly came together—her right and left hands each doing their own imperturbable thing—just like that.

Lulu realized it the same time I did. I held my breath. She tried it tentatively again. Then she played it more confidently and faster, and still the rhythm held. A moment later, she was beaming.

"Mommy, look—it's easy!" After that, she wanted to play the piece over and over and wouldn't leave the piano. That night, she came to sleep in my bed, and we snuggled and hugged, cracking each other up. When she performed "The Little White Donkey" at a recital a few weeks later, parents came up to me and said, "What a perfect piece for Lulu—it's so spunky and so her."

Even Jed gave me credit for that one. Western parents worry a lot about their children's self-esteem. But as a parent, one of the worst things you can do for your child's self-esteem is to let them give up. On the flip side, there's nothing better for building confidence than learning you can do something you thought you couldn't.

There are all these new books out there portraying Asian mothers as scheming, callous, overdriven people indifferent to their kids' true interests. For their part, many Chinese secretly believe that they care more about their children and are willing to sacrifice much more for them than Westerners, who seem perfectly content to let their children turn out badly. I think it's a misunderstanding on both sides. All decent parents want to do what's best for their children. The Chinese just have a totally different idea of how to do that.

Western parents try to respect their children's individuality, encouraging them to pursue their true passions, supporting their choices, and providing positive reinforcement and a nurturing environment. By contrast, the Chinese believe that the best way to protect their children is by preparing them for the future, letting them see what they're capable of, and arming them with skills, work habits and inner confidence that no one can ever take away.

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### *Sulzer & Kant on Obedience in Education in 1700s Germany*

In Britain and America in the 1700s, the most influential philosopher of education was John Locke, with his [Some Thoughts Concerning Education](#). In France, it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau with his [Emile](#).

But in the German states, it was [Johann Georg Sulzer](#), with his 1748 *An Essay on the Education and Instruction of Children*. Sulzer's fundamental thesis:

"Obedience is so important that all education is actually nothing other than learning how to obey."

"It is not very easy, however, to implant obedience in children. It is quite natural for the child's soul to want to have a will of its own, and things that are not done correctly in the first two years will be difficult to rectify thereafter. One of the advantages of these early years is that then force and compulsion can be used. Over the years, children forget everything that happened to them in early childhood. If their wills can be broken at this time, they will never remember afterwards that they had a will, and for this very reason the severity that is required will not have any serious consequences."[1]

From Immanuel Kant's lectures on education, first delivered in 1776/77: "Above all things, obedience is an essential feature in the character of a child, especially of a school boy or girl."[2]

**Sources:** [1] Johann Georg Sulzer, *Versuch von der Erziehung und Unterweisung der Kinder (An Essay on the Education and Instruction of Children)*, 1748. Quoted in Alice Miller, [For Your Own Good](#). [2] Immanuel Kant, *On Education*. Translated by Annette Churton. University of Michigan Press, 1960. In Ozmon and Craver's *Philosophical Foundations of Education*, 7th ed.

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## *SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING EDUCATION*

John Locke

§ 1. A sound mind in a sound body, is a short, but full description of a happy state in this world; he that has these two, has little more to wish for; and he that wants either of them, will be but little the better for any thing else. Men's happiness, or misery, is most part of their own making. He whose mind directs not wisely, will never take the right way; and he whose body is crazy and feeble, will never be able to advance in it. I confess, there are some men's constitutions of body and mind so vigorous, and well framed by nature, that they need not much assistance from others; but, by the strength of their natural genius, they are, from their cradles, carried towards what is excellent; and, by the privilege of their happy constitutions, are able to do wonders. But examples of this kind are but few; and I think I may say, that, of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education. It is that which makes the great difference in mankind. The little, or almost insensible, impressions on our tender infancies, have very important and lasting consequences; and there it is, as in the fountains of some rivers, where a gentle application of the hand turns the flexible waters into channels, that make them take quite contrary courses; and by this little direction, given them at first, in the source, they receive different tendencies, and arrive at last at very remote and distant places.

§ 2. I imagine the minds of children, as easily turned, this or that way, as water itself; and though this be the principal part, and our main care should be about the inside, yet the clay cottage is not to be neglected. I shall therefore begin with the case, and consider first the health. of the body, as that which perhaps you may rather expect, from that study I have been thought more peculiarly to have applied myself to; and that also which will be soonest despatched, as lying, if I guess not amiss, in a very little compass.

§ 3. How necessary health is to our business and happiness; and how requisite a strong constitution, able to endure hardships and fatigue, is, to one that will make any figure in the world; is too obvious to need any proof.

§ 43. This being laid down in general, as the course ought to be taken, it is fit we come now to consider the parts of the discipline to be used a little more particularly. I have spoken so much of carrying a strict hand over children, that perhaps I shall be suspected of not considering enough what is due to their tender age and constitutions. But that opinion will vanish, when you have heard me a little farther. For I am very apt to think, that great severity of punishment does but very little good; nay, great harm in education: and I believe it will be found, that, *ceteris paribus*, those children who have been most chastised, seldom make the best men. All that I have hitherto contended for, is, that whatsoever rigour is necessary, it is more to be used, the younger children are; and, having by a due application wrought its effect, it is to be relaxed, and changed into a milder sort of government.

§ 67. Manners, as they call it, about which children are so often perplexed, and have so many goodly exhortations made them, by their wise maids and governesses, I think, are rather to be learned by example than rules; and then children, if kept out of ill company, will take a pride to behave themselves prettily, after the fashion of others, perceiving themselves esteemed and commended for it. But, if by a little negligence in this part, the boy should not put off his hat, nor make legs very gracefully, a dancing-master will cure that defect, and wipe off all that plainness of nature, which the à-la-mode people call clownishness. And since nothing appears to me to give children so much becoming confidence and behaviour, and so to raise them to the conversation of those above their

age, as dancing; I think they should be taught to dance, as soon as they are capable of learning it. For, though this consist only in outward gracefulness of motion, yet, I know not how, it gives children manly thoughts and carriage, more than any thing. But otherwise I would not have little children much tormented about punctilios, or niceties of breeding.

Never trouble yourself about those faults in them, which you know age will cure.

§ 135. I place virtue as the first and most necessary of those endowments that belong to a man or a gentleman, as absolutely requisite to make him valued and beloved by others, acceptable or tolerable to himself. Without that, I think, he will be happy neither in this, nor the other world.

§ 148. When he can talk, it is time he should begin to learn to read. But as to this, give me leave here to inculcate again what is very apt to be forgotten, viz. that great care is to be taken, that it be never made as a business to him, nor he look on it as a task. We naturally, as I said, even from our cradles, love liberty, and have therefore an aversion to many things, for no other reason, but because they are enjoined us. I have always had a fancy, that learning might be made a play and recreation to children; and that they might be brought to desire to be taught, if it were proposed to them as a thing of honour, credit, delight, and recreation, or as a reward for doing something else, and if they were never chid or corrected for the neglect of it.

§ 149. Thus children may be cozened into a knowledge of the letters; be taught to read, without perceiving it to be any thing but a sport, and play themselves into that which others are whipped for. Children should not have any thing like work, or serious, laid on them; neither their minds nor bodies will bear it. It injures their healths; and their being forced and tied down to their books, in an age at enmity with all such restraint, has, I doubt not, been the reason why a great many have hated books and learning all their lives after: it is like a surfeit, that leaves an aversion behind, not to be removed.

§ 157. The Lord's prayer, the creed, and ten commandments, it is necessary he should learn perfectly by heart; but, I think, not by reading them himself in his primer, but by somebody's repeating them to him, even before he can read. But learning by heart, and learning to read, should not, I think, be mixed, and so one made to clog the other. But his learning to read should be made as little trouble or business to him as might be.

§ 160. When he can read English well, it will be seasonable to enter him in writing. And here the first thing should be taught him, is to hold his pen right; and this he should be perfect in, before he should be suffered to put it to paper: for not only children, but any body else, that would do any thing well, should never be put upon too much of it at once, or be set to perfect themselves in two parts of an action at the same time, if they can possibly be separated.

§ 162. As soon as he can speak English, it is time for him to learn some other language: this nobody doubts of, when French is proposed. And the reason is, because people are accustomed to the right way of teaching that language, which is by talking it into children in constant conversation, and not by grammatical rules. The Latin tongue would easily be taught the same way, if his tutor, being constantly with him, would talk nothing else to him, and make him answer still in the same language. But because French is a living language, and to be used more in speaking, that should be first learned, that the yet pliant organs of speech might be accustomed to a due formation of those sounds, and he get the habit of pronouncing French well, which is the harder to be done, the longer it is delayed.

§ 178. At the same time that he is learning French and Latin, a child, as has been said, may also be entered in arithmetic, geography, chronology, history, and geometry too. For if these be taught him

in French or Latin, when he begins once to understand either of these tongues, he will get a knowledge in these sciences, and the language to-boot.

Geography, I think, should be begun with; for the learning of the figure of the globe, the situation and boundaries of the four parts of the world, and that of particular kingdoms and countries, being only an exercise of the eyes and memory, a child with pleasure will learn and retain them: and this is so certain, that I now live in the house with a child, whom his mother has so well instructed this way in geography, that he knew the limits of the four parts of the world, could readily point, being asked, to any country upon the globe, or any county in the map of England; knew all the great rivers, promontories, straits, and bays in the world, and could find the longitude and latitude of any place before he was six years old. These things, that he will thus learn by sight, and have by rote in his memory, are not all, I confess, that he is to learn upon the globes. But yet it is a good step and preparation to it, and will make the remainder much easier, when his judgment is grown ripe enough for it: besides that, it gets so much time now, and by the pleasure of knowing things, leads him on insensibly to the gaining of languages.

§ 179. When he has the natural parts of the globe well fixed in his memory, it may then be time to begin arithmetic. By the natural parts of the globe, I mean several positions of the parts of the earth and sea, under different names and distinctions of countries; not coming yet to those artificial and imaginary lines, which have been invented, and are only supposed, for the better improvement of that science.

§ 180. Arithmetic is the easiest, and consequently the first sort of abstract reasoning, which the mind commonly bears, or accustoms itself to: and is of so general use in all parts of life and business, that scarce any thing is to be done without it. This is certain, a man cannot have too much of it, nor too perfectly;

§ 184. As nothing teaches, so nothing delights, more than history. ...

§ 194. Though the systems of physics, that I have met with, afford little encouragement to look for certainty, or science, in any treatise, which shall pretend to give us a body of natural philosophy from the first principles of bodies in general; yet the incomparable Mr. Newton has shown, how far mathematics, applied to some parts of nature, may, upon principles that matter of fact justify, carry us in the knowledge of some, as I may so call them, particular provinces of the incomprehensible universe. And if others could give us so good and clear an account of other parts of nature, as he has of this our planetary world, and the most considerable phænomena observable in it, in his admirable book "*Philosophiæ naturalis principia mathematica*," we might in time hope to be furnished with more true and certain knowledge in several parts of this stupendous machine, than hitherto we could have expected. And though there are very few that have mathematics enough to understand his demonstrations; yet the most accurate mathematicians, who have examined them, allowing them to be such, his book will deserve to be read, and give no small light and pleasure to those, who, willing to understand the motions, properties, and operations of the great masses of matter in this our solar system, will but carefully mind his conclusions, which may be depended on as propositions well proved.

§ 216. Though I am now come to a conclusion of what obvious remarks have suggested to me concerning education, I would not have it thought, that I look on it as a just treatise on this subject. There are a thousand other things that may need consideration; especially if one should take in the various tempers, different inclinations, and particular defaults, that are to be found in children; and prescribe proper remedies. The variety is so great, that it would require a volume; nor would that reach it. Each man's mind has some peculiarity, as well as his face, that distinguishes him from all



others; and there are possibly scarce two children, who can be conducted by exactly the same method. Besides that, I think a prince, a nobleman, and an ordinary gentleman's son, should have different ways of breeding. But having had here only some general views in reference to the main end and aims in education, and those designed for a gentleman's son, who being then very little, I considered only as white paper, or wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases; I have touched little more than those heads, which I judged necessary for the breeding of a young gentleman of his condition in general; and have now published these my occasional thoughts, with this hope, that, though this be far from being a complete treatise on this subject, or such as that every one may find what will just fit his child in it; yet it may give some small light to those, whose concern for their dear little ones makes them so irregularly bold, that they dare venture to consult their own reason, in the education of their children, rather than wholly to rely upon old custom.

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**Source:** *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* [1690]. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/>

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## Montessori Education

### Marsha Enright

*Formerly a psychotherapist, Marsha Familiaro Enright, co-founded in 1990 the Council Oak Montessori School (elementary level), of which she is the president and administrator. Another cofounder of the school and its corporate secretary, Doris Cox, currently teaches middle school children at Council Oak. Marsha Enright is currently the president of the [Reason, Individualism, Freedom Institute](#), and leads development of the College of the United States.*

The education of the human child is of profound importance to anyone dedicated to achieving "the best within us," but especially to those who have, or wish to have, children of their own, and to those who are or wish to become teachers. What are the child's nature and needs? How are they different from those of an adult? How can we best foster the child's development so as to help him maximize his potential for productivity and happiness in life? Current research validates Montessori's ideas. We believe that, on the whole, the philosophy of the child developed by Italian physician and teacher Maria Montessori (pictured at left), is most consistent with the Objectivist view of human nature, needs, and values.

#### **Maria Montessori**

Maria Montessori, the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School, became a doctor in 1896. Her first post was in the university's Psychiatric Clinic.

In that age, retarded children were considered a medical problem, rather than an educational one, and were often kept in hospitals for the insane. Montessori's visits with children in Roman insane asylums prompted her to study the works of Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard (1775-1838) and Edouard Seguin (1812-1880), two French-born pioneers in education for the mentally deficient. She went on to read all the major works on educational theory of the previous two centuries.

In 1899, Montessori became director of the State Orthophrenic School, where her work with the retarded was so successful that the majority of her students were able to pass the state education exams. While other people exclaimed over this phenomenal success, Montessori pondered its implication for normal children. If the mentally deficient could do as well on the exams as normal children, in what poor state must those normal children be! This reflection led her to devote her life to education.

Montessori opened her first Casa dei Bambini (Children's House) in 1907, applying to children of normal intelligence the methods and materials she had developed for deficient children. She also spent a great deal of time observing and meditating on what children did with her materials—what brought out their best learning and their greatest enthusiasm.

Montessori's work with the retarded was so successful that the majority of her students were able to pass the state education exams.

As a result of Montessori's achievements at the Casa dei Bambini, her method spread rapidly. By 1915, over 100 Montessori schools had opened in America, and many more had opened in the rest of the world. In Switzerland, one of the most important 20th-century theorists in child development—Jean Piaget (1896-1980)—was heavily influenced by Montessori and her method. Piaget was director of the modified Montessori school in Geneva, where he did some of the observations for his first book, *Language and Thought of the Child*, and served as head of the Swiss Montessori society.

Maria Montessori, *Her Life and Work*, by E.M. Standing, is an interesting historical account told from the viewpoint of a devoted follower. A more recent and objective biography is Rita Kramer's *Maria Montessori*.

### The Montessori Method

Maria Montessori's own works constitute the best source of information concerning her theories and methods. *The Montessori Method*, the first overview of her educational techniques, remains the best in many respects. *Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook* goes into the details of her philosophy, materials, and methods. *The Discovery of the Child* is a later detailed summarization of Montessori's philosophy and method of teaching, with much discussion of the child's nature and the best means of approaching the child with work. *The Secret of Childhood* is a history of what—and how—Montessori learned about the unique nature of children, the problems that can arise when the child's nature is not properly nurtured, and the repercussions that proper and improper nurturing of the child have on society. This work is especially recommended for parents.

"A child's work is to create the person she will become." Maria Montessori

According to Maria Montessori, "A child's work is to create the person she will become." To carry out this self-construction, children have innate mental powers, but they must be free to use these powers. For this reason, a Montessori classroom provides freedom while maintaining an environment that encourages a sense of order and self-discipline. "Freedom in a structured environment" is the Montessori dictum that names this arrangement.

Like all thinkers in the Aristotelian tradition, Montessori recognized that the senses must be educated first in the development of the intellect. Consequently, she created a vast array of special learning materials from which concepts could be abstracted and through which they could be concretized. In recognition of the independent nature of the developing intellect, these materials are self-correcting—that is, from their use, the child discovers for himself whether he has the right answer. This feature of her materials encourages the child to be concerned with facts and truth, rather than with what adults say is right or wrong.

Also basic to Montessori's philosophy is her belief in the "sensitive periods" of a child's development: periods when the child seeks certain stimuli with immense intensity, and, consequently, can most easily master a particular learning skill. The teacher's role is to recognize the sensitive periods in individual children and put the children in touch with the appropriate materials.

Montessori also identified stages of growth—which she called "Planes of Development"—that occur in approximately six-year intervals and that are further subdivided into two three-year segments. These planes of development are the basis for the three-year age groupings found in Montessori schools: ages 3 to 6, 6 to 9, 9 to 12, and 12 to 18.

From birth to age six, children are sensorial explorers, studying every aspect of their environment, language, and culture. Montessori's *The Absorbent Mind* provides a detailed discussion of how the child's mind and needs develop during this period.

From age six to twelve, children become reasoning explorers. They develop new powers of abstraction and imagination, using and applying their knowledge to further discover and expand their world. During this time, it is still essential that the child carry out activities in order to integrate acting and thinking. It is his own effort that gives him independence, and his own experience that brings

him answers as to how and why things function as they do. Montessori's *The Montessori Elementary Materials* discusses the materials and curriculum to be used for children during this period.

*From Childhood to Adolescence*, also by Montessori, outlines the changes children undergo in mentality and outlook as they grow from childhood to adolescence, and the nature and needs of the adolescent child. She also proposes a radical concept of schooling for the adolescent.

Valuable secondary works on the Montessori method include Elizabeth Hainstock's *Teaching Montessori in the Home: The Preschool Years*, and *Teaching Montessori in the Home: The School Years*. Both give an abbreviated view of the philosophy and the method, as well as detailed instructions on how to make and use the materials. Paula Lilliard's 1972 work, *Montessori: A Modern Approach*, reviews the history and nature of the Montessori philosophy, discussing how "current" it is in addressing modern educational concerns and what it has to offer the contemporary family.

"[W]e must respect religiously, reverently, these first indications of individuality." -Montessori

Throughout her writing, Montessori combines keen observations and insights with a heroic view of the importance of the child's work in self-development—work by which each man creates the best within him. Many writers and critics dislike Montessori's romantic rhetoric, and admittedly her phraseology tends to the mystical. Nevertheless, we find her language refreshing and inspiring. As the following sentence illustrates, she always keeps in mind the glory and grandeur of human development:

"Humanity shows itself in all its intellectual splendor during this tender age as the sun shows itself at the dawn, and the flower in the first unfolding of the petals; and we must respect religiously, reverently, these first indications of individuality."

The Montessori method always places its principles and activities in the broad context of the importance of human life and development, intelligence and free will. Indeed, one of the cornerstones of the Montessori method is the presentation of knowledge as an integrated whole, emphasizing conceptual relationships between different branches of learning, and the placement of knowledge in its historical context.

### **Dewey Versus Montessori**

In American academic circles, Montessori is little known, except as a name from the past, and textbooks on educational theory therefore tend to discuss her method only in an historical context. Much of this learned ignorance can be traced to *The Montessori System Examined*, a small but highly influential book published in 1914 by Professor William Heard Kilpatrick. In his time, Kilpatrick was one of the most popular professors at Columbia University's Teachers College, an institution with far-ranging influence among educational theorists and one of the main redoubts for John Dewey's Progressive method of education.

Dewey and Montessori approached education from philosophically and psychologically different perspectives. Dewey's concern was with fostering the imagination and the development of social relationships. He believed in developing the intellect late in childhood, for fear that it might stifle other aspects of development. By contrast, Montessori believed that development of the intellect was the only means by which the imagination and proper social relationships could arise. Her method focused on the early stimulation and sharpening of the senses, the development of independence in motor tasks and the care of the self, and the child's naturally high motivation to learn about the world as a means of gaining mastery over himself and his environment.

Thus, behind Kilpatrick's criticism of Montessori's educational method lay a great deal of antagonism towards Montessori's philosophy and psychology. Kilpatrick dismissed Montessori's sensorial materials because they were based on what he considered to be an outdated theory of the faculties of the mind (Dewey was greatly influenced by early Behaviorism) and a too-early development of the intellect. Kilpatrick also criticized Montessori's materials as too restrictive: because they have a definite outcome, he felt, they restrict the child's imagination. Following Dewey's collectivist view of man, and his central focus on the social development of the child, Kilpatrick also disliked Montessori's decidedly individualistic view of the child.

### **Montessori Today**

In the United States, the views of Dewey and Kilpatrick prevailed, and the name of Montessori was largely forgotten for several decades. Fortunately for recent generations of American children, a dissatisfied American mother, Nancy Rambusch, rediscovered Montessori in Europe during the 1950s. Rambusch began the "second-wave" Montessori schools in the United States, lectured widely on the Montessori method, and helped found the American Montessori Society. Over the past forty years, grass-roots interest has spurred a phenomenal growth of Montessori schools in America, but the movement is not generally recognized or promoted in university education departments.

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**Source:** <http://atlassociety.org/commentary/commentary-blog/3633-foundations-study-guide-montessori-education>

## *Some Quotations on Education*

### Maria Montessori

#### **Education should fit the child, not vice versa:**

“The adult has not understood the child or the adolescent, and is therefore in continual strife with him. The remedy is not that the adult should learn something intellectually, or complete a deficient culture. He must find a different starting point ... In their dealings with children adults ... look upon the child as something empty that is to be filled through their own efforts, as something inert and helpless for which they must do everything, as something lacking an inner guide and in constant need of direction. ... But if a child has within himself the key to his own personality ... these must be delicate powers indeed, and an adult by his untimely interventions can prevent their secret realization ... .” (1936)

#### **Cognition and movement are integrated:**

“One of the greatest mistakes of our day is to think of movement by itself, as something apart from the higher functions. ... Mental development must be connected with movement and be dependent on it. It is vital that educational theory and practice should become informed by this idea. ... Watching a child makes it obvious that the development of the mind comes about through his movements. ... Mind and movements are parts of the same entity.” (1967, 141-2)

#### **Choice:**

“These children have free choice all day long. Life is based on choice, so they learn to make their own decisions. They must decide and choose for themselves all the time. ... They cannot learn through obedience to the commands of another.” (1989, 26)

**Intrinsic motivation, not extrinsic:**

“The prize and the punishment are incentives towards unnatural and forced effort, and therefore we certainly cannot speak of the natural development of the child in connection with them.” (1912/1964, 21)

“The secret of success is found to lie in the right use of imagination in awakening interest, and the stimulation of seeds already sown.” (1948/1967, 1-2)

**Spontaneous self-development:**

“By leaving the children in our schools at liberty we have been with great clearness to follow them in their natural method of spontaneous self-development.” (1912/1964, 357)

“All we have to do is set the energy free. ... When we speak of freedom in education we mean freedom for the creative energy which is the urge of life towards the development of the individual. This is not the casual energy like the energy of a bomb that explodes. It has a guiding principle, a very fine, but unconscious directive, the aim of which is to develop a normal person. When we speak of free children we are thinking of this energy which must be free in order to construct these children well.” (1989, 12)

**Meaningful-to-student context:**

“Education, as today conceived, is something separated both from biological and social life. All who enter the educational world tend to be cut off from society. ... People are prepared for life by exclusion from it.” (1967, 10-11)

**Social voluntarism and win-win:**

“Our schools show that children of different ages help one another. The younger ones see what the older ones are doing and ask for explanations. These are readily given, and the instruction is really valuable. ... The older ones are happy to be able to teach what they know. People sometimes fear that if a child of five gives lessons, this will hold him back from his own progress. But, in the first place, he does not teach all the time and his freedom is respected. Second, teaching helps him to understand what he knows even better than before. He has to analyze and rearrange his little store of knowledge before he can pass it on. ... [So] everyone achieves a healthy normality through the mutual exchange.” (1967, 226-8)

Schools can make a “contribution to the cause of goodness by removing obstacles” (1965, 189).

**The teacher as provider of structure, guide, and “policeman”:**

“Freedom in a structured environment.” (1965)

“The children in our schools are free, but that does not mean there is no organization. Organization, in fact, is necessary ... if the children are to be free to work.” (1967, 244)

“It is true that the child develops in his environment through activity itself, but he needs material means, guidance and an indispensable understanding. It is the adult who provides these necessities.

... If [the adult] does less than is necessary, the child cannot act meaningfully, and if he does more than is necessary, he imposes himself on the child, extinguishing creative impulses.” (1956, 154)

“Do not apply the rule of non-interference when the children are still the prey of all their different naughtinesses. Don’t let them climb on the windows, the furniture, etc. You must interfere at this stage. At this stage the teacher must be a policeman. The policeman has to defend the honest citizens against the disturbers.” (1989, 16)

**Scientific method applied to education:**

“Scientific pedagogy” (1912)

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**Source:** These quotations are from Stephen Hicks’s video lecture on *Objectivism and Montessori*, Part 12 of his Philosophy of Education course. Available at <http://www.stephenhicks.org/publications/philosophy-of-education/> and Youtube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/EducationPhilosophy>).

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## United States Supreme Court

*UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA REGENTS v. BAKKE*

438 U.S. 265 (1978)

Argued October 12, 1977, Decided June 28, 1978

The Medical School of the University of California at Davis (hereinafter Davis) had two admissions programs for the entering class of 100 students—the regular admissions program and the special admissions program. Under the regular procedure, candidates whose overall under-graduate grade point averages fell below 2.5 on a scale of 4.0 were summarily rejected. About one out of six applicants was then given an interview, following which he was rated on a scale of 1 to 100 by each of the committee members (five in 1973 and six in 1974), his rating being based on the interviewers' summaries, his overall grade point average, his science courses grade point average, his Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) scores, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and other biographical data, all of which resulted in a total "benchmark score." The full admissions committee then made offers of admission on the basis of their review of the applicant's file and his score, considering and acting upon applications as they were received. The committee chairman was responsible for placing names on the waiting list and had discretion to include persons with "special skills." A separate committee, a majority of whom were members of minority groups, operated the special admissions program. The 1973 and 1974 application forms, respectively, asked candidates whether they wished to be considered as "economically and/or educationally disadvantaged" applicants and members of a "minority group" (blacks, Chicanos, Asians, American Indians). If an applicant of a minority group was found to be "disadvantaged," he would be rated in a manner similar to the one employed by the general admissions committee. Special candidates, however, did not have to meet the 2.5 grade point cutoff and were not ranked against candidates in the general admissions process. About one-fifth of the special applicants were invited for interviews in 1973 and 1974, following which they were given benchmark scores, and the top choices were then given to the general admissions committee, which could reject special candidates for failure to meet course requirements or other specific deficiencies. The special committee continued to recommend candidates until 16 special admission selections had been made. During a four-year period 63 minority [438 U.S. 265, 266] students were admitted to Davis under the special program and 44 under the general program. No disadvantaged whites were admitted under the special program, though many applied. Respondent, a white male, applied to Davis in 1973 and 1974, in both years being considered only under the general admissions program. Though he had a 468 out of 500 score in 1973, he was rejected since no general applicants with scores less than 470 were being accepted after respondent's application, which was filed late in the year, had been processed and completed. At that time four special admission slots were still unfilled. In 1974 respondent applied early, and though he had a total score of 549 out of 600, he was again rejected. In neither year was his name placed on the discretionary waiting list. In both years special applicants were admitted with significantly lower scores than respondent's. After his second rejection, respondent filed this action in state court for mandatory, injunctive, and declaratory relief to compel his admission to Davis, alleging that the special admissions program operated to exclude him on the basis of his race in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, a provision of the California Constitution, and 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which provides, inter alia, that no person shall on the ground of race or color be excluded from participating in any program receiving federal financial assistance. Petitioner cross-claimed for a declaration that its special admissions program was lawful.



The trial court found that the special program operated as a racial quota, because minority applicants in that program were rated only against one another, and 16 places in the class of 100 were reserved for them. Declaring that petitioner could not take race into account in making admissions decisions, the program was held to violate the Federal and State Constitutions and Title VI. Respondent's admission was not ordered, however, for lack of proof that he would have been admitted but for the special program. The California Supreme Court, applying a strict-scrutiny standard, concluded that the special admissions program was not the least intrusive means of achieving the goals of the admittedly compelling state interests of integrating the medical profession and increasing the number of doctors willing to serve minority patients. Without passing on the state constitutional or federal statutory grounds the court held that petitioner's special admissions program violated the Equal Protection Clause. Since petitioner could not satisfy its burden of demonstrating that respondent, absent the special program, would not have been admitted, the court ordered his admission to Davis.

Held: The judgment below is affirmed insofar as it orders respondent's admission to Davis and invalidates petitioner's special admissions program, but is reversed insofar as it prohibits petitioner from taking race into account as a factor in its future admissions decisions.

**MR. JUSTICE POWELL announced the judgment of the Court.**

This case presents a challenge to the special admissions program of the petitioner, the Medical School of the University of California at Davis, which is designed to assure the admission [438 U.S. 265, 270] of a specified number of students from certain minority groups. The Superior Court of California sustained respondent's challenge, holding that petitioner's program violated the California Constitution, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq., and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The court enjoined petitioner from considering respondent's race or the race of any other applicant in making admissions decisions. It refused, however, to order respondent's admission to the Medical School, holding that he had not carried his burden of proving that he would have been admitted but for the constitutional and statutory violations. The Supreme Court of California affirmed those portions of the trial court's judgment declaring the special admissions program unlawful and enjoining petitioner from considering the race of any applicant. 1 [438 U.S. 265, 271] It modified that portion of the judgment denying respondent's requested injunction and directed the trial court to order his admission.

For the reasons stated in the following opinion, I believe that so much of the judgment of the California court as holds petitioner's special admissions program unlawful and directs that respondent be admitted to the Medical School must be affirmed. For the reasons expressed in a separate opinion, my Brothers THE CHIEF JUSTICE, MR. JUSTICE STEWART, MR. JUSTICE REHNQUIST, and MR. JUSTICE STEVENS concur in this judgment. [438 U.S. 265, 272]

I also conclude for the reasons stated in the following opinion that the portion of the court's judgment enjoining petitioner from according any consideration to race in its admissions process must be reversed. For reasons expressed in separate opinions, my Brothers MR. JUSTICE BRENNAN, MR. JUSTICE WHITE, MR. JUSTICE MARSHALL, and MR. JUSTICE BLACKMUN concur in this judgment.

Affirmed in part and reversed in part.

I

The Medical School of the University of California at Davis opened in 1968 with an entering class of 50 students. In 1971, the size of the entering class was increased to 100 students, a level at which it

remains. No admissions program for disadvantaged or minority students existed when the school opened, and the first class contained three Asians but no blacks, no Mexican-Americans, and no American Indians. Over the next two years, the faculty devised a special admissions program to increase the representation of "disadvantaged" students in each Medical School class. The special program consisted of a separate admissions system operating in coordination with the regular admissions process.

Under the regular admissions procedure, a candidate could submit his application to the Medical School beginning in July of the year preceding the academic year for which admission was sought. Record 149. Because of the large number of applications, the admissions committee screened each one to select candidates for further consideration. Candidates whose overall undergraduate grade point averages fell below 2.5 on a scale of 4.0 were summarily rejected. About one out of six applicants was invited for a personal interview. Ibid. Following the interviews, each candidate was rated on a scale of 1 to 100 by his interviewers and four other members of the admissions committee. The rating embraced the interviewers' summaries, the candidate's overall grade point average, grade point average in science courses, scores on the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and other biographical data. The ratings were added together to arrive at each candidate's "benchmark" score. Since five committee members rated each candidate in 1973, a perfect score was 500; in 1974, six members rated each candidate, so that a perfect score was 600. The full committee then reviewed the file and scores of each applicant and made offers of admission on a "rolling" basis. The chairman was responsible for placing names on the waiting list. They were not placed in strict numerical order; instead, the chairman had discretion to include persons with "special skills."

The special admissions program operated with a separate committee, a majority of whom were members of minority groups. On the 1973 application form, candidates were asked to indicate whether they wished to be considered as "economically and/or educationally disadvantaged" applicants; on the 1974 form the question was whether they wished to be considered as members of a "minority group," which the Medical School apparently viewed as "Blacks," "Chicanos," "Asians," and "American Indians." If these questions were answered affirmatively, the application was forwarded to the special admissions committee. No formal definition of "disadvantaged" was ever produced, but the chairman of the special committee screened each application to see whether it reflected economic or educational deprivation. Having passed this initial hurdle, the applications then were rated by the special committee in a fashion similar to that used by the general admissions committee, except that special candidates did not have to meet the 2.5 grade point average cutoff applied to regular applicants. About one-fifth of the total number of special applicants were invited for interviews in 1973 and 1974. Following each interview, the special committee assigned each special applicant a benchmark score. The special committee then presented its top choices to the general admissions committee. The latter did not rate or compare the special candidates against the general applicants, but could reject recommended special candidates for failure to meet course requirements or other specific deficiencies. The special committee continued to recommend special applicants until a number prescribed by faculty vote were admitted. While the overall class size was still 50, the prescribed number was 8; in 1973 and 1974, when the class size had doubled to 100, the prescribed number of special admissions also doubled, to 16.

From the year of the increase in class size—1971—through 1974, the special program resulted in the admission of 21 black students, 30 Mexican-Americans, and 12 Asians, for a total of 63 minority students. Over the same period, the regular admissions program produced 1 black, 6 Mexican-Americans, and 37 Asians, for a total of 44 minority students. Although disadvantaged whites applied

to the special program in large numbers, none received an offer of admission through that process. Indeed, in 1974, at least, the special committee explicitly considered only "disadvantaged" special applicants who were members of one of the designated minority groups.

Allan Bakke is a white male who applied to the Davis Medical School in both 1973 and 1974. In both years Bakke's application was considered under the general admissions program, and he received an interview. His 1973 interview was with Dr. Theodore C. West, who considered Bakke "a very desirable applicant to [the] medical school." Despite a strong benchmark score of 468 out of 500, Bakke was rejected. His application had come late in the year, and no applicants in the general admissions process with scores below 470 were accepted after Bakke's application was completed. There were four special admissions slots unfilled at that time, however, for which Bakke was not considered. *Id.*, at 70. After his 1973 rejection, Bakke wrote to Dr. George H. Lowrey, Associate Dean and Chairman of the Admissions Committee, protesting that the special admissions program operated as a racial and ethnic quota.

Bakke's 1974 application was completed early in the year. His student interviewer gave him an overall rating of 94, finding him "friendly, well tempered, conscientious and delightful to speak with." His faculty interviewer was, by coincidence, the same Dr. Lowrey to whom he had written in protest of the special admissions program. Dr. Lowrey found Bakke "rather limited in his approach" to the problems of the medical profession and found disturbing Bakke's "very definite opinions which were based more on his personal viewpoints than upon a study of the total problem." Dr. Lowrey gave Bakke the lowest of his six ratings, an 86; his total was 549 out of 600. Again, Bakke's application was rejected. In neither year did the chairman of the admissions committee, Dr. Lowrey, exercise his discretion to place Bakke on the waiting list. In both years, applicants were admitted under the special program with grade point averages, MCAT scores, and benchmark scores significantly lower than Bakke's.

After the second rejection, Bakke filed the instant suit in the Superior Court of California. He sought mandatory, injunctive, and declaratory relief compelling his admission to the Medical School. He alleged that the Medical School's special admissions program operated to exclude him from the school on the basis of his race, in violation of his rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The University cross-complained for a declaration that its special admissions program was lawful. The trial court found that the special program operated as a racial quota, because minority applicants in the special program were rated only against one another, and 16 places in the class of 100 were reserved for them. Declaring that the University could not take race into account in making admissions decisions, the trial court held the challenged program violative of the Federal Constitution, the State Constitution, and Title VI. The court refused to order Bakke's admission, however, holding that he had failed to carry his burden of proving that he would have been admitted but for the existence of the special program.

Bakke appealed from the portion of the trial court judgment denying him admission, and the University appealed from the decision that its special admissions program was unlawful and the order enjoining it from considering race in the processing of applications. The Supreme Court of California transferred the case directly from the trial court, "because of the importance of the issues involved." The California court accepted the findings of the trial court with respect to the University's program. Because the special admissions program involved a racial classification, the Supreme Court held itself bound to apply strict scrutiny. It then turned to the goals the University presented as justifying the special program. Although the court agreed that the goals of integrating the medical profession and increasing the number of physicians willing to serve members of minority groups were compelling state interests, it concluded that the special admissions program was not the least intrusive means of

achieving those goals. Without passing on the state constitutional or the federal statutory grounds cited in the trial court's judgment, the California court held that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment required that "no applicant may be rejected because of his race, in favor of another who is less qualified, as measured by standards applied without regard to race."

Turning to Bakke's appeal, the court ruled that since Bakke had established that the University had discriminated against him on the basis of his race, the burden of proof shifted to the University to demonstrate that he would not have been admitted even in the absence of the special admissions program. The court analogized Bakke's situation to that of a plaintiff under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. On this basis, the court initially ordered a remand for the purpose of determining whether, under the newly allocated burden of proof, Bakke would have been admitted to either the 1973 or the 1974 entering class in the absence of the special admissions program. In its petition for rehearing below, however, the University conceded its inability to carry that burden. California court thereupon amended its opinion to direct that the trial court enter judgment ordering Bakke's admission to the Medical School. That order was stayed pending review in this Court. We granted certiorari to consider the important constitutional issue. ...

V

Accordingly, we would reverse the judgment of the Supreme Court of California holding the Medical School's special admissions program unconstitutional and directing respondent's admission, as well as that portion of the judgment enjoining the Medical School from according any consideration to race in the admissions process.

\* \* \*

## *The Case for Affirmative Action*

By Charles J. Ogletree, Jr.

*After centuries of bias, we must stand by policies that redress past wrongs.*

My dreams became reality as a result of my Stanford education. My father, who grew up in Birmingham, Ala., and my mother, a native of Little Rock, Ark., never finished high school. They grew up in a segregated South that offered few opportunities and many obstacles for African Americans. I grew up in Merced, Calif., in an environment where many of my peers viewed merely staying alive and getting a job as a successful course in life. But, with a push from my parents, I was determined to be the first in my family to attend college. With help from high school counselors, I discovered Stanford. And thanks to an aggressive minority outreach program by the admissions office, I was given the opportunity of a first-rate education. Without affirmative action, I would never have applied to, and certainly would not have attended, Stanford.

We must keep affirmative action—and keep refining it. It is a small but significant way to compensate victims of slavery, Jim Crow laws, discrimination and immigration restrictions. It is also a means to assure that institutions such as Stanford will celebrate and foster that which they simply cannot avoid: diversity in a democratic society. Affirmative action admissions policies seek to realign the balance of power and opportunity by doing what is, at heart, quite simple: affirmatively including the formerly excluded.

There are critics of affirmative action who claim it is no longer needed, or unfairly discriminates "in reverse" or "stigmatizes" admitted minority students. I disagree.

Those who claim affirmative action is no longer needed believe that the field has been leveled. But they ignore alarming figures. Last year, only 1,455 African Americans received PhDs in the United States. During the same year, 24,608 whites were awarded PhDs. The truth is that while America has made progress on racial issues, these changes are recent, vulnerable to being reversed and in fact nowhere near completed.

Those who cry "reverse discrimination" base their views almost exclusively on a belief that minority test scores are too low. But they fail to acknowledge that test scores and subsequent performance in college have a correlation that is, to say the least, inexact. When we insist on test scores as an ultimate measure of merit, we exclude, once again, students who have not had access to good public education or to funds that pay for preparatory courses for those tests. We exclude those who, given the opportunity, will display their ability.

Finally, those who would eradicate affirmative action because it "stigmatizes" minorities have two flaws in their argument. Stigma is the product of racist attitudes that still persist today. As a result, killing affirmative action would do little, probably nothing, to ameliorate the stigmatization of minorities. Indeed, one wonders, even for the few whom affirmative action might arguably stigmatize: Would they feel better and achieve more being excluded from a good education entirely? That question ties into the second flaw in the "stigmatization" argument: Opponents rely on the exceptional case, not the rule. (Just as they tend to point to the minuscule number of failures rather than the many successes.) The majority of minorities strongly favor affirmative action because of the benefits and opportunities it affords.

I was attracted to Stanford precisely because of its affirmative action programs. Here was an institution that clearly recognized that some people enter life with different abilities and opportunities, and that standardized tests were not the only way to judge issues of character, creativity and intellectual promise. When I arrived on campus, I found there was no affirmative action in course selection or grading. I was expected to compete with my peers on an equal basis. I learned that success was not automatic. I got my bachelor's degree in three years and graduated with distinction. I spent my fourth year obtaining my master's degree, and giving serious thought to the next stages of life.

The experiences of many of my minority classmates is a ringing endorsement of affirmative action. Most came from families where the parents had not gone to college, and many were from single-parent households. Moreover, many went on to become successful doctors, lawyers and business leaders, and others are prominent school teachers, public servants and entrepreneurs.

It is my hope that one day we will no longer need affirmative action. As our society becomes more diverse, the need for specific programs aimed at targeted groups will obviously diminish. However, that time has not yet arrived. My two teenage children, who are both college bound, are far better qualified to navigate the educational waters than I was 25 years ago. Despite this laudable progress, they are still judged in everyday life, by race. They are constantly reminded by comments, innuendo and circumstances of their ethnicity precisely because we have not been able as a society to overcome the issues of race.

The affirmative action policies promoted by Stanford recognize that, for more than 300 years, African Americans were treated differently because of their race. The important efforts over the course of the past 30 years by government and private institutions have gone a considerable distance in facing up to this history. It will not take 300 years, or even 100 years, to address the sad legacy of our nation's past. We have made a lot of progress. This is no time to turn back.

\* \* \*

**Source:** *Stanford Alumni Magazine*, 2015.

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## *“Affirmative Action”: A Worldwide Disaster*

Thomas Sowell

Arguments for and against “affirmative action” have raged for about twenty years in the United States. Similar arguments have provoked controversy—and even bloodshed—for a longer or a shorter period, in the most disparate societies, scattered around the world. India, Nigeria, Australia, Guyana, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Indonesia are just some of the countries where some groups receive official, government-sanctioned preferences over others. While the American phrase “affirmative action” is used in Australia and Canada, other countries have used a variety of other phrases, such as “positive discrimination” (India), “sons of the soil” preferences (Indonesia, Malaysia), “standardization” (Sri Lanka), or “reflecting the federal character” of the country (Nigeria). The same general principle of government apportionment of coveted positions, to supersede the competition of the marketplace or of academia, was of course also embodied in the *numerus clausus* laws used to restrict the opportunities of Jews in prewar Central and Eastern Europe.

The countries with preferential policies have varied enormously in cultural, political, economic, and other ways. The groups receiving preferences have likewise varied greatly, from locally or nationally dominant groups in some countries to the poorest and most abject groups, such as the untouchables of India. Such vast disparities in settings and people make it all the more striking that there are common patterns among these countries—patterns with serious implications for “affirmative-action” policies in the United States. Among these patterns are the following:

1. Preferential programs, even when explicitly and repeatedly defined as “temporary,” have tended not only to persist but also to expand in scope, either embracing more groups or spreading to wider realms for the same groups, or both. Even preferential programs established with legally mandated cut-off dates, as in India and Pakistan, have continued far past those dates by subsequent extensions.
2. Within the groups designated by government as recipients of preferential treatment, the benefits have usually gone disproportionately to those members already more fortunate.
3. Group polarization has tended to increase in the wake of preferential programs, with non-preferred groups reacting adversely, in ways ranging from political backlash to mob violence and civil war.
4. Fraudulent claims of belonging to the designated beneficiary groups have been widespread and have taken many forms in various countries.

In the United States, as in other countries around the world, the empirical consequences of preferential policies have received much less attention than the rationales and goals of such policies. Too often these rationales and goals have been sufficient unto themselves, both in the political arena and in courts of law. Without even an attempt at empirical assessment of costs versus benefits, with no attempt to pinpoint either losers or gainers, discussions of preferential policies are often exercises in assertion, counter-assertion, and accusation. Illusions flourish in such an atmosphere. So do the disappointments and bitterness to which illusions lead.

Foremost among these illusions is the belief that group “disparities” in “representation” are suspect anomalies that can be corrected by having the government temporarily apportion places on the basis of group membership. Every aspect of this belief fails the test of evidence, in country after country.

The prime moral illusion is that preferential policies compensate for wrongs suffered. This belief has been supported only by a thin veneer of emotional rhetoric, seldom examined but often reiterated.

### ***Statistical Disparities***

Equally nebulous are the assumptions about the statistical “disparities” and “imbalances” that preferential policies are supposed to correct.

The idea that large statistical disparities between groups are unusual—and therefore suspicious—is commonplace, but only among those who have not bothered to study the history of racial, ethnic, and other groups in countries around the world. Among leading scholars who have in fact devoted years of research to such matters, a radically different picture emerges. Donald L. Horowitz of Duke University, at the end of a massive and masterful international study of ethnic groups—a study highly praised in scholarly journals—examined the idea of a society where groups are “proportionately represented” at different levels and in different sectors. He concluded that “few, if any, societies have ever approximated this description.”

A worldwide study of military forces and police forces by Cynthia Enloe of Clark University likewise concluded that “militaries fall far short of mirroring, even roughly, the multi-ethnic societies” from which they come. Moreover, just “as one is unlikely to find a police force or a military that mirrors its plural society, so one is unlikely to find a representative bureaucracy.” One reason is that “it is common for different groups to rely on different mobility ladders.” Some choose the military, some the bureaucracy, and some various parts of the private sector. Even within the military, different branches tend to have very different racial or ethnic compositions—the Afrikaners, for example, being slightly underrepresented in the South African navy and greatly overrepresented in the South African army, though their utter dominance in the government ensures that they cannot be discriminated against in either branch. Powerless minorities have likewise been greatly overrepresented or even dominant in particular branches of the military or the police—the Chinese in Malaysia’s air force and among detectives in the police force, for example.

In the private sector as well, it is commonplace for minorities to be overrepresented, or even dominant, in competitive industries where they have no power to prevent others from establishing rival businesses. Jewish prominence in the clothing industry, not only in the United States, but in Argentina and Chile as well, did not reflect any ability to prevent other Americans, Argentines, or Chileans from manufacturing garments, but simply the advantages of the Jews’ having brought needle-trade skills and experience with them from Eastern Europe. The fact that Jews owned more than half the clothing stores in mid-19th-century Melbourne likewise reflected that same advantage, rather than any ability to forbid other Australians from selling clothes. In a similar way, German minorities have been dominant as pioneers in piano manufacturing in colonial America, czarist Russia, Australia, France, and England. Italian fishermen, Japanese farmers, and Irish politicians have been among many other minority groups with special success in special fields in various countries, without any ability to keep out others.

Another distinguished scholar who has studied multi-ethnic societies around the world, Myron Weiner of MIT, refers to “the universality of ethnic inequality.” He points out that those inequalities are multidimensional:

All multi-ethnic societies exhibit a tendency for ethnic groups to engage in different occupations, have different levels (and, often, types) of education, receive different incomes, and occupy a different place in the social hierarchy.



Yet the pattern Professor Weiner has seen, after years of research, as a “universality” is routinely assumed to be an *anomaly*, not only by preferential-policy advocates, but also by the intelligentsia, the media, legislators, and judges—all of whom tend to assume, as a *norm*, what Professor Horowitz has found to exist (or even to be approximated) in “few, if any, societies.” That what exists widely across the planet is regarded as an anomaly, while what exists virtually nowhere is regarded as a norm, is a tribute to the effectiveness of sheer reiteration in establishing a vision—and of the difficulties of dispelling a prevailing vision by facts.

Some might try to salvage the statistical argument for discrimination by describing discrimination as also being universal. But, to repeat, groups who are in no position to discriminate against anybody have often been overrepresented in coveted positions—the Chinese in Malaysian universities, the Tamils in Sri Lankan universities, the southerners in Nigerian universities, all during the 1960’s, and Asians in American universities today being just some of the minorities of whom this has been true. All sorts of other powerless minorities have dominated particular industries or sectors of the economy, the intellectual community, or government employment. Among businessmen, India’s Gujaratis in East Africa, the Lebanese in West Africa, the Chinese in Southeast Asia, the Jews in Eastern Europe, and Koreans and Vietnamese in black ghettos across the United States are just some examples. Among high government officials, the Germans were greatly over-represented in czarist Russia, as were Christians in the Ottoman empire. Among intellectuals, the Scots were as dominant in 18th- and 19th-century Britain as the Jews have been in other parts of Europe. In short, large statistical disparities have been commonplace, both in the presence of discrimination and in its absence. Indeed, large disparities have been commonplace in the utilization of preferential programs designed to reduce disparities.

The intellectual and political *coup* of those who promote the randomness assumption is to put the burden of proof entirely on others. It is not merely the individual employer, for example, who must disprove this assumption in his own particular case in order to escape a charge of discrimination. All who oppose the randomness assumption find themselves confronted with the task of disproving an elusive plausibility, for which no evidence is offered. As for counter-evidence, no enumeration of the myriad ways in which groups are grossly disparate—in age of marriage, alcohol consumption, immigration patterns, performance in sports, performance on tests—can ever be conclusive, even when extended past the point where the patience of the audience is exhausted.

Those viscerally convinced of the pervasiveness of discrimination and its potency as an explanation of social disparities—and convinced also of the effectiveness of preferential policies as a remedy—are little troubled by the logical shakiness of the statistical evidence. That is all the more reason for others to be doubly troubled—not simply because an incorrect policy may be followed but also, and more importantly, because actions ostensibly based on the rule of law are in substance based on visceral convictions, the essence of lynch law.

### ***Statistical “Control” and “Explanation”***

Those who regard income differences or occupational differences among groups as evidence of discrimination recognize that groups also differ in education, job experience, and other factors that affect such results as incomes and occupations. However, by comparing individuals with the same education, the same job experience, etc., who belong to different racial or ethnic groups, they treat the remaining differentials in pay or occupational status as evidence of discrimination and as a rough measure of its magnitude. In principle, this process of statistically controlling variables that affect outcomes is logical and reasonable. It is only in practice that serious problems arise because we simply do not know enough to do what we are trying to do or claiming to do.

A 1982 study by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, for example, recognized that differences in age and education affect incomes but considered that its study of intergroup economic differences was “controlling for such factors” when it compared individuals of the same age and with the same number of years of schooling. Unfortunately, education is one of many *multidimensional* variables. Education varies not only in number of years, but also qualitatively, according to the caliber of the institution in which the education was received, the performance of the student receiving the education, and the kind of field in which the student specializes. Seldom are statistical data sufficiently detailed to permit holding all these dimensions of education constant. Moreover, qualitative variables such as the caliber of the institution are difficult to quantify and impossible to quantify with precision.

One way of dealing with this complication is to ignore the multidimensional nature of education, by either explicitly or implicitly assuming that these individual variations more or less cancel out when comparing thousands of people. However, individuals from different racial or ethnic groups differ not only randomly but also systematically. For example, groups with significantly lower quantities of education tend to have lower qualities of education as well, whether quality is measured by individual performance, institutional ranking, or the prestige and remuneration of the fields of specialization. This pattern is found, whether comparing Chinese versus Malays in Malaysia, Tamils versus Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, European and American Jews versus North African and Middle Eastern Jews in Israel, caste Hindus versus untouchables in India, or whites versus blacks or Hispanics in the United States. Thus, what is called the “same” education in intergroup statistical comparisons is often not even approximately the same education in reality.

### ***Statistical Trends***

Where the benefits of “affirmative action” are not simply regarded as axiomatic, they are too often based on a partial reading of statistical trends. “Before” and “after” comparisons abound, to show that minority representation in this or that institution or sector—or in desirable jobs throughout the economy—has increased in the wake of preferential policies. This might be valid in a static world, to which “change” was added—which seems to be the kind of world envisioned by those using that approach. However, such a vision bears little resemblance to the real world, in which affirmative action has been just one of innumerable social changes, including many going back much farther than preferential policies.

The proportions of blacks in professional and other high-level occupations increased substantially in the decade following passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—a fact often cited as evidence of its effectiveness in the economy. What is almost never cited is the fact that the proportions of blacks in such occupations rose even more substantially in the decade *preceding* passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Nor were blacks unique. The incomes of Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Mexican Americans all rose, both absolutely and relative to the incomes of whites, in the decade preceding passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This was not a static world, to which “change” was added, but a world of trends already in motion. Moreover, the kinds of social trends that preceded preferential policies were by no means unique to the United States.

In a number of countries around the world, it has been precisely the rise of a newly-educated and upwardly-mobile class among previously lagging groups that provided the political impetus to demands for preferential policies. In Bombay, capital of India’s state of Maharashtra, the “marked advancement of the Maharashtrians occurred prior to the stringent policy measures adopted by the state government” to promote preferential hiring, according to a scholarly study. In part this reflected a prior “enormous growth in school enrollments” in Maharashtra and a “rapid expansion in college

enrollment”—also prior to preferences. A similar growth of an indigenous, newly-educated class in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Lithuania during the years between the two world wars led to demands for preferential policies in the form of group quotas to relieve them from having to compete with Jews. Likewise, in Nigeria, it was the recent growth of an educated class in the north that led to demands for preferential policies to relieve them from having to compete with more educated southern Nigerians. This same pattern of a rising educated class prior to the preferential policies that they promote can also be found in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Quebec province of Canada, and much of sub-Saharan Africa.

A serious assessment of preferential policies cannot ignore preexisting trends. Neither can it generalize from trends in particular sectors to national trends. Even in countries where nationwide data on the economic position of officially preferred groups show little or no improvement, nevertheless improvements in particular sectors may be dramatic. For example, increased employment of officially preferred groups at higher levels may be much more striking in government agencies and in government-related parts of the private sector than in the economy as a whole. This pattern has been visible at various periods in India, Poland, Malaysia, Hungary, Sri Lanka, and the United States. But this is hardly decisive evidence of the effectiveness of such policies when nationwide data tell a very different story.

In the United States, stories and statistics abound as to how the number of blacks employed in particular institutions increased dramatically during the 1970's—often in government agencies or in firms with government contracts that made them subject to federal “guidelines.” However, the employment of blacks by private firms without government contracts actually declined between 1970 and 1980. What were, from the viewpoint of the economy, *transfers* of people were seen from the viewpoint of particular institutions as dramatic *increases*. It is one of the elementary fallacies to generalize from a part to the whole, whether it is called “the fallacy of composition” or the story of the blind men feeling different parts of an elephant.

### ***Assumptions as Law***

Flaws in logic or evidence are unfortunate in intellectual speculation but they are far more serious in courts of law, where major penalties may be inflicted on those whose employees or students, for example, do not have a racial or ethnic composition that meets the preconceptions of other people. Some U.S. Supreme Court Justices have repeatedly treated statistical disparities as tantamount to discrimination and assumed the task of restoring groups to where they would have been otherwise. Even where group disparities in “representation” reflect demonstrable performance disparities, these performance disparities themselves have been taken as proof of societal discrimination. Thus, in the *Weber* case, Justice Harry Blackmun declared that there could be “little doubt that any lack of skill” on the part of minority workers competing with Brian Weber “has its roots in purposeful discrimination of the past.” In the *Bakke* case, four Justices declared that the failure of minority medical-school applicants to perform as well as Allan Bakke “was due principally to the effects of past discrimination.” The Court’s task, therefore, was one of “putting minority applicants in the position they would have been in if not for the evil of racial discrimination.”

All this presupposes a range of knowledge that no one has ever possessed. Ironically, this sweeping assumption of knowledge has been combined with an apparent ignorance of vast disparities in performance, disparities favoring groups with no power to discriminate against anybody. From such judicial speculation it is only a short step to the idea of restoring groups to where they would have been—and *what* they would have been—but for the offending discrimination.

What would the average Englishman be like today “but for” the Norman conquest? What would the average Japanese be like “but for” the enforced isolation of Japan for two-and-a-half centuries under the Tokugawa shoguns? What would the Middle East be like “but for” the emergence of Islam? In any other context besides preferential-policy issues, the presumption of knowing the answers to such questions would be regarded as ridiculous, even as intellectual speculation, much less as a basis for serious legal action.

To know how one group’s employment, education, or other pattern differs statistically from another’s is usually easy. What is difficult to know are the many variables determining the interest, skill, and performance of those individuals from various groups who are being considered for particular jobs, roles, or institutions. What is virtually impossible to know are the patterns that would exist in a non-discriminatory world—the deviations from which would indicate the existence and magnitude of discrimination.

Age distribution and geographic distribution are only two very simple factors which can play havoc with the assumption that groups would be evenly or randomly distributed in occupations and institutions, in the absence of discrimination. When one group’s median age is a decade younger than another’s—not at all uncommon—that alone may be enough to cause the younger group to be statistically “overrepresented” in sports, crime, and entry-level jobs, as well as in those kinds of diseases and accidents that are more prevalent among the young, while the older group is over-represented in homes for the elderly, in the kinds of jobs requiring long years of experience, and in the kinds of diseases and accidents especially prevalent among older people.

Another very simple factor operating against an even “representation” of groups is that many ethnic groups are distributed geographically in patterns differing from one another. It would be unlikely that American ethnic groups concentrated in cold states like Minnesota and Wisconsin would be as well represented among citrus growers and tennis players as they are on hockey teams and among skiers. It is also unlikely that groups concentrated in land-locked states would be equally represented in maritime activities, or that groups from regions lacking mineral deposits would be as well-represented among miners or in other occupations associated with extractive industries as groups located in Pennsylvania or West Virginia.

Differences in geographic concentrations among racial and ethnic groups are by no means confined to the U.S. In Brazil, people of German and Japanese ancestry are concentrated in the south. In Switzerland, whole regions are predominantly French, German, or Italian. In countries around the world, an overwhelming majority of the Chinese or the Jewish population is heavily concentrated in a few major cities—often in just one city in a given country. Group differences in geographical distribution can reach right down to the neighborhood level or even to particular streets. In Buenos Aires, people of Italian ancestry have concentrated in particular neighborhoods or on particular streets, according to the places of their own or their ancestral origins in Italy. In Bombay, people from different parts of India are likewise concentrated in particular neighborhoods or on particular streets.

Lest the point be misunderstood, while these two simple and obvious factors—age and location—are capable of disrupting the even “representation” that many assume to exist in the absence of discrimination, there are also innumerable other factors, of varying degrees of complexity and influence, that can do the same. Moreover, differences in age and location may play a significant role in explaining *some* socioeconomic differences between *some* groups but not other socioeconomic differences between those groups, or among other groups. The purpose here is not to pinpoint the reasons for intergroup differences—or even to assume that they can all be pinpointed—but rather to

show how arbitrary and unfounded is the assumption that groups would be evenly “represented,” in the absence of discrimination. Precisely because the known differences among groups are large and multidimensional, the presumption of weighing these differences so comprehensively and accurately as to know where some group would be “but for” discrimination approaches hubris.

Even the more modest goal of knowing the *general direction* of the deviation of a group’s position from where it would have been without discrimination is by no means necessarily achievable. What are the “effects” of centuries of injustice, punctuated by recurring outbursts of lethal mass violence, against the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia or against the Jews in Europe? Both groups are generally more prosperous than their persecutors. Would they have been still more prosperous in the absence of such adversity? Perhaps—but many peoples with a long history of peace, and with prosperity supplied by nature itself, have quietly stagnated. This is not to say that the Jews and the Chinese would have done so. It is only to say that *we do not know and cannot know*. No amount of good intentions will make us omniscient. No fervent invocation of “social justice” will supply the missing knowledge.

### ***Honors***

Nowhere is control more illusory than in the awarding of honors, whose very meaning and effect depend upon other people’s opinions. Preferential honors for members of particular groups can easily render suspect not only those particular honors but also honors fully merited and awarded after free and open competition. If one-fifth of the honors received by preferred groups are awarded under double standards, the other four-fifths are almost certain to fall under a cloud of suspicion as well, if only because some of those who lost out in the competition would prefer to believe that they were not bested fairly. It is by no means clear that more real honors—which are ultimately other people’s opinions—will come to a group preferentially given awards. Preferential honors can in practice mean a moratorium on recognition of the group’s achievements, which can be confounded with patronage or pay-offs. This need not inevitably be so. The point is that the matter is out of the control of those who decide award policy, and in the hands of others observing the outcomes and deciding what to make of them.

Honor is more than a sop to personal vanity. It is a powerful incentive which accomplishes many social tasks, including tasks that are too arduous and dangerous to be compensated by money—even inducing individuals in crisis situations to sacrifice their lives for the greater good of others. In more mundane matters, honor and respect from one’s colleagues and subordinates are important and sometimes indispensable aids, without which even the most talented and conscientious individuals sometimes cannot fulfill their promise. To jeopardize the respect and recognition of individuals from preferred groups by rewarding “honors” tainted with double standards is not only to downgrade their own achievements but also to downgrade their chances of accomplishing those achievements in the first place. For example, minority faculty members have often complained about a lack of intellectual and research interaction with their colleagues, and of being thought of as “affirmative-action” professors. After the media revealed that black students were admitted to the Harvard Medical School with lower qualifications, white patients began to refuse to be examined by such students. The negative effects of tainted honors are by no means limited to academia.

### ***Historical Compensation***

The wrongs of history have been invoked by many groups in many countries as a moral claim for contemporary compensation. Much emotional fervor goes into such claims but the question here is about their logic or morality. Assuming for the sake of argument that the historical claims are factually correct, which may not be the case in all countries, to transfer benefits between two groups

of living contemporaries because of what happened between two sets of dead people is to raise the question whether any sufferer is in fact being compensated. Only where both wrongs and compensation are viewed as collectivized and inheritable does redressing the wrongs of history have a moral, or even a logical, basis.

The biological continuity of the generations lends plausibility to the notion of group compensation—but only if guilt can be inherited. Otherwise there are simply windfall gains and windfall losses among contemporaries, according to the accident of their antecedents. Moreover, few people would accept this as a general principle to be applied consistently, however much they may advocate it out of compassion (or guilt) over the fate of particular unfortunates. No one would advocate that today's Jews are morally entitled to put today's Germans in concentration camps, in compensation for the Nazi Holocaust. Most people would not only be horrified at any such suggestion but would also regard it as a second act of gross immorality, in no way compensating the first, but simply adding to the sum total of human sins.

Sometimes a more sociological, rather than moral, claim is made that living contemporaries are suffering from the *effects* of past wrongs and that it is these effects which must be offset by compensatory preferences. Tempting as it is to imagine that the contemporary troubles of historically wronged groups are due to those wrongs, this is confusing causation with morality. The contemporary socioeconomic position of groups in a given society often bears no relationship to the historic wrongs they have suffered. Both in Canada and in the United States, the Japanese have significantly higher incomes than the whites, who have a documented history of severe anti-Japanese discrimination in both countries. The same story could be told of the Chinese in Malaysia, Indonesia, and many other countries around the world, of the Jews in countries with virulent anti-Semitism, and a wide variety of other groups in a wide variety of other countries. Among poorer groups as well, the level of poverty often has little correlation with the degree of oppression. No one would claim that the historic wrongs suffered by Puerto Ricans in the United States exceed those suffered by blacks, but the average Puerto Rican income is lower than the average income of blacks.

None of this proves that historic wrongs have no contemporary effects. Rather, it is a statement about the limitations of our knowledge, which is grossly inadequate to the task undertaken and likely to remain so. To pretend to disentangle the innumerable sources of intergroup differences is an exercise in hubris rather than morality.

As one contemporary example of how easy it is to go astray in such efforts, it was repeated for years that the high rate of single-parent, teenage pregnancy among blacks was “a legacy of slavery.” Evidence was neither asked nor given. But when serious scholarly research was finally done on this subject, the evidence devastated this widely held belief. The vast majority of black children grew up in two-parent homes, even under slavery itself, and for generations thereafter. The current levels of single-parent, teenage pregnancy are a phenomenon of the last half of the 20th century and are a disaster that has also struck groups with wholly different histories from that of blacks. Passionate commitment to “social justice” can never be a substitute for knowing what you are talking about.

Those who attribute any part of the socioeconomic fate of any group to factors internal to that group are often accused of “blaming the victim.” This may sometimes be part of an attempt to salvage the historical-compensation principle but it deserves separate treatment.

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**Source:** excerpted from *Commentary*, 1989.

## *An Open Letter to Bill Bennett*

Milton Friedman

*Milton Friedman is Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and Professor Emeritus of Economics at the University of Chicago. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics in 1976. (Source: Reprinted from The Wall Street Journal, September 7, 1989, p. A14.)*

DEAR BILL:

In Oliver Cromwell's eloquent words, "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken" about the course you and President Bush urge us to adopt to fight drugs. The path you propose of more police, more jails, use of the military in foreign countries, harsh penalties for drug users, and a whole panoply of repressive measures can only make a bad situation worse. The drug war cannot be won by those tactics without undermining the human liberty and individual freedom that you and I cherish.

You are not mistaken in believing that drugs are a scourge that is devastating our society. You are not mistaken in believing that drugs are tearing asunder our social fabric, ruining the lives of many young people, and imposing heavy costs on some of the most disadvantaged among us. You are not mistaken in believing that the majority of the public share your concerns. In short, you are not mistaken in the end you seek to achieve.

Your mistake is failing to recognize that the very measures you favor are a major source of the evils you deplore. Of course the problem is demand, but it is not only demand, it is demand that must operate through repressed and illegal channels. Illegality creates obscene profits that finance the murderous tactics of the drug lords; illegality leads to the corruption of law enforcement officials; illegality monopolizes the efforts of honest law forces so that they are starved for resources to fight the simpler crimes of robbery, theft and assault.

Drugs are a tragedy for addicts. But criminalizing their use converts that tragedy into a disaster for society, for users and non-users alike. Our experience with the prohibition of drugs is a replay of our experience with the prohibition of alcoholic beverages.

I append excerpts from a column that I wrote in 1972 on "Prohibition and Drugs." The major problem then was heroin from Marseilles; today it is cocaine from Latin America. Today, also, the problem is far more serious than it was 17 years ago: more addicts, more innocent victims; more drug pushers, more law enforcement officials; more money spent to enforce prohibition, more money spent to circumvent prohibition.

Had drugs been decriminalized 17 years ago, "crack" would never have been invented (it was invented because the high cost of illegal drugs made it profitable to provide a cheaper version) and there would today be far fewer addicts. The lives of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of innocent victims would have been saved, and not only in the U.S. The ghettos of our major cities would not be drug-and-crime-infested no-man's lands. Fewer people would be in jails, and fewer jails would have been built.

Colombia, Bolivia and Peru would not be suffering from narco-terror, and we would not be distorting our foreign policy because of narco-terror. Hell would not, in the words with which Billy Sunday welcomed Prohibition, “be forever for rent,” but it would be a lot emptier.

Decriminalizing drugs is even more urgent now than in 1972, but we must recognize that the harm done in the interim cannot be wiped out, certainly not immediately. Postponing decriminalization will only make matters worse, and make the problem appear even more intractable.

Alcohol and tobacco cause many deaths in users than do drugs. Decriminalizing them would not prevent us from treating drugs as we now treat alcohol and tobacco: prohibiting sales of drugs to minors, outlawing the advertising of drugs and similar measures. Such measures could be enforced, while outright prohibition cannot be. Moreover, if even a small fraction of the money we now spend on trying to enforce drug prohibition were devoted to treatment and rehabilitation, in an atmosphere of compassion not punishment, the reduction in drug usage and in the harm done to the users could be dramatic.

This plea comes from the bottom of my heart. Every friend of freedom, and I know you are one, must be as revolted as I am by the prospect of turning the United States into an armed camp, by the vision of jails filled with casual drug users and of an army of enforcers empowered to invade the liberty of citizens on slight evidence. A country in which shooting down unidentified planes “on suspicion” can be seriously considered as a drug-war tactic is not the kind of United States that either you or I want to hand on to future generations.

Milton Friedman Senior Research Fellow  
Hoover Institution  
Stanford University

### *Flashback*

This is a truncated version of a column by Mr. Friedman in Newsweek’s May 1, 1972, issue, as President Nixon was undertaking an earlier “drug war.”

“The reign of tears is over. The slums will soon be only a memory. We will turn our prisons into factories and our jails into storehouses and corncribs. Men will walk upright now, women will smile, and the children will laugh. Hell will be forever for rent.”

That is how Billy Sunday, the noted evangelist and leading crusader against Demon Rum, greeted the onset of Prohibition in early 1920.

We know now how tragically his hopes were doomed.

Prohibition is an attempted cure that makes matters worse—for both the addict and the rest of us.

Consider first the addict. Legalizing drugs might increase the number of addicts, but it is not clear that it would. Forbidden fruit is attractive, particularly to the young. More important, many drug addicts are deliberately made by pushers, who give likely prospects that first few doses free. It pays the pusher to do so because, once hooked, the addict is a captive customer. If drugs were legally available, any possible profit from such inhumane activity would disappear, since the addict could buy from the cheapest source.

Whatever happens to the number of addicts, the individual addict would clearly be far better off if drugs were legal. Addicts are driven to associate with criminals to get the drugs, become criminals themselves to finance the habit, and risk constant danger of death and disease.



Consider next the rest of us. The harm to us from the addiction of others arises almost wholly from the fact that drugs are illegal. It is estimated that addicts commit one third to one half of all street crime in the U.S.

Legalize drugs, and Street crime would drop dramatically.

Moreover, addicts and pushers are not the only ones corrupted. Immense sums are at stake. It is inevitable that some relatively low-paid police and other government officials—and some high-paid ones as well—will succumb to the temptation to pick up easy money.

Legalizing drugs would simultaneously reduce the amount of crime and raise the quality of law enforcement. Can you conceive of any other measure that would accomplish so much to promote law and order?

In drugs, as in other areas, persuasion and example are likely to be far more effective than the use of force to shape others in our image.

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## *A Response to Milton Friedman*

William J. Bennett

*William J. Bennett was Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and U.S. Secretary of Education.  
(Source: The Wall Street Journal, September 19, 1989, p. A30.)*

Dear Milton:

There was little, if anything, new in your open letter to me calling for the legalization of drugs (*The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 7). As the excerpt from your 1972 article made clear, the legalization argument is an old and familiar one, which has recently been revived by a small number of journalists and academics who insist that the only solution to the drug problem is no solution at all. What surprises me is that you would continue to advocate so unrealistic a proposal without pausing to consider seriously its consequences.

If the argument for drug legalization has one virtue it is its sheer simplicity. Eliminate laws against drugs, and street crime will disappear. Take the profit out of the black market through decriminalization and regulation, and poor neighborhoods will no longer be victimized by drug dealers. Cut back on drug enforcement, and use the money to wage a public health campaign against drugs, as we do with tobacco and alcohol

### *Counting Costs*

The basic premise of all these propositions is that using our nation's laws to fight drugs is too costly. To be sure, our attempts to reduce drug use do carry with them enormous costs. But the question that must be asked—and which is totally ignored by the legalization advocates—is what are the costs of not enforcing laws against drugs?

In my judgment, and in the judgment of virtually every serious scholar in this field, the potential costs of legalizing drugs would be so large as to make it a public policy disaster.

Of course, no one, including you, can say with certainty what would happen in the U.S. if drugs were suddenly to become a readily purchased product. We do know, however, that wherever drugs have been cheaper and more easily obtained, drug use—and addiction—has skyrocketed. In opium and cocaine-producing countries, addiction is rampant among the peasants involved in drug production.

Professor James Q. Wilson tells us that during the years in which heroin could be legally prescribed by doctors in Britain, the number of addicts increased forty-fold. And after the repeal of Prohibition—an analogy favored but misunderstood by legalization advocates—consumption of alcohol soared by 350%.

Could we afford such dramatic increases in drug use? I doubt it. Already the toll of drug use on American society—measured in lost productivity, in rising health insurance costs, in hospitals flooded with drug overdose emergencies, in drug-caused accidents, and in premature death—is surely more than we would like to bear.

You seem to believe that by spending just a little more money on treatment and rehabilitation, the costs of increased addiction can be avoided. That hope betrays a basic misunderstanding of the problems facing drug treatment. Most addicts don't suddenly decide to get help. They remain addicts either because treatment isn't available or because they don't seek it out. The National Drug Control

Strategy announced by President Bush on Sept. 5 goes a long way in making sure that more treatment slots are available. But the simple fact remains that many drug users won't enter treatment until they are forced to— often by the very criminal justice system you think is the source of the problem.

As for the connection between drugs and crime, your unswerving commitment to a legalization solution prevents you from appreciating the complexity of the drug market. Contrary to your claim, most addicts do not turn to crime to support their habit. Research shows that many of them were involved in criminal activity before they turned to drugs. Many former addicts who have received treatment continue to commit crimes during their recovery. And even if drugs were legal. What evidence do you have that the habitual drug user wouldn't continue to rob and steal to get money for clothes, food or shelter? Drug addicts always want more drugs than they can afford, and no legalization scheme has yet come up with a way of satisfying that appetite.

The National Drug Control Strategy emphasizes the importance of reclaiming the streets and neighborhoods where drugs have wrought havoc because, I admit, the price of having drug laws is having criminals who will try to subvert them. Your proposal might conceivably reduce the amount of gang- and dealer-related crime, but it is fanciful to suggest that it would make crime vanish. Unless you are willing to distribute drugs freely and widely, there will always be a black market to undercut the regulated one. And as for the potential addicts, for the school children and for the pregnant mothers, all of whom would find drugs more accessible and legally condoned, your proposal would offer nothing at all.

So I advocate a larger criminal justice system to take drug users off the streets and deter new users from becoming more deeply involved in so hazardous an activity. You suggest that such policies would turn the country 'into an armed camp.' Try telling that to the public housing tenants who enthusiastically support plans to enhance security in their buildings, or to the residents who applaud police when a local crack house is razed. They recognize that drug use is a threat to the individual liberty and domestic tranquility guaranteed by the Constitution.

I remain an ardent defender our nation's laws against illegal drug use and our attempts to enforce them because I believe drug use is wrong. A true friend of freedom understands that government has a responsibility to craft and uphold laws that help educate citizens about right and wrong. That, at any rate, was the Founders' view of our system of government.

### *Liberal Ridicule*

Today this view is much ridiculed by liberal elites and entirely neglected by you. So while I cannot doubt the sincerity of your opinion legalization, I find it difficult to respect. The moral cost of legalizing drugs is great, but it is a cost that apparently lies outside the narrow scope of libertarian policy prescriptions.

I do not have a simple solution to the drug problem. I doubt that one exists. But I am committed to fighting the problem on several fronts through imaginative policies and hard work over a long period of time. As in the past, some of these efforts will work and some won't. Your response, however, is to surrender and see what happened. To my mind that is irresponsible and reckless public policy. At a time when national intolerance for drug use is rapidly increasing, the legalization argument is a political anachronism. Its recent resurgence is, I trust, only a temporary distraction from the genuine debate on national drug policy.

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## *Eighteen Questions about Sex and Love [with notes]*

1. What is sex?
2. What is love?
3. What is the *relationship* between sex and love?
4. What are the *values* or *benefits* of sex? [Physical and psychological]
5. What are the *costs* or *risks* of sex? [Physical and psychological]
6. How much of sex is *physical*, *emotional*, and *rational*? [E.g., the psychological role of fantasies, list-making of preferred traits, ]
7. Do men and women want the *same things* out of sex? [E.g., evolutionary psychology explanations, constructionist explanations]
8. How much *commitment* should sex involve? [E.g., open-ended, marriage, for the purpose of raising children]
9. Should sexual relationships be *exclusive*? [one-on-one, polyamory]
10. How much of one's sexuality is *biological*, *cultural*, or a matter of one's *choices* and *character*?
11. Is one's sexual *orientation* (heterosexual, bi-sexual, homosexual) biological, cultural or a matter of choice and habit?
12. What is *normal* sex? [Sex that is healthy, moral, etc.]
13. What is sexual *deviancy*? [Sex that is unhealthy, immoral, etc.]
14. What is the *legitimate range* of sexual practice? [E.g., age differences, fetishes, orientation, activities, species]
15. What is *pornography*? [E.g., "erotica," soft/hardcore, obscenity]
16. Is pornography *healthy* or *harmful*?
17. What is the *ideal* sex life? [E.g., romantic, promiscuity, procreative, chastity]
18. What role should the *government* have in individuals' sex lives? [E.g., rights-violations (e.g., rape), censorship or not, regulations about age of consent, marriage, public displays of sexuality]

## *Sex and Love—Three Ideals*

<i>Platonic love</i>	<i>Romantic love</i>	<i>Promiscuity</i>
<i>Chastity</i> is the ideal	<i>Romantic love/sex</i> is the ideal	<i>Sex without commitment</i> is the ideal
Sex is <i>bad</i> and love is <i>good</i>	Sex is <i>good</i> and love is <i>good</i>	Sex is <i>good</i> and love is an <i>illusion</i>
Sex is <i>physical</i> and love is <i>spiritual</i>	Sex is the <i>physical aspect</i> and love is the <i>spiritual aspect</i> of the same act	Sex is physical and love is a <i>chemical state</i>
The physical is <i>bad</i> and the spiritual is <i>good</i>	<i>Both</i> physical and spiritual are <i>good</i>	The physical is <i>real</i> and the spiritual is <i>unreal</i> or a <i>byproduct</i>
The physical and the spiritual are <i>different</i> and <i>opposed</i> to each other	The physical and the spiritual are <i>two aspects of one being</i>	The spiritual is <i>reduced</i> to the physical
(All spirit, no physical)	(Integrate physical and spiritual)	(All physical, no spiritual)

## *Valuing Love*

Nathaniel Branden, Ph.D.

I do not know if there has ever been a time in history when the word *love* has been used so promiscuously as it is at present.

We are told constantly that we must “love” everyone. Leaders of movements declare that they “love” followers they have never met. Enthusiasts of personal-growth workshops and encounter-group weekends emerge from such experiences announcing that they “love” all people everywhere.

Just as a currency, in the process of becoming more and more inflated, has less and less purchasing power, so words, through an analogous process of inflation, through being used less and less discriminately, are progressively emptied of meaning.

It is possible to feel benevolence and goodwill toward human beings one does not know or does not know very well. It is not possible to feel love. Aristotle made this observation twenty-five hundred years ago, and we still need to remember it. In forgetting it, all we accomplish is the destruction of the concept of love.

Love by its very nature entails a process of selection, of discrimination. Love is our response to what represents our highest values. Love is a response to distinctive characteristics possessed by some beings but not by all. Otherwise, what would be the tribute of love?

If love between adults does not imply admiration, if it does not imply an appreciation of traits and qualities that the recipient of love possesses, what meaning or significance would love have and why would anyone consider it desirable?

In his book *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm wrote: “In essence, all human beings are identical. We are all part of One; we are One. This being so, it should not make any difference whom we love.”

Really? If we were to ask our lovers why they care for us, consider what our reaction would be if told, “Why shouldn’t I love you? All human beings are identical. Therefore, it doesn’t make any difference whom I love. So it might as well be you.” Not very inspiring, is it?

So I find the advocacy of “universal love” puzzling—if one takes words literally. Not everyone condemns sexual promiscuity, but I have never heard of anyone who hails it as an outstanding virtue.

But spiritual promiscuity? Is that an outstanding virtue? Why? Is the spirit so much less important than the body?

In commenting on this paradox, Ayn Rand wrote in *Atlas Shrugged*: “A morality that professes the belief that the values of the spirit are more precious than matter, a morality that teaches you to scorn a whore who gives her body indiscriminately to all men—the same morality demands that you surrender your soul in promiscuous love for all comers.”

My own impression is that people who talk of “loving” everyone are, in fact, expressing a wish or a plea that everyone love them. But to take love—above all, love between adults—seriously, to treat the concept with respect and distinguish it from generalized benevolence or goodwill, is to appreciate that it is a unique experience possible between some people but not between all.

Consider the case of romantic love. When two adults with significant spiritual and psychological affinities encounter each other, and if they have evolved to a decent level of maturity—if they are beyond the level of merely struggling to make their relationship “work”—then romantic love can become a pathway, not only to sexual and emotional happiness but also to higher reaches of human growth. It can become a context for a continuing encounter with the self, through the process of interaction with another self. Two consciousnesses, each dedicated to personal evolution, can provide an extraordinary stimulus and challenge to each other.

But such a possibility presupposes self-esteem. The first love affair we must consummate successfully is with ourselves; only then are we ready for a relationship with another. A person who feels unworthy and unlovable is not ready for romantic love.

Of course, there are other kinds of love besides romantic love. What I feel for my grandchildren is a different kind of love. What it has in common with romantic love, however, is that I see in my grandchildren values and traits that touch my heart. But it would be a corruption of language to say that I “love” my grandchildren the same as I “love” children whom I do not even know. Whatever my feelings for other children, the experience is entirely different.

Apart from what I feel for my wife—who is the highest value in my life—writing is my paramount passion. What this means, practically, is that a good deal of my time and energy is devoted to writing.

This has to do with living one’s values, not simply professing them.

You ask, “How do I bring love into my life?” My answer is that I focus day after day principally on what I care most about in this world—on what I most respect and admire. That is what I give my time and attention to.

Since my highest priorities are my marriage and my work, I give the greatest part of my time and energy to them. With regard to my wife, I frequently communicate to her my awareness of all the traits and characteristics in her that I so much love, respect, appreciate, and admire.

We all want to be seen, understood, appreciated. I call this the need for the experience of psychological visibility. I strive to make my wife feel visible to me.

I also spend a great deal of time thinking about the things I love. I am keenly aware of how much there is in life to appreciate and enjoy. I dwell on that every day. I do not take anything good in my life for granted.

I am always aware of our mortality. I know that if I love someone, the time to express it is today. If I value something, the time to honor it is today.

\* \* \*

**Source:** *This essay was written in answer to the question, “How do I bring love into my life?” Originally published in Personal Excellence 5/98. Published in Handbook for the Heart, edited by Richard Carlson and Benjamin Shield, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 1996.*

*Artistic Funding, Freedom, and Censorship*

*Should the government fund art? If so, what kind?*

Discussions by Jesse Helms, Robert Hughes, Robert Samuelson, and Steven Durland

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Amendment 420: The NEA Should Not Fund Obscenity

Jesse Helms

U.S. Senate, July 26, 1989.

Mr. Jesse Helms is a United States senator from North Carolina. Helms was outraged to learn that taxpayer money was used to support the work of Andres Serrano, Robert Mapplethorpe, and others.

Mr. Serrano, for example, had received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for a project that consisted of a crucifix placed in a bottle filled with his urine. The following is Helms's proposal to the U.S. Senate to eliminate government funding for art that is judged to be obscene or indecent.

Amendment No. 420. (Purpose: To prohibit the use of appropriated funds for the dissemination, promotion, or production of obscene or indecent materials or materials denigrating a particular religion.)

MR. HELMS. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from North Carolina [Mr. Helms] proposes an amendment numbered 420.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous Consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 94, line 16, strike the period and insert the following: "provided that this section will become effective one day after the date of enactment."

Sec. limitations.

None of the funds authorized to be appropriated pursuant to this Act may be used to promote, disseminate, or produce—

1. obscene or indecent materials, including but not limited to depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts; or
2. material which denigrates the objects or beliefs of the adherents of a particular religion or nonreligion; or



3. material which denigrates, debases, or revues a person, group or class of citizens on the basis of race, creed, sex, handicap, age, or national origin.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, this amendment has been agreed to on both sides, I believe. I very much appreciate it.

Mr. President, I believe we are all aware of the controversy surrounding the use of Federal funds, via the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], to support so-called works of art by Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe. My amendment would prevent the NEA from funding such immoral trash in the future. Specifically, my amendment prohibits the use of the NEA's funds to support obscene or indecent materials, or materials which denigrate the objects or beliefs of a particular religion.

I applaud the efforts of my distinguished colleagues from West Virginia, Mr. BYRD and from Idaho, Mr. McCLURE, to address this issue in both the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, and the full Appropriations Committee. Cutting off funding to the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art [SECCA] in Winston-Salem and the Institute for Contemporary Art in Philadelphia will certainly prevent them from misusing Federal funds for the next 5 years. However, as much as I agree with the measures, the committee's efforts do not go far enough because they will not prevent such blasphemous or immoral behavior by other institutions or artists with Government funds. That is why I have offered my amendment.

Frankly, Mr. President, I have fundamental questions about why the Federal Government is involved in supporting artists that taxpayers have refused to support in the marketplace. My concern in this regard is heightened when I hear the arts community and the media saying that any restriction at all on Federal funding would amount to censorship. What they seem to be saying is that we in Congress must choose between: First, absolutely no Federal presence in the arts; or second, granting artists the absolute freedom to use tax dollars as they wish, regardless of how vulgar, blasphemous, or despicable their works may be.

If we indeed must make this choice, then the Federal Government should get out of the arts. However, I do not believe we are limited to those two choices and my amendment attempts to make a compromise between them. It simply provides for some common sense restrictions on what is and is not an appropriate use of Federal funding for the arts. It does not prevent the production or creation of vulgar works, it merely prevents the use of Federal funds to support them.

Mr. President, I remind my colleagues that the distinguished Senator from New York and I called attention to Mr. Serrano's so-called work of art which portrays Jesus Christ submerged in a bottle of the artist's urine, on May 18. We pointed out that the National Endowment for the Arts had not only supported a \$15,000 award honoring Mr. Serrano for it, but they also helped promote and exhibit the work as well.

Over 25 Senators—Democrats and Republicans—expressed their outrage that day by cosigning a letter to Hugh Southern, the Endowment's acting chairman, asking him to review their procedures and to determine what steps are needed to prevent such abuses from recurring in the future. Mr. Southern replied on June 6 that he too was personally offended by Mr. Serrano's so-called art, but that—as I have heard time after time on this issue—the Endowment is prevented by its authorizing language from promoting or suppressing particular points of view.

Mr. Southern's letter goes on to endorse the Endowment's panel review system as a means of ensuring competence and integrity in grant decisions, and he states that the Endowment will review their processes to be sure they are effective and maintain the highest artistic integrity and quality.

However, Mr. President, shortly after receiving Mr. Southern's response, I became aware of yet another example of the competence, integrity and quality of the Endowment's panel review system. It is a federally supported exhibit entitled: "Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment." The Corcoran Gallery of Art had planned to open the show here in Washington on July 1, but abruptly canceled it citing the danger the exhibit poses to future Federal funding for the arts. The Washington Project for the Arts subsequently agreed to make their facilities available and opened the show last Friday, July 21.

Mr. President, the Corcoran, and others in the arts community felt the Mapplethorpe exhibit endangered Federal funding for the arts because the patently offensive collection of homoerotic pornography and sexually explicit nudes of children was put together with the help of a \$30,000 grant from the Endowment. The exhibit was assembled by the University of Pennsylvania's Institute for Contemporary Art as a retrospective look at Mr. Mapplethorpe's work after his recent death from AIDS. It has already appeared in Philadelphia and Chicago with the Endowment's official endorsement.

I have a catalog of the show and Senators need to see it to believe it. However, the catalog is only a survey, not a complete inventory of what was in the Endowment's show. If Senators are interested, I have a list and description of the photographs appearing in the show but not the catalog because even the catalog's publishers knew they were too vulgar to be included—as sick as that book is.

Vanity Fair magazine ran an article on another collection of Mapplethorpe's works which appears at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art in New York. This collection included many of the photographs currently in the NEA funded exhibit. There are unspeakable portrayals which I cannot describe on the floor of the Senate.

Mr. President, this pornography is sick. But Mapplethorpe's sick art does not seem to be an isolated incident. Yet another artist exhibited some of this sickening obscenity in my own State. The Duke Museum of Art at Duke University had a show deceptively titled "Morality Tales: History Painting in the 1980's." One painting, entitled "First Sex," depicts a nude woman on her back, legs open, knees up, and a little boy leaning against her leg looking into her face while two sexually aroused older boys wait in the back ground. Another work shows a man urinating on a boy lying in a gutter. Other, more despicable, works were included as well.

I could go on and on, Mr. President, about the sick art that has been displayed around the country. These shows are outrageous. And, like Serrano's blasphemy, the most outrageous thing is that some of the shows like Mapplethorpe's are financed with our tax dollars. Again, I invite the Senators to see what taxpayers got for \$30,000 dollars.

Mr. President, how did the Endowment's vaunted panel review system approve a grant for this pornography? It was approved because the panel only received a description, provided by the Endowment's staff, which read as follows:

"To support a mid-career summary of the work of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Although all aspects of the artist's work—the still-lives, nudes, and portraits—will be included, the exhibition will focus on Mapplethorpe's unique pieces where photographic images interact with richly textured fabrics within carefully design frames."

Mr. President, what a useless and misleading description. No legitimate panel of experts would know from this description that the collection included explicit homoerotic pornography and child obscenity. Yet none of the descriptions for other projects funded by the Endowment at the time

were any better. Indeed, Mr. Jack Neusner—who sat on the panel approving the Mapplethorpe exhibit—was mystified as to how he had approved a show of this character. He knows now that he was misled.

Mr. President, I was hopeful Washington would be spared this exhibit when the Corcoran canceled it. I only wish the Corcoran had canceled the show out of a sense of public decency and not as part of a calculated attempt to shield themselves and the Endowment from criticism in Congress.

Some accuse us of censorship because we threaten to cut off Federal funding, yet they are the ones who refuse to share the contents of their exhibits with the taxpayers' elected representatives. For example, the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem refused to send me copies of requested works, despite their earlier promises to the contrary. If what such institutions promote and exhibit is legitimate art, then why are they afraid for the taxpayers and Congress to see what they do?

Mr. President, there is a fundamental difference between Government censorship—the preemption of publication or production—and governmental refusal to pay for such publication and production. Artists have a right, it is said, to express their feelings as they wish; only a philistine would suggest otherwise. Fair enough, but not an artist has a preemptive claim on the tax dollars of the American people; time for them, as President Reagan used to say, “to go out and test the magic of the marketplace.”

Congress attaches strings to Federal funds all the time. Churches must follow strict Federal guidelines in order to participate in Federal programs for the poor and needy—even when those guidelines violate their religious tenets. For example, a U.S. District Court in Alabama recently held that a practicing witch employed by the Salvation Army in a women's shelter could not be fired because the shelter was federally funded.

Mr. President, there have been instances where public outrage has forced artists to remove works from public display. For instance, shortly after Mayor Harold Washington's death, a work portraying him as a transvestite was forcibly removed from a show in Chicago. Another work on display at Richmond's airport was voluntarily removed after the night crew complained about a racial epithet which had been inscribed on it. There was little real protest from the arts community in these instances.

Mr. President, at a minimum, we need to prohibit the Endowment from using Federal dollars to fund filth like Mr. Serrano's and Mr. Mapplethorpe's. If it does not violate criminal statutes and the private sector is willing to pay for it, fine! However, if Federal funds are used then Congress needs to ensure the sensibilities of all groups—regardless of race, creed, sex, national origin, handicap, or age—are respected.

Federal funding for sadomasochism, homoeroticism, and child pornography is an insult to taxpayers. Americans for the most part are moral, decent people and they have the right not to be denigrated, offended or mocked with their own tax dollars. My amendment would protect that right.

Mr. President, if Senators want the Federal Government funding pornography, sadomasochism, or art for pedophiles, they should vote against my amendment. However, if they think most voters and taxpayers are offended by Federal support for such art, they should vote for my amendment.

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## “A Loony Parody of Cultural Democracy”

Robert Hughes

*Time*, August 14, 1989

Robert Hughes is art critic for *Time* magazine. In the following article, Hughes argues against Jesse Helms’s Amendment 420 and defends government funding for the arts.

Senator Jesse Helms, that noted paleo-conservative, has taken up the cudgels against that most distinguished and useful vehicle of patronage in American cultural life, the National Endowment for the Arts. Neoconservatives want to keep the NEA because they would like to run it. Paleos like Helms don’t greatly care whether it exists or not; if attacking it can serve a larger agenda, fine.

Last year NEA money totaling \$45,000 was used by the Corcoran museum for an exhibition by the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe and by an Institution that gave an award to the artist Andres Serrano. One of Serrano’s pieces was a photo of a plastic crucifix immersed in the artist’s urine—a fairly conventional piece of postsurrealist blasphemy, which, though likely to have less effect on established religion than a horsefly on a tank, was bound to irk some people. Mapplethorpe’s show was to contain some icy, polished and (to most straights and one surmises, at least a few Republican gays) deeply repulsive photos of S and M queens doing this and that to one another.

As soon as the dewlaps of Senator Helms’ patriarchal wrath started shaking at its door, the Corcoran caved in and canceled Mapplethorpe’s show. Unappeased, the ayatollah of North Carolina proposed a measure that would forbid the NEA to give money to “promote, disseminate or produce” anything “obscene or indecent” or derogatory of “the objects or beliefs of the adherents of a particular religion or non-religion” which, taken literally, comprises image or belief of any kind, religious or secular.

In effect, this would make the NEA hostage to every crank, ideologue and God botherer in America. A grant for an exhibition of Gothic ivories could be pulled on the grounds that the material was offensive to Jews (much medieval art is anti-Semitic), to Muslims, (what about those scenes of false prophets in hell with Muhammad?), or, for that matter, to atheists offended by the intrusion of religious propaganda into a museum. A radical feminist could plausibly argue that her “nonreligious” beliefs were offended by the sexism of Rubens’ nudes or Picasso’s *Vollard Suite*. Doubtless a fire worshiper would claim that the presence of extinguishers in a theater was repugnant to his god.

In short, what the amendment proposes is a loony parody of cultural democracy in which everyone becomes his or her own Censor. Clearly, Jesse Helms has no doubt that the NEA he punished if it strays from what he fancies be the center line of American ethical belief. The truth, of course, that no such lone exists—not in a society as vast, various and eclectic as the real America. Helms’ amendment might have played in Papua, where a government spokesperson defended the banning of Martin Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation of Christ* on the grounds that “our people traditionally set much store on dreams and hallucinations. But in the U.S., no.

The problem is compounded by the fact that the NEA is not a ministry of culture. It does not commission large works to reflect glory on the state, or set firm policy for other institutions. Its \$169 million budget is tiny—less than one-third the projected price of one Stealth bomber, or, to put it another way, only ten times the recent cost of a single painting by Jasper Johns. The French

government spends three times the NEA's budget music theater and dance alone (\$560 million in 1989). German government spending on culture runs at around \$4.5 billion, repeat, billion, a year.

The extreme conservative view is that support of the contemporary arts is not the business of government. Never mind that quite a few people who were not exactly radicals, from Rameses II to Louis XIV and Urban VIII, thought otherwise and thus endowed the world with parts of the Egypt, the Paris and the Rome we have today. New culture is optional—slippery stuff, ambiguous in its meanings, uncertain in its returns. Away with it! Let the corporations underwrite it!

The fetish of supply-side culture was one of the worst legacies of the Reagan years. Though the Great Communicator was frustrated in his attempt to abolish the Endowment in 1981, he made sure that more government money went to military bands than to the entire budget of the NEA. Oom-pah-pah culture to fit a time of oom-pah-pah politics. After all, who could say that the arts needed support outside the marketplace at a time when star orchestra conductors were treated like sacred elephants and the art market was turning into a freakish potlatch for new money?

Conversely, why bother to support what market Darwinism seems to condemn to obscurity? “I have fundamental questions,” Helms grated, “about why the federal government is supporting artists the taxpayers have refused to support in the marketplace.”

But this was exactly what the NEA was created, in 1965, to do—and it was the wisest of decisions. Lots of admirable art does badly at first its rewards to the patron are not immediate and may never come. Hence the need for the NEA. It is there to help the self-realization of culture that is not immediately successful.

Corporate underwriting has produced some magnificent results for American libraries, museums, ballets, theaters and orchestras—for institutional culture, across the board. But today it is shrinking badly, and it requires a delicate balance with government funding to work well. Corporations' underwriting money comes out of their promotion budgets and—not unreasonably, since their goal is to make money—they want to be associated with popular, prestigious events. It's no trick to get Universal Widget to underwrite a Renoir show, or one of those PBS nature series (six hours of granola with bugs copulating to Mozart). But try them with newer, more controversial, or more demanding work and watch the faces in the boardroom drop. Corporate is nervous money; it needs the NEA reassurance as a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. Our problem, despite conservative rant, is too little government support for the arts, not too much. Even if we had a ministry of culture to parade the roosters, we would still need the NEA to look after the eggs.

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## “Highbrow Pork Barrel”

Robert Samuelson

*Washington Post*, August 16, 1989

Mr. Samuelson is a columnist who writes regularly for national publication. He is the author of *The Good Life and Its Discontents* (1996). In the following article, Samuelson argues that federal funding for the arts should be ended.

I once suggested that Congress consider creating a National Endowment for Rodeo. The proposal's point was to show that rodeo subsidies are as worthy as “art” subsidies. Going beyond the irony, I

urged abolishing the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). This prompted the usual fan mail. One reader speculated that my cultural tastes ran to watching women's mud wrestling. Suppose they did. Should government then subsidize what I consider art?

The recent furor over allegedly obscene art financed by the NEA has only confirmed the wisdom of my view. Genuine art is about self-expression. It flows from individual imagination, ingenuity, joy and rage. By definition, it is undefinable. Standards are always subjective. In a democratic society there is a permanent conflict between artistic freedom and political accountability for "art" supported by public money.

Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, is correct when he says taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for art that most Americans find offensive or indecent. (The current cause célèbre: a picture of a crucifix floating in urine, funded by an NEA grant.) But Helms's critics are also correct when they decry censorship and warn against government imposing standards of conformity and respectability. There's an easy escape from this impasse. Get government out of the arts. Then artists could create without fear, and congressmen would have no cause for complaint.

Now I was not born yesterday. I know that the chance of Congress erasing the NEA is about one in 25,000. But we can at least see it for what it is—highbrow pork barrel. By this I mean that the NEA spends public monies to pay for what are basically private pleasures and pursuits. I do not mean that no good comes from these grants. But the good goes primarily to the individual artists and art groups that receive the grants and to their relatively small audiences. Public benefits are meager.

There's a serious issue here, as political scientist Edward Banfield has argued. What are the legitimate uses of national government? Our federal government is the mechanism by which we tax ourselves to meet collective national needs. Subsidizing "art" fails this elementary test. It does not meet an important national need. Neither do subsidies for "good" television or the "humanities.": the missions of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Suppose someone actually proposed a National Endowment for Rodeo with a \$169 million budget, which is the 1989 budget for the NEA. Grants would go to individual rodeo riders ("to foster riding skills") and to rodeo shows ("to make rodeos more available to public"). Questions would arise. Why do rodeo riders and fans merit special treatment? Do they create some public benefit?

It's considered uncouth to ask similar questions of public support for opera, sculpture, painting or television. But, of course, the questions apply. Grants from the NEA go mainly to individual artists or arts organizations. In 1998 the New York Philharmonic received \$286,000; the San Francisco Opera got \$330,000; the Denver Center for Performing Arts got \$75,000. There were grants of about \$10,000 each to 55 small literary magazines, and 89 sculptors got grants of about \$5,000 apiece.

What justifies the subsidies? The idea that our artistic future depends on federal handouts to free artists from commercial pressures falters on two counts. It overlooks the complexity of creative motivation and ignores the corrupting influences of government grantsmanship. Herman Melville did not need an NEA grant to write; Winslow Homer did not need an NEA grant to paint. Art consumers benefit from the NEA, because their ticket prices are indirectly subsidized. But these are mainly higher-income people who deserve no subsidy. In 1987 only a quarter of the public attended opera or musical theater, reports pollster Louis Harris. But half of those with incomes exceeding \$50,000 attended. Museum and theater attendance reflect similar income patterns.

Public-television subsidies are also highbrow pork barrel. On average, public TV draws about 4 percent of prime-time viewers. The “MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour” receives the largest grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), \$4.3 million in 1989. It’s a superb program, but what public purpose does it serve? Can anyone claim there isn’t enough news? My guess is that its audience consists heavily of news junkies, who read newspapers and magazines, and watch CNN. The program doesn’t inform the uniformed but better informs the well-informed.

No great (or even minor) national harm would occur if Congress axed these cultural agencies. Museums wouldn’t vanish; the NEA provides a tiny share of their funds. Neither would public television stations; they rely on the CPB for only about 11 percent of their money. The CPB’s children’s programs with distinct instructional value could be moved to the Department of Education. In any case, “Sesame Street” would survive. Oscar the Grouch and his pals are a tiny industry appearing on toys and clothes.

Some arts groups would retrench, and others would die. Many would find new funding sources; in 1987 private giving for cultural activities totaled \$6.4 billion. The great undercurrents of American art would continue undisturbed, because they’re driven by forces—the search to understand self and society, the passion of individual artists—far more powerful than the U.S. Treasury. And the \$550 million spent by the three main cultural agencies could be used for more legitimate public needs: for example, reducing the budget deficit or improving Medicaid.

As I said, this won’t happen. The obscenity tempest probably won’t even provoke a serious examination of government and the arts. Arts and public-broadcasting advocates case any questioning of federal financing as an assault on the Temples of Culture by the Huns. Like all groups feeding at the federal trough, they’ve created a rhetoric equating their self-interest with the national interest.

Most congressmen accept these fictitious claims because Congress enjoys the power and, on occasion, finds the agencies useful whipping boys. It’s a marriage of convenience that, however dishonest, seems fated to endure.

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## “Censorship, Multiculturalism, and Symbols”

Steven Durland

*High Performance* (Fall 1989)

Steven Durland is editor of *High Performance* magazine. In this selection, Durland hypothesizes that the controversy over NEA funding is at root an attack on members of minority groups by racist, homophobic, and sexist white males who dominate American society.

Eventually you will have to ask: who is doing the art that’s getting censored? Mapplethorpe was gay, Serrano is Hispanic. Scott Tyler is black. The San Diego billboard group is multicultural, promoting a black cause. While this censorship crisis may be a surprise to many, any multicultural, gay, or feminist artist can give you a litany of examples. Were I to make the charge that these acts of censorship were motivated by racism, homophobia or sexism, I’m sure most of the perpetrators would argue vehemently that such was not the case. And I think they’d honestly believe it when they say it. So what gives?

What gives is that the voice of the dominant, culture has never understood what it actually means when it so graciously legislates racial, sexual and gender equality. Subconsciously, they think they're giving everyone a chance to be just like them. A chance live like white men. A chance to make art in the great Euro-Western tradition. They've failed to realize that few want to be like them. Rather, they want the freedom to be themselves, living their religions, and their own histories, and their own cultures. Just like it says in the Constitution. And that is definitely a threat to a country that, in spite of its "Bill of Rights," imagines itself to be white, Christian, heterosexual and male.

There are some overriding art world ironies here. For years national, state and local funding agencies have made it a priority assure that at least token funding go to representatives of these groups. You seldom hear of a peer panel review any more doesn't make a point of noting sex and ethnicity in the distribution of money. What the people at the top have failed to realize, though, is that when you give a voice to people who've been denied for long, what you're going to find out is that these people are pissed\* (pun intended) off. No "Thank you, massa" here. They immediately take the opportunity to point out racist governments and sexist religions and Christian hypocrisy. Sure it may be raw. But it's exercising the same right, used with a much greater sense of real "American" morality, that the dominant culture has used for so long to keep women in the home, blacks in their place, and gays on their death beds.

It's a fact that only ten percent of the families in the U.S. are representative of "male provider, woman in the home with the kids." Perhaps these men with their "women in the homes" have more time to write letters, and that's why this small population is dominating our cultural debate. I don't know. They've certainly managed a voice that vastly outnumbers their membership. Perhaps, in this particular instance, the art world is to blame for its own problems. Any elected official would recognize in an instant that no matter how much artists protest, when it's time to go to the polls, Wildmon's\* supporters are going to make their wives go out and vote, while the poorly networked and apolitical members of the art world are deconstructing sitcoms. A sad thought when you consider that the art world potentially has much more clout. ... [\*A reference to Donald Wildmon of Mississippi, a social activist and leader of the American Family Association. Mr. Wildmon has been active in opposing works of art deemed obscene or irreligious.]

The final, overriding irony in all this is that all parties involved—the artists, the conservative right, the Congress—are in the position of not being able to do anything about the things that are really upsetting them. To compensate, each group, in their own way, is attacking what is perceived to be a symbol of its antagonism. For the artists, those symbols may be the crucifixes of religious zealots, the flags of racist governments, or the sexual mores of oppressive cults. (Excuse me, but why aren't fanatic Christians who give lots of money to dubious ministers considered cultists? Where are the de-programmers when you need them?) For the conservative right, the art they attack is, for them, symbolic of a general breakdown in moral fiber. For Congress, this is their Grenada: a symbolic show of power directed toward a tiny, defenseless agency in a government over which they've lost control.

For the artists, working with symbols is the stock in trade. For the others, it's a cop out. The artists have done their job. They've called attention to some of our social, cultural and political failings. If Helms or Wildmon wants to "kill the messenger," they're just not doing their job.

To quote Hilton Kramer, "What we're being asked to support and embrace in the name of art is an attitude toward life." He's right. But unlike Mr. Kramer, I would see it as very positive to support an attitude—even a government supported policy—that champions freedom of expression. Especially when we're faced with the alternatives—the ones we generally associate with such names as Hitler, Stain, Khomeini and Deng Xiaoping. Need we add Helms to that list?



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