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From the President

In June 1998, the International Association of Torch Clubs held the annual convention in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The gathering was highly successful and many attendees expressed their satisfaction to me. The papers were exceptional, the food excellent and the ambience was conducive to a fine social event. It was obvious that a great deal of planning and coordination had taken place.

Torch conventions include a session on "Duties of Club Officers." In the last few years when I have either chaired or attended this event it has always been different, as members contribute their own clubs' methods and ideas. At first reading such a session might be thought of as dull or repetitive, but it is actually stimulating and vital. There is, however, one topic which must govern all Torch activities: communication. For example, the Executive Secretary's office cannot fulfill its obligations to the individual clubs and members unless it receives all of the appropriate information.

We live in an era when reaching each other is becoming more and more efficient. However, fax and e-mail do not make for very good social relationships. If one is inviting a potential member to a club meeting, I believe that the recipient deserves at least a phone call and preferably a hand-written note. But, perhaps I am terribly old-fashioned! Clubs which have high membership do work at it; do make personal contacts and follow-ups. Their membership committees analyze the membership and actively seek members in unrepresented professions.

Your Board or Directors are all a little disappointed that the membership numbers continue to decline. They have all worked so hard to try to stop the slide. Actually, membership development is up to the individual member. Think TORCH. Become involved and invite suitable professional friends and acquaintances and then follow up. Make sure that the membership chairman has the prospect's name and address and find out if he or she found the

meeting congenial and intriguing. If the person has comments, make sure that they are passed on the appropriate person, even if derogatory!

It is impossible to have a successful club if the papers are sub-standard. The program chairman should not only invite a member to present a paper, but should inquire as to the material and make sure that it will be a "paper," not a travelogue or a fireside chat. It is right and proper that a Torch paper be read, for it should contain facts and figures which might make it difficult to produce without written materials. Length is important, and ideally a half-hour production or 3,000 words is just about correct.

A Torch meeting must be held in a gracious environment and this usually means a club or country club. There are few restaurants which can provide two rooms, one for a social hour and one for the meal. It is my personal feeling that some kind of social gathering before the meal is very important. As I have travelled to many different Torch clubs, I have seen that the lack of social interaction spoils the meeting. When people arrive and go straight to their dinner seats, no one knows anyone else and new members never get involved and drop out.

We should strive for the highest quality in everything so that Torch meetings can be memorable evenings. Please call on your Board members and your Regional representatives to help with problems and design your meetings to become special events.

--Ruth Giller



A Few Words from the Editor

As always, your editor returned from the annual convention charged with enthusiasm for Torch and everything connected with it. As usual, it was an opportunity to visit with old friends and to meet new friends in a congenial atmosphere. In addition, it was a unique opportunity to hear an interesting story of urban revitalization from the people involved in it. The people of Kalamazoo are devoting serious thought and effort to revitalizing their community and there is much to be learned from their experience. Most of what they presented has applications to many other communities. We wish them success in their efforts and thank them for the warm hospitality extended to Torch. It was a marvelous convention.

I am particularly proud of this issue of *The Torch*. In addition to Gerald Eggert's Paxton paper, there is a group of papers which I consider to be a particularly good collection of Torch papers. Some are from a

prior convention, some were Paxton candidates, others were submitted by the clubs to which they were originally presented. There is a variety of topics and all are very well written. Without denigrating papers appearing in previous issues of the magazine, I believe it can be fairly said that there is a more consistent level of quality in the papers of this issue than in many prior issues. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I did.

It has come to our attention that some club presidents may be keeping secrets from their members. The secrets are, of course, the various issues of *The Torch Leader*, a publication put together by International President-elect Ralph Falconer as a means of

Please see "Editor," next page

P.S.

I am embarking on another archeological dig. Right in my own house.

I suspect many people have "sites" similar to the one I am now uncovering layer by layer, particularly of (1) they have lived in the same house for 32 or so years, as I have, and (2) that house is generously equipped with so many attics and other storage spaces that it has never really been necessary to throw *anything* away.



All the children's books are there. An awful lot of the children's homework is there. My accumulations of files (big files) from two prior places of employment where records and papers and miscellany by the dozens were generated every week—the kind of material I once thought would be of great value for some research project some day—are there too.

All kinds of organizational responsibilities—Torch was one—produced a lot of paper too. Paper that has no value that I can think of. Torch, for example, has archives elsewhere. And all that mountain of paper from the 1975 Presyterian General Assembly is available elsewhere if someone should ever want it. It's not up to me to preserve it. Anyway, there's lots of stuff (including up to 34 years worth of my favorite magazine) there. It has been lying quietly in place awaiting an archeologist patient enough to sift through it or (and this is the

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"Editor," from previous page

encouraging dialogue between clubs about things that may help clubs succeed. While it is sent only to club officers, the intention is that it be used as a springboard for discussion within the clubs about making them better. We hope that your club officers might pick up an idea or two from the publication to take to club meetings as the basis for such discussions. If your club is so successful that it needs no such discussion, please let Ralph know how you got to that point so he can use the information to help other clubs.

A number of good ideas were offered at the Editor's session at the convention. We are grateful for them and will try to use them to improve your publications. Some, such as increasing the number of issues of the magazine or the size of it are budgetary issues and we can't do much about them for now. As always, we found that some members aren't receiving the magazine or the

real need) bold enough to chuck it out.

My first dig through the site came about two years ago.

I still had (or thought I had) all the original photographs for my 1946 high school yearbook, of which I was editor. I had a vague recollection of having decided 10 years or so earlier that I would never have any use for those. But did I really throw them away?

After going through box after box in the basement of my house, I concluded that the only thing I had thrown out in 35 years was the very thing I so desperately wanted now in order to have them returned to my classmates at their 50th reunion. That's why I hadn't thrown out anything since.

But, oh, the memories that came back as I dug through box after forgotten box in 1996. There was a whole box saved from Air Force experiences, such as the composite cover photograph I and another intelligence staffer had creating showing a B-36 "buzzing" Oxford University. We were warned that this could create a major scandal about our big planes flying too low, but we used it anyway. I never heard of any problem, if there was one.

There was a picture of me banging out a story about the return of the "In Cold Blood" killers in a Garden City, Kansas, motel back in 1960 with two bottles of Scotch placed in the foreground by prankish colleagues.

Frankly, I was emotionally drained, not exhilarated, after two days of reliving both trivia and tragedy. I felt I had just excavated my life all the way back through high school.

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newsletter. Every member should get both. If members aren't getting the publications, we obviously can't reach them through the publications, so club officers, please check to see that all your members are receiving them and let us know of any who aren't. We need to get that corrected as soon as possible. Incidentally, that is a good reason to get monthly reports in to the International office as promptly as possible. We use them as a source of additions to our publications mailing list.

Questions arose at the session about letters to the editor and submission of papers on disks. First, we welcome letters to the editor, but please make them as concise as possible. Try for 250 words or less. Remember our space limitations. If they concern a particular paper, we'll give the author of the paper an opportunity to respond in the issue in which the letter is published. We don't aim to support continuing controversy, so as a general rule, we won't use letters about letters.

I don't think I could have ever mustered the gumption to do anything with all the reminder if my youngest son and his wife had wife had not returned to Des Moines this summer to attend Drake Law School, and we needed to empty a few rooms for student housing.

I could trust him to recognize what might need saving and dispose of the rest. In the process he discovered some interesting things about our family I guess we had never mentioned—like the letter offering me a job in Ethiopia (really) in 1965. And a letter signed by Lyndon Johnson thanking me for endorsing him in 1964.

The biggest volume of papers, however, remains. It is strictly Des Moines, and I'm considering throwing the lot away, unopened and unexamined. If I have found no need to refer to the documents within them in the past 15 years, I'll not be likely to need them in the next 15. But son Mac, still a historian at heart (he received his MA in history from the University of Washington this summer) may not let me so callously dispose of boxes that might have a veritable treasure trove of documentation in them.

And what has all this got to do with Torch? As I review the experiences represented by these artifacts, it dawns on me, that some could have, if I had only dredged them up sooner, substantially enriched papers I had presented. They might at least have made them more interesting.

--Paul Stanfield

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We also welcome papers on disks. Our software accommodates many word processor programs and papers on disks save typing time. We do, however, insist on a hard copy in order to avoid problems that sometimes arise when going from one system to another.

Another issue that arose was the question of how long to retain unused papers in the pool from which papers are drawn to be used in the magazine. This is an issue with which we have struggled over the years without reaching a satisfactory conclusion. We'll resolve it this year and notify all the authors of old papers in our files by letter.

I want to conclude this column with a plea to all of you to send us your good papers. In order to publish the best possible magazine, we need many good papers. We promise to give every paper serious consideration and to be as prompt as possible in responding to you.

--Pat Deans

Why Isn't History Any Longer History?

by Gerald G. Eggert, Ph.D.

About the Author



Gerald Eggert received a B.A. in history from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the

University of Michigan. He taught at the University of Maryland, Bowling Green State University and Pennsylvania State University where he headed the History Department for a time. In addition to teaching American history, he also researched and wrote a biography of Richard Olney and three books on business and labor topics. Since retiring in 1991, he has written about Pennsylvania's iron industry.



This paper was presented December 10, 1997 to the Central Pennsylvania Torch Club.

Variants of the question, "Why isn't history any longer history?" reflect part of today's widespread discontent with education in America. One complaint is that schools no longer teach history. Increasingly this is true; a growing number of high schools and colleges are dropping requirements in history, including American History, in favor of allegedly more "relevant" subjects: courses in interpersonal relations, current social problems, adjustment to living, and the like. The more frequent criticism of history, however, concerns what is being taught. History today isn't patriotic, or worse, it is subversive. It no longer introduces the young to outstanding heroic leaders but to lesser, controversial persons or people previously unheard of. The negative aspects of American society are stressed: the subjection of women; prejudice against minorities, denial of rights to blacks; abuse of the Native American Indian. It

dwells on inequality and the maldistribution of wealth, income and privileges among the classes. Increasingly it is absorbed with gender issues: sexuality, homosexuality, family structures or non-structures. Hence the question, "Why isn't history any longer history?"

The short and simple answer is that history isn't now and never was what many critics thought it to be. Like life itself, history is filled with complexity, uncertainty and change. Many, if not most people prefer it otherwise, hungering for simplicity and certainty. Accordingly they accept their

"History is not a cookbook of pretested recipes. It teaches by analogy, not by maxims. It can illuminate the consequences of actions in comparable situations. Yet each generation must discover for itself what situations are in fact comparable."

religion on faith, insist that the Constitution be interpreted strictly and laws be enforced without judicial discretion. It follows they want history that is as dependable and predictable and consistent with their other beliefs. Unfortunately life as it occurs regularly puts such would-be constants to tests that erode and undercut their certainty. Without going into religious or constitutional fundamentalism, let me observe that faith in trial by jury as the means for obtaining justice has been weakened in recent years, especially since celebrity trials have become television spectacles. The problem may well have less to do with shortcomings of the system, however, than with discomfort at seeing the complexity of "justice." What at first seems an open-and-

shut case of guilt or innocence, with enough time, money, and expertise brought to bear, often is very much less obviously so. Those who favor "quick and sure justice" must advocate the strategy of persons seeking to improve their golf scores—don't THINK too much or too long about what you are doing.

To return to the topic at hand, let us look briefly at the evolution and nature of what we call history. At its most basic level, history consists of the sum total of human experience, everything that humankind has done, said or written across time. At that level, history (with a small "h") is the whole past, the motherlode from which the subject matter we call History (with a capital "H") is mined.

The earliest History as a body of knowledge was oral, the passing down of family and tribal memories by story-tellers recounting group experiences, and the exploits of important personages. Its function was to establish one's place in a larger group and the group's place in time and space. Often that first history was also mythic, interpreting and tying the origins of the family, tribe, nation or race to the gods or nature. It usually taught that the people in question were descended from the deity or were a special creation or chosen people. In modern dress it tries to establish the people in question as special, somehow superior and set apart from the general run of humanity.

In time oral history took written form. Earliest were chronicles, simple lists of important rulers and events. This form lives on, usually at year's end, when newspapers and television list the year's, decade's (and soon the century's or millennium's) ten, 25 or 100 most important events, disasters, scandals, or personages. Mythic history in written form is also very ancient: the Homeric and Viking sagas, and Old Testament being familiar examples. More recent variations were classic accounts by 19th century American historians such as Francis Parkman who saw the inevitable British triumph in its rivalry with France and Spain for control of North America as the unfolding of nature's plan for a chosen democratic and protestant

people.¹ (How disturbing to Parkman's ghost must be the rising tide of Hispanics in America today!)

Mythic history has always undergirded what we call patriotism (when ours), or chauvinistic nationalism or propaganda (if someone else's). It was a modern secular version of mythic history that many of today's older generation learned from their history books in school and still think of as the "real History" that has disappeared.

A more recent development has been Academic History. As modern universities have grown, so has the academic history industry. Today thousands of trained academicians are engaged in researching, writing and teaching history. And things academic both multiply and constantly change. Indeed, the publish or perish demands of modern academe encourage innovation. To get published something new must be found or a previously accepted view revised. Studying Lincoln only to conclude that he opposed slavery wins no plaudits. However, to piece together something that plausibly suggests "there is reason to believe" he secretly kept slaves in the basement of the White House during the Civil War, even if not believed, has a chance of seeing print.

One long-term goal of academic history has been to objectify the subject to eliminate the mix of mythology, chauvinism and fiction that constituted earlier history. History was to be made "scientific" by establishing rules of evidence requiring the use of only incontrovertible, documented facts and data. Ideally, this would produce a completely objective account of what happened; a type of history that would consist of, in the words of Sergeant Friday of the "Dragnet" series on TV, "Just the facts, ma'am."

As it turns out, "just the facts ma'am" history neither much interests or satisfies anyone. Take, for example a reasonably objective, factual statement: "Hostilities during the Civil War began with the firing on Ft. Sumter in Charleston Harbor on April 12, 1861 and ended on April 9 four years later with General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse." The almost inevitable response is "So What?" Why did the war begin and end where and when it did? What forces brought about the conflict? Whose fault was it? Could it have been avoided? What determined the war's outcome? What was its significance? Indeed, does the Civil War have any relevance today?

In other words, most people are not interested in history to learn facts, dates, terms of treaties or lists of accomplishments of kings or presidents. They read history for insights into the background of contemporary situations and problems, for instruction on human nature, to find out how events have evolved and their implications for the present. Sometimes they merely seek support for what they already believe. Others, such as politicians, use the past to make their arguments plausible: "History shows that ..." which they usually follow with an untruth.

Often in such matters we depart from fact and enter into interpretation. Agreement disappears, matters become complex, facts give way to opinions. When, for example, we ask what is significant about the Civil War, we have to consider, significant for whom? People at the time or us today? To Southern planters, poor whites, slaves, Northern businessmen, laborers, or Abolitionists? And what kind of significance—political, military, economic, social, moral, racial, literary, legal? All involve both the historian's and the reader's insights, philosophy, point of view, biases and prejudices.

But given the fact that the past is over and done and what actually happened cannot change, how account for the continual changes taking place in accounts of the past? Among the specific forces contributing to change are:

The discovery of new evidence.

Long-lost or hidden letters, diaries, eye-witness accounts, and new caches of records periodically become available. Think of history as an on-going court trial in which new witnesses continually come forward to offer new evidence. Written history at any point is at best a summary of the evidence to date. In the 1950s the papers of President Warren G. Harding were discovered. It had been believed they were destroyed upon his death. In fact, his widow had stashed them away and after her death they became public. These papers have given a clearer and somewhat more favorable view of his administration, albeit without adding much to Harding's personal stature. The discovery and study of the Dead Seas Scrolls have forced changes in our view of a part of Ancient Middle Eastern History. Recently released tapings of Presidential conversations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson with their advisers at critical

times are enriching our knowledge of these presidents. On the other hand, recent testimony of secret service men guarding Kennedy has not improved his image, and the latest Nixon tapes have only dug his pit deeper.

New technology is constantly facilitating the finding and use of important data.

To mention but a few, sonar and sophisticated diving equipment make possible the locating and salvaging of vessels on the bottom of the sea, recovering long-lost and usually well-preserved evidence from the past. Carbon-dating enables a more accurate determination of the age of historic artifacts. Massive quantities of data such as the United States Manuscript Census, once entered into computers, can be organized, manipulated, and correlated in moments. A lifetime would be required to perform only a small portion of the same data management operations manually. Video tapes are amassing an immense body of an entirely new form of documentation that future historians will have to contend with.

The appearance of new scientific and/or philosophic synthesis or frameworks.

When such theories, regardless of field of origin, are sufficiently persuasive, they force intellectuals in all areas to confront them whether they agree or disagree. Among the most influential to historians in the 19th and 20th centuries have been Darwin's Theory of Evolution from the field of biology; Freud's psychological theories regarding the subconscious; Marx's theory of the role of class, wealth, and power in history; Einstein's theory of relativity from the field of physics. Equally important theories may be anticipated as outcomes of current research into space, altering our concept of the universe and man's place in it, and biological research that already is changing our view of the nature of life.

The increased sensitivity of Historians to the nature of the sources they use.

Academic historians have come to realize that the raw material of their craft, primary documents, have a built-in bias favoring the literate, educated, wealthy, and powerful minority. These, after all, are the people who created and preserved the letters, diaries, public records, memoirs, and books that serve as sources. However, the great mass of mankind throughout history have

been illiterate and have left little documentation. This accounts for why the distinguished Adams family of Massachusetts (Presidents John and John Quincy; Charles Francis, American Minister to Great Britain during the Civil War; Henry the historian and novelist; and Charles Francis, Junior, businessman and railroad president) are so frequently quoted by historians: they were literate, held positions of power, wrote much and threw away nothing. By contrast, the likes of "Effie Glotz," illiterate immigrant scrubwoman who wrote nothing, goes unmentioned. History has long been devoted to "important people" and their affairs: to kings, presidents and generals, to politics and war; not to everyday life or to peasants, workers, or ordinary foot soldiers. The history of the Old South was from the planter's perspective, even when describing slaves and slavery. Industrial history was from Andrew Carnegie's view, not that of the "Hunky" who worked twelve hours a day, seven days a week in his mills. Women in history with few exceptions have been portrayed as adjuncts of the males in their lives. Most obituaries of women, regardless of prominence, read in my research, described them as daughters, sisters, wives or mothers of the men in their lives, not as persons in their own right. Realization of this inherent bias of the sources they use has led historians in recent decades to search out material by or about ordinary persons and increasingly to write "history from the bottom up."

Changing problems and concerns of society.

As already noted, except for antiquarians and some historians, history is studied not to learn about the past per se, but to understand the present. Researching, writing and teaching history reflects contemporary concerns and interests of both scholars and the public. During the Great Depression economic history came into vogue. John Kenneth Galbraith's classic study of the stockmarket crash of 1929 has just been republished, the occasion being the recent odd behavior of Wall Street. During World War II and after, diplomatic history dominated the field. The Civil Rights movement later revived the then-dying field of Constitutional History, and the ongoing sexual revolution is producing a plethora of studies in that area.

The changing make-up of American

society.

The history most of us grew up with was written by and for people living in a very different society than ours today. The earlier histories of the United States—the ones that served as models for those that followed—for the most part were written by men of independent means. Their successors, the early academic historians, though less wealthy, were middle-class and upper middle class in origin. The audience they wrote for was similar: educated, property-owning, middle class WASPS (white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant men and women) and their children who attended high schools, prep schools and colleges and studied history. Despite their numbers, working-class whites, blacks, the Irish, South and East European immigrants, and Asians, counted for little, rarely received schooling beyond eighth grade, and generally went unmentioned in history texts.

The prevailing culture of the 19th century and a little beyond, was middle class, male dominated, success oriented, optimistic about progress and reform, with faith in the country, its destiny, and in a benevolent being watching over us. Our national fathers were noble, far-sighted and generally above reproach; the wars we fought were forced upon us by evil enemies; America had both might and right on its side. We won every war, then made generous peace with our defeated foes. Glitches in this view were dismissed casually:

—When whites decimated the Indians it was but the inevitable advance of "Civilization" against "savagery." Custer's last stand was but a lamentable setback for the eventual triumph of the American superiority.

—When workers were shot down by police or militia during 19th century strikes it was because they had defied law and order and tried to thwart the unstoppable march of industrial progress.

—Blacks, denied their civil rights and sometimes lynched, simply were not ready for citizenship and had to be kept in their places.

—When women were denied the vote or right to hold office, it was because "everyone knew" they were not meant to engage in such activities or "bother their pretty heads" with obviously male activities.

—Even when the United States occupied disputed land claimed by Mexico up to the Rio Grande, the war that followed was caused by Mexico's affrontery in contesting that occupation.

Today American society is far less homogeneous. We are much more diverse ethnically and religiously. The 1990 census found a quarter of the population to be black, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American—groups expanding faster than the old Euro-American stock. We are an older people; 13 percent 65 or older and aging rapidly as birthrates decline and improved health facilities add to longevity. Only 55 percent of households include married couples. Of Americans professing a religion, only 40 percent are old line protestant, 36 percent are Catholic, 16 percent belong to other Christian groups (Orthodox, Pentecostals, Mormons, and the like), and seven percent are non-Christian: Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists—groups with swelling memberships.

Moreover, today's minorities (following the example of blacks during the Civil Rights Movement and feminists more recently) are vocal and refuse to accept majority domination. Further, all groups, not just middle class children, attend high school and study history. As late as 1940 a little more than half of 17 year olds graduated from high school and about one in ten went to college. In 1992 more than 70 percent graduated from high school and more than 40 percent went to college. College enrollments have changed too. In 1960, 95 percent of college students were white, 5 percent were minorities; in 1994, 84 percent were white, and thanks in part to affirmative action, other race enrollments rose to 16 percent. Today more than half (52 percent) of college enrollees are women.

Under these changed circumstances and with these minority groups in their audience, how can historians, describe the displacement of Indians by Europeans as the triumph of "civilization" over "savagery" (terms which few if any Sociologists accept as valid)? Glad as most Americans are that America was settled by their European ancestors, our Indian policy does bear an uncomfortably close resemblance to Hitler's Jewish policy in its final outcome.

And how do we teach equality or equal justice under law for all to blacks, women, or other minorities given past treatment of these groups? The answer is we teach it defensively, not with the old confidence: America's record is better than that of many other nations and we are still trying to live up to our ideals.

Given events of the last half-century or so, only a blind optimist could teach or write

American History as the unfolding of a divine plan with us the chosen people, or as the triumph of democracy, freedom and justice for all, or even assert that America is progressing to a higher and better social order when as plausible a case can be made for the opposite.

Not surprising then, are the shifts in emphasis that have been made in teaching history. The once near-consensus that called for molding Americans of all backgrounds into a common culture—the “Melting pot” concept—is giving way to an emphasis on multiplicity, diversity, race and ethnicity. Certainly younger academics accept that approach and minority groups—blacks, Hispanics, homosexuals, feminists, and the like seem to identify with it as descriptive of their experience. Admittedly this approach tends to divide rather than unite society. However, for many, and especially for blacks, the goal of assimilation into the melting pot clearly has not come about in the 133 years since the Civil War. As many students of the subject and apparently most blacks see it, other Americans have refused to accept them into the main stream. Most are not yet deemed suitable candidates for full participation. Not surprisingly, they increasingly reject the goal they are denied.

One good example of how and why written history changes can be found in two editions of the widely used, highly regarded college text by two outstanding professors of their generation, *Growth of the American Republic* by Samuel Elliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager. This is what they wrote about slaves and slavery in 1950:

“As for Sambo, whose wrongs moved the abolitionists to wrath and tears, there is some reason to believe that he suffered less than any other class in the South from its ‘peculiar institution.’ The majority of slaves were adequately fed, well cared for, and apparently happy. Competent observers reported that they performed less labor than the hired man of the Northern states. Their physical wants were better supplied than those of thousands of Northern laborers, English operatives, and Irish peasants...Although brought to America by force, the incurably optimistic Negro soon became attached to the country, and devoted to his ‘white folks.’ Slave

insurrections were planned—usually by the free Negroes—but invariably betrayed by some faithful black; and trained obedience kept most slaves faithful throughout the Civil War...Topsy and Tom Sawyer’s devoted Jim were nearer to the average childlike, improvident, humorous, prevaricating, and superstitious Negro than the unctuous Uncle Tom...If we overlook the original sin of the slave trade, there was much to be said for slavery as a transition from a primitive to a more mature culture. The Negro learned his master’s language, received his religion, and accepted his moral standards. In return he contributed much besides his labor—rhythm and humor for instance—to American civilization.”²

This passage, if put to a vote at the time, probably would have been regarded by most Americans (other than blacks) as a well-written, thumbnail characterization of both blacks and slavery. However, only eleven years later the 1961 edition of their textbook, Morison & Commager treated slavery quite differently and at somewhat greater length than cited here. They noted that a Virginia slave who accompanied his master to Ireland in 1827:

“looked with horror upon the mud hovels and miserable food’ of the Irish peasantry,...[But] the ‘white slaves’ as the scornful [master] called them, could emigrate to America as free men, their sons could become congressmen and bishops, and their grandsons, governors and even Presidents; while the children of Negroes in America were born into bondage, despite the proud statement of equality in the Declaration of Independence...The Negro in America accepted his slave status because he had to, and got as much fun out of life as he could, consoled by belief in a Heaven where no color line was drawn. When converted to Christianity, he discovered the parallel between his own bondage and that of the Israelites in Egypt, and derived his most poignant spiritual hymns from the Book of Exodus...The Romans usually freed their talented slaves,

and in any case their progeny went free. But America offered no legal escape to the talented or intellectual slave; it subjected a writer like Frederick Douglass, or a born leader of men like Booker T. Washington, to the caprice of a white owner who might by his inferior in every respect. And one drop of African blood made a man or woman a ‘nigger.’¹³

Inasmuch as slavery had ended a century before either account was written and no changes could have occurred in blacks, masters, or the institution in the meantime, how are the dramatic differences between these respected historians’ accounts of 1950 and 1961 to be explained?

In this instance the change can be explained by what was happening in society, and accordingly to these men, in those eleven years. The decade of the ‘fifties witnessed the coming to life of the modern Civil Rights movement. The Supreme Court in *Brown vs. Board of Education* outlawed segregated schools in 1954; the Montgomery Alabama bus boycott occurred in 1955-57, followed by the rise to leadership of Martin Luther King; the crisis over integration of the public schools of Little Rock, Arkansas, took place in 1957; the sit-in movement to integrate lunch counters in public places got under way in 1960. These events forced a new consciousness and sensitivity both to contemporary treatment of Blacks and their treatment historically.

For their characterization of “Sambo,” Morison and Commager originally had depended almost entirely on the views of planters and upper class whites. “Sambo” was a composite of masters’ stereotypes of slave attitudes and character. Protests by black college students at the “Sambo” passages led to some schools to discontinue use of the text. This negative reaction, combined with the swelling chorus of the Civil Rights movement, induced the historians to reexamine their assumptions, and to consider the question anew, seeking out more representative sources.⁴

To return to the opening question, “When isn’t history any longer history?” What really is being asked is, why isn’t history like it was when I studied it in school? But would we ask that of any other discipline? Why isn’t chemistry any longer chemistry? Why isn’t physics today the

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More on a subject of great interest.

Dr. Kevorkian: Solution or Loose Cannon

by Paul E. Irion



About the Author

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Pennsylvania. Prior to taking up a career in teaching, he was a parish pastor in Illinois and a hospital chaplain in St. Louis.

He was educated at Elmhurst College, Eden Theological Seminary, and the University of Chicago with additional studies at Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

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I want to try to weave together four strands of my subject. First, I want to examine, briefly, the subject of suicide in general. Secondly, I want to look at suicide in terminal illness. Then, I want to consider the special application—physician-assisted suicide. Finally, I want to examine the work of one practitioner: Dr. Kevorkian.

Suicide

We are well aware that many of our attitudes toward taking one's own life are in large part culturally determined. While in some cultures it is considered honorable, in the Judeo-Christian traditions there have been strong sanctions against suicide. Although there is no reference in the Bible specifically forbidding suicide, traditions have been built up through the centuries to express our society's disapproval of suicide. As late as the 19th century, it was not uncommon for penalties to be attached to suicide: burying a suicide at a crossroads with stake through the heart, hanging the corpse on a tree to be picked by the birds, beating the body with chains, exposing the

body naked in public, holding a trial for the corpse and disposing of it in an undignified way, forcing survivors to pay a heavy fine to the state. Even into the mid-20th century suicides were refused religious funerals and burial in consecrated cemeteries.

These old attitudes have moderated in a variety of ways. We have seen a progression from regarding suicide as a crime—to seeing it as the outgrowth of emotional illness—to a consideration of the legitimacy of the right to choose to die under some circumstances, acknowledged, for

"I would hope that before long physicians, ethicists, clergy, lawyers would begin to develop a system which would offer a terminally ill person the right to decide, along with the necessary safeguards to prevent exploitation or abuse."

example, in something like the Living Will.

For centuries there have been theological questions raised about suicide. Is suicide a sin? If so, in what sense? Is it an unforgivable sin since there is no opportunity for repentance? As I indicated, there is no specific prohibition in the Bible; some biblical heroes died by their own hand: e.g. Saul and his sons, who fell on their swords after a defeat in battle. The Bible makes no judgment on these suicides. It deals with them as morally neutral.

But still it is correct to say that the theological tradition, going beyond biblical teaching, unquestionably opposed suicide as profoundly sinful. Suicide has been regarded as a nullification of the power of God to control life and death. The traditional theological objection is that God gave life and it is, therefore, only God's to take away. Suicide has been regarded a blasphemy because it amounts to rejection of

creatureliness if a person assumes the right to take his or her own life.

Logically, if we assume that this is true, the desirable response to any life-threatening situation would be total passivity, a stance which never has had total approval in Judeo-Christian tradition. Under such presuppositions Christian Science would be the normative stance. How much do we really accept that humans are to be passive in decisions about living and dying? What are the implications for birth control, medical treatment, Living Wills?

We have come to ask: is "death-by-choice" morally wrong? Traditionally, Judeo-Christian tradition has regarded suicide as a violation of the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill!" even though, as I have pointed out, Scripture deals with suicide as morally neutral. In spite of strong prohibitions in western culture, there were always exceptions in Judeo-Christian tradition: martyrdom was understood as giving up one's life in self-sacrifice for others; suicide was regarded as permissible to avoid the peril of rape, and was sometimes rewarded with sainthood.

More recently many theologians have rejected the idea that every form of self-killing is murder, acknowledging that under some circumstances it may be a moral act. A great deal of attention is being given in time to the ethics of controlling life. The realistic mode that predominates today recognizes that means exist for human beings to affect processes surrounding the beginning and the end of life. We do not feel obligated to be totally passive. If we did have such a responsibility, then no treatment would be valid.

Human beings are regarded as having been endowed by their Creator with intelligence in order to become active participants in the processes of living and dying. One can legitimately ask: Is there any moral or theological difference between participating in the potential beginning of life through contraception or participating in the ending of life by voluntarily terminating treatment in terminal illness? So one can ask: is it right to want to control life, or is that "playing God?"—And to struggle

with the answer to those questions.

There is always the possibility of making a wrong decision, but freedom inevitably necessitates accepting that responsibility. Like most questions of this order, there are no easy answers that we can give with absolute assurance. There is much that we do not understand. The Judeo-Christian tradition affirms a loving, understanding, accepting God. Maybe we are most helpful when we “play God” with our actions guided by such principles (love, understanding, acceptance) rather than by rigid dogmas defining life in absolutist terms.

Suicide in Terminal Illness

A lot of our response (whether it be absolute rejection or hesitant approval of suicide in general) has been based on the premise that it is a regrettable course of action because maybe things might have changed for the better. Something might have occurred in the person’s experience that would have made suicide unnecessary.

But much of our discussion recently has focused on situations which are not going to get better, the issue of the legitimacy of suicidal intention in the terminally ill. How much does a person have the right to decide for himself or herself that his or her quality of life is no longer acceptable? How much does a person have the right to die his or her own death?

More and more people are being accorded the right to self-determination. Through Living Wills and other advanced directives, through hospice care, we have expressed our support for the right of a person to abandon heroic treatment and to embrace death. We have gotten over puritanical masochism and acknowledged that people have a right to refuse to suffer grievous pain. We now have the means for controlling most heavy pain and so have given up the insistence that pain is an excellent character-builder and have approved the desire to avoid unrelieved pain. To see pain as a desirable character-building experience may be appropriate to a society without the means to relieve pain, but once there is relief for the pain, that stance is no longer necessary. (We question G. Gordon Liddy holding his hand in a candle flame to demonstrate the strength of his character.)

Much the same can be said for desired release from enforced prolonged dying. Now that means are available for prolonging vital signs (respiration, circulation) which are still

the legal indicators of life, we have become concerned that these means often do not prolong life but prolong dying for the terminally ill. We have acknowledged a person’s right to refuse such heroic treatment to prolong existence at all costs. In so doing we have acknowledged that life must be defined in terms of quality not just extended quantity. Once a person no longer has quality of life, which he or she regards as acceptable, we have come to give the right to die.

This offers an argument for assisted suicide by analogy to accepted practices—does suicide essentially differ from the intention of Living Wills, or the termination of heroic life support. If we can accept as legitimate these measures allowing life to end, what is the basis for denying the terminally ill person the right to desire to end his or her life? We then confront the distinction between passive and active euthanasia, which has become increasingly blurred in our time.

Now there are also some arguments advanced against suicide for the terminally ill. Some would argue that any wish to die is the consequence of clinical depression and should be treated as such rather than permitting a person to act on the depressive impulses. We do have a variety of treatments to relieve clinical depression: (psychotherapy, medication). These are unquestionably desirable alternatives to suicide.

Some would argue that suicidal intention is the failure of hope, which is a social as well as an individual problem. To abandon hope in our society is to violate a major value. However, the response we designate as “No Code” is in this sense an abandonment of hope. We have to be clear about what is being hoped for: cure? Longer life? But what about hope for a peaceful end to life, for another dimension of life?

Physician-Assisted Suicide

We are struggling on a national level with this issue. It is general knowledge that this phenomenon has been in existence for a long time. Sensitive physicians for many years have quietly acceded to their patient’s requests for help in bringing life to an end. There have been very occasional prosecutions of such physicians. We can probably recall so-called “mercy-death” trials, but for the most part they came only in cases where the physicians went public to

force social consideration of the issue or when a zealous local prosecutor decided to make a case. Some have argued that since the means to commit suicide already are available, why involve physicians?

A new ingredient has been added to the issue in the past few decades. The legalization of abortion in *Rowe v. Wade* began the organization of a right-to-life party, which has a strong ideological base. This movement has been highly politicized.

In a number of states efforts have been made to pass laws which either prohibit or permit physician-assisted suicide. The Supreme Court is being asked to rule on this phenomenon.

The legal basis supporters of physician-assisted suicide are using in seeking to overturn state laws making physician-assisted suicide a crime rests on two parts of the 14th Amendment:

[“No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States, nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”]

First, it is argued that the due process provision makes death by choice a protected right. Since the right to withdraw life support has already been granted, the right to chose death by suicide is parallel.

Second, it is argued that the equal protection provision affirms that a person on life-support has the right to request “pulling the plug,” so the terminally ill person not on life-support should have the same right.

Supporters of the prohibition or criminalization of physician-assisted suicide base their stance on the belief that any active participation in the termination of life, no matter what its quality, is morally wrong and criminal.

The problem is that the ideological struggle between right to choose and right to life has made impossible the kind of case-by-case decision-making required in such situations. The extreme of each side in the struggle is intent on making an ideological point. The case-by-case possibility evaporates in face of the ideological struggle, because it becomes an all-or-nothing approach.

Advocates of physician-assisted suicide may want to insist on the right to decide so rigidly that they may miss

significant factors in an individual situation which indicate that physician-assisted suicide is not the appropriate option *in that* case. Opponents may want to insist on the evil of taking a life so fervently that they completely ignore the significant factors of irreversibility, or pain threshold, or acceptance of death. We find ourselves in a situation where most of the zealots on either side of the issue are so guided by their unyielding ideological stance that they cannot participate in rational debate. But debate is necessary if we are to be responsible family members, care givers, citizens.

Let me briefly review some of the pro and con arguments that are advanced beyond the all-or-nothing ideological positions.

Those who resist the possibility of physician-assisted suicide argue that it is a violation of the physician-patient relationship. Citing the Hippocratic Oath's assertion that the physician has the responsibility to preserve life, they argue that physician-assisted suicide violates the basic contract between physician and patient.

In response it is argued that the Hippocratic Oath also enjoins the physicians to relieve suffering. It's pain that puts mercy into "mercy killing." Severe pain makes death the lesser of two evils. The Kevorkian defense case in Michigan persuasively used video tapes to show and hear patients telling of their desire to end their suffering.

But it is not only physical pain; many other terminal patients express concern about "loss of dignity" or "becoming a burden." It's not just the pain of cancer, but also total physical and social debilitation of diseases like Alzheimers or Lou Gehrig's disease.

The very center of the moral consensus rests on the idea of mercy. This has led to two suggestions for alternative ways of responding to pain so severe that it draws persons to the possibility of suicide. The first of these is a call for major research into effective pain control and better training of physicians to use means already at hand. The second alternative commends support of hospice programs which provide supportive care for the relief of physical and psychic pain in the terminally ill and their families. Still, it needs to be recognized that about 5% of severe pain is intractable and it is argued that for this small group physician-assisted suicide needs to be a legitimate

option.

Many physicians have openly resisted physician-assisted suicide, saying that it undercuts both their self-understanding and their relationship with patients. We are also aware by analogy that some physicians have resisted hospice care because they feel it is giving up treatment, although this attitude is changing in many communities.

On the other side of the ledger we find the new mode of patient participation in medical care. More and more physicians are, without abdicating their responsibilities, encouraging patients to make informed decisions about their treatment. The question then becomes: is the request for assistance in bringing life to an end beyond the scope of such self-determination?

There is one other argument against assisted or unassisted suicide for the terminally ill, which from my personal perspective is the most credible serious objection. It is asserted that social approval for suicide among the terminally ill poses a danger in that it might be forced upon persons against their will, subtly or aggressively. There is the possibility of family abuse: haste to get at the assets of the aged or ill person, or wanting to be relieved of the responsibilities of care, putting pressure on person to commit suicide or request assisted suicide.

There is, however, more to fear than the occasional greedy family. We have to think of such present realities as managed health care making decisions largely on economic grounds or Medicare decreed DRG's*. As medical care of the elderly poses real and serious problems for the national economy, is there the danger that socially approved (even legalized) suicide for the terminally ill would ultimately support an enforced reduction in the elderly population? One shudders at the possible misdirection of physician-assisted suicide as society's way of getting rid of social burdens: those regarded as undesirables, defined by their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or age. As I said, this is for me a major caution—a real fear. Personally, I have to say that I no longer find this an unthinkable possibility, given the present political and economic climate which too often substitutes the bottom line for compassion.

The Cause Celebre: Dr. Kevorkian

In the face of repeated prosecutions,

harassment, public ridicule, the wrath of the right-to-life party, Dr. Kevorkian continues to assist people to bring their lives to an end. It is argued *ad hominem* that he is a loony, a publicity seeker. But he has just enough resemblance to the prophet Jeremiah to require serious examination.

For purposes of this discussion let's assume that he is, as he says, trying to meet a profound need in the persons who come to him, that he is trying to make a social statement to compel our body politic to debate and decide this issue responsibly. He states that he is trying to inform and encourage physician support. He says that he is an advocate for legalization or benign neglect of physician-assisted suicide.

I confess to some ambivalence about Dr. Kevorkian's activity. On one hand I support him for raising the issue because I believe that physician-assisted suicide can be legitimate under some extreme conditions. I do not favor its outright prohibition. On the other hand I am troubled by the lack of safeguards in his approach as it now operates. There is the danger that he is as rigidly ideological as his right-to-life opponents are.

He operates pretty much on his own. He assesses the situation of his patients and makes the decision unilaterally. I must grant, however, that he has said he would welcome other physicians as colleagues but has not been successful in enlisting that support. He has also assisted persons who do not fit the classical definitions of terminality: individuals who anticipate debilitation and do not wish to wait for it to come into full bloom. So he is forcing us to acknowledge or reject the right of a person to define when the quality of life has become non-acceptable.

I suppose I would argue that until society begins to deal responsibly with this issue, he should not be condemned or convicted for his actions. We should use Dr. Kevorkian's activities as a stimulus to responsible national debate on physician-assisted suicide.

Three Concluding Sentences About the Future

I would hope that before long physicians, ethicists, clergy, lawyers would begin to develop a system which would offer a terminally ill person the right to decide,
Please see "Kevorkian," page 30

Some problems with, and misconceptions about aging.

The Oldest Old

by Christopher H. Hodgman, M.D.

About the Author



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What age of the human life span is growing most rapidly? Most would talk about the baby boomers, or “Generation X”; few would think that, percentage-wise, it is actually those over 85, over 90, even over 100: The ‘oldest old,’ as demographics call this group, is still an unfamiliar term to most people.

For those of us in the medical profession, a *Lancet* editorial noted several years ago, “until now we have known very little about those in their 90’s—who they are, where they live, what they do, how they see themselves, the state of their health, and the support they need.” Or, as another journal added, “until recently the oldest old have been such a small group worldwide that they’ve been overlooked, except for the even fewer centenarians, who have throughout history been the subject of exotic curiosity.”

Indeed, until recently, we tended to call anybody 65 or over “old.” The age of 65 was chosen by Count Otto Von Bismark to be the magic age of retirement for workers in Germany about a century ago; that probably was why it was also selected by new deal planners as the retirement age for social security. This was really a way to remove older workers from the job market during the depression; before then, people had worked as long as they were able. By implication, then, anyone over 65 was now too old to work.

In fact, of course, nothing dramatic occurs on one’s 65th birthday. Indeed,

...“we are brought up to see old age as a disease; we distance ourselves from older people rather than accepting them simply as ourself at a later point in life.”

because the older vote is part of a very powerful lobby—“I’m old and I vote!”—a federal law was enacted in the 80’s eliminating a specific retirement age altogether. While this action was delayed for higher education, that delay is now over, and as a tenured professor I can stay on forever—just another “tenured lemon.” Still, at *some* point one moves from being middle aged to entering what’s awkwardly called “younger old age.” For the next decade or two, people pretty much carry on their days working, playing golf, skiing, having affairs.

But even the younger old have problems because Americans are fearful of aging and turned off by everything related to it:

A recent *Time* article spoke of our aversion to age: “As a result, we’re continually devising names for the old that

avoid the o-word itself: senior citizen and seasoned citizen, golden-ager and silver fox, mature American and retired person—not to mention forthrightly negative terms like biddy and geezer.” Recent studies show that photographs of the oldest old are perceived as negative. *The New York Times* asked recently “where’s the word or phrase than can distinguish those 65 and over from the rest of society at a time when the older group includes so many marathon runners, computer hackers, and general gad-a-bouts?” Advertisers have also coined a few terms, including “opals,” for “older people with active lifestyles,” and “rappys” for “retired affluent professionals.” The *Times* article concluded: “we are brought up to see old age as a disease; we distance ourselves from older people rather than accepting them simply as ourself at a later point in life. As long as that continues, it doesn’t make much difference what [older people] are called.”

So the first point about old age is that there are now 3 groups: the young old, the old old, and the oldest old. In any case, around the mid-80’s oldest old age begins. (As my mother-in-law once put it, “your 80’s *are* different from your 70’s.”)

Well, what about the oldest old? Aren’t they a small item on the national health scene? To avoid too many figures, consider this: we currently spend \$50 billion a year to care for Americans 80 years old and older—the same order of magnitude as national debt service—*twice* annual veterans benefits, *twice* national employment benefits. Those over 65 are 12% of our population but they spend a third of all our health dollars. The elderly have been called a “fiscal black hole.” In New York state, the oldest old constitute only 4% of hospital patients and 8% of annual bed days—but they cost 25% of all Medicare benefits. So this *is* a

population particularly worth considering from a medical standpoint.

How many of the oldest old are there? And what are the trends? There are currently 5 million Americans over 85; about 40,000 over a hundred years of age. But consider this: that's almost three times the number of centenarians that there were as recently as 1980. It is clear that the numbers of the oldest old will increase *impressively*. There are now so many that there's gold in them thar hills: witness the two birthday cards now available in any card shop: one for 95 year-olds, one for centenarians. The question which isn't yet answered: will the increase in numbers be merely substantial or will it be *phenomenal*? We know that this is the population group growing fastest of all. We've had so little experience that simple extrapolations break down.

Today's five million over eighty-fives will have more than doubled by 2030, and by 2050 may equal 20 to 48 million. If numbers increase as some predict, today's 40,000 centenarians will number somewhere between *1 and 4 million* by the middle of the next century.

Who are today's oldest old?

Most are women. What is generally not known, however, is that the death rates of both genders are approximately equal once the age of 85 is reached. Furthermore, those men who survive to 85 or 90 are significantly more robust than their female counterparts. These trends will continue with an increasing percentage of males in the future. Also, those African American elders who survive to this age have better expectations for subsequent survival than do Caucasians; although when asked, they doubt this is so. These two groups—males generally, and African Americans of both genders in particular, become relatively healthier in very old age than white females—constituting what is called a “cross-over effect.” This cross-over occurs because less favored males generally, as well as both male and female members of minorities, have done most of their dying earlier—so that those who remain are in fact not only survivors, but *selected* survivors: those who for genetic reasons weren't prone to degenerative

diseases including cancer, or who have had superior resistance to infections—after all, they've been exposed to essentially all of the infectious agents by the time they're 90. In fact, it is true for Americans as a whole: our life expectancy at 85 exceeds the Swedes, French, English, or Japanese. An article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that “this finding suggests that elderly Americans are receiving better care than elderly citizens of other developing countries.” (In fact, not true: just the cross-over effect once again.)

Where do the oldest old live?

Many would say, mostly in nursing homes; actually, more than half live in the community. Males remarry more easily than do females because there are so many more elderly women; so proportionately more men live in family settings than do women.

But neither sex generally lives with sons or daughters—about a third as many do now as did 35 years ago. Of the elderly living in the community, half live alone; a third have spouses; and only 6% live in three-generation households. Indeed the trend is increasingly to independent living. Another trend is to greater educational levels in the oldest old. And the educated are the group who follow the healthiest life styles—another reason why their numbers will increase so dramatically.

How do they get on?

Here again, many would think that nearly all the oldest old must be significantly impaired. But of that majority of the oldest old who live in the community, almost half report no activity limitations, and full one-third report themselves to be in excellent or very good health. Almost half have lived in the same house for 20 years, and 11% haven't moved for 50 years. Most aren't socially isolated. It has been said that the elderly “like intimacy, but at a distance.” Of those who live alone, almost half see or phone a child daily and another third do so 2 to 6 times a week. Three-fourths have a child within 60 minutes distance, one-third only 10 minutes away. In sociological jargon

those who are “embedded” in their families are much better off. Children turn out to be the best source of support: professional caregivers just don't substitute. Adult grandchildren report that bonds with grandparents are strong and enduring.

The economic status of the old is yet another source of many stereotypes. The *New York Times* has described the oldest old as “elderly, affluent and selfish” and *Time* magazine has called them “greedy geezers.” The stereotype that the elderly are more prosperous than the general population isn't true, but it is true that the elderly get a much larger share of the pie proportionately than do American children. The old have gotten more while the young have gotten less. This has partly been due to “senior power,” the “grey panthers,” the American Association of Retired Persons. Through their efforts, Social Security benefits increased substantially in the 70's. To an extent this imbalance is being corrected; in 1994 for example, Social Security income was fully taxed for the first time. In any case it is definitely true that money has a dramatic correlation with physical impairment in the elderly. In fact, one of the best correlations with good health in the very old is car and house ownership.

In the past, from a medical standpoint, the oldest old were generally chronically ill and therefore well known to their physicians. Increasingly the oldest old are now physiologically much healthier than expected. There has been a steady decline in disabilities of old age. We do considerably better at caring for the elderly than we did as recently as 20 years ago. If almost half of all men aged 80 are robust, and over a quarter of women, it is appropriate to abandon unrealistically hopeless prognosis for the oldest old—to be willing to intervene therapeutically rather than to fall prey to unhealthy therapeutic nihilism. The real issue is prolongation of healthy oldest age. In fact, the disabled elderly population is increasing only two-thirds as fast as the group as a whole. So “*active* life expectancy” is increasing even more rapidly than this most rapidly increasing group. The level of functional disability

in the elderly is best predicted by their past employment. Physical laborers are less likely to survive than professionals, and so on. As yet another recent *New York Times* article headlined, “The new era of robust elderly belies [the past] fear of scientists.”

Of course, those who are healthy today are most likely to be healthy a year from now. The needs of the non-institutionalized oldest old are not much different from those of younger patients. With respect to treatment, even centenarians are now generally acceptable surgical risks, with good survival rates in intensive care units. It is true that the last year of life is the most expensive medically—but this is so at all ages, from the 24-week preemie on up.

Well, what about Alzheimer’s? There are many myths about this condition. The rate starts at 1% between the ages of 65 and 70 and doubles every 10 years. But even in the group of centenarians studied by Thomas Perls in Boston, fewer than 25% had Alzheimer’s. The picture is less optimistic if one realizes that—particularly for men—Alzheimer’s is associated with early mortality; as a consequence, of those who do survive to 100, most will never get Alzheimer’s. Perls indicates that the presence or absence of certain genes correlates with long life and also with the presence or absence of Alzheimer’s. The genetic obverse is Down syndrome; here 100% who survive to middle age have Alzheimer’s.

After the age of 100 non-specific mental slowing seems to occur. As one oldest old lady put it, “the words roll around in my head like marbles dropped on the floor.”

It is true that timed tests are less well done by the elderly. Vocabulary is most stable; mental flexibility and abstracting capacities begin to diminish in the 70’s, but a third of 80-year-olds perform as well as youth. Because the organs of perception are often dulled, the capacity to perceive the test correctly must be assessed as well as the mental capacity to answer it. Brain metabolic function becomes less vigorous with age and is one of the factors involved in slowing. And many of the fibrillary tangles associated

with Alzheimers occur in normal aged brains. The decline of vision and hearing correlates with decline in mental activity—some believe because of the loss of stimulation, others because the brain is deteriorating as vision and hearing lessen. But character structure doesn’t change much in old age. As the decades pass, we apparently become more and more like ourselves.

Much of the cognitive malfunction in the elderly is due to depression, which too often gets neither diagnosed nor treated because it is assumed to be dementia. An old person complaining of a failing mind is at least as likely to be depressed as to be truly demented, perhaps even more so because he or she realizes the decline. But depression also goes undiagnosed because the elderly are ashamed of mental illness. It is therefore especially important for physicians to screen the very old for depression. Suicide rates, highest in the seventies, may decline in the eighties and nineties, perhaps due, once again, to the cross-over effect.

There’s an adage that goes “use it or lose it.” It has become evident that both mental and physical functions can be heightened in the elderly by appropriate practice. Genetically engineered growth hormone has dramatic effects on the very old, with impressive increases in muscle mass and decreased fat. But, so too do appropriate mental and physical exercise. It is often forgotten that disability can *decrease* as well as increase. For example, even 90-year-old nursing home volunteers can double their leg strength in eight weeks of routine exercise. Cognitively, too, the oldest old can learn to play video games, use computers, and improve their contract bridge. It turns out that their greatest enemy may often simply be the assumption that they can’t do it any longer, so that they are more inclined to blame loss of memory for mental incapacity or some physical problem for loss of mobility when the real problem is inadequate effort. Self-guided practice improves both body and mind, and even greater improvement occurs when the process and predictability of improvements are emphasized. It turns out, too, that the most important preventive

care may simply be grab bars, railings and non-slip floor coverings - all financially low-ticket items.

So the oldest old are increasingly intriguing, and there’ll be more and more of them, if they’re lucky.

But here’s the current question we need to answer: Are they lucky to be very old? In a recent article in *The New York Times*, the author, Michael Norman, described his aunt Milly.

“She is 88 now, a widow with alabaster hair and skin like parchment. Some days she seems more frail, and she begins to muse. Her eyes fill with doubt and she says things like ‘Why? Why are the scientists breaking their brains to get us to live longer? I want to know, what’s the point?’”

Michael Norman points out that at the beginning of the 20th century, most people lived only two to ten years after retiring. Now the period of young old is no different from the rest of life—people continue to keep busy, which as Michael Norman puts it, “seems to be our society’s answer to meaning and existence.”

But after 85: what then? Gerontologists talk about the “dreadful d’s”—decline, deterioration, dependency, death.” In America, none of these are—to use another “d” word—desirable. Instead, what we engage in is still another d word: denial.

Clearly, we simply haven’t faced the reality of this last chapter of the life span. The historian Thomas Cole says that in the last 200 years the social and biomedical sciences have thought of old age as only “an engineering problem to be solved”; but by reducing old age to a “problem,” science has diminished it. Science has robbed old age of the rich symbolism and purpose it had for most of our history. Now old age in America no longer stands for anything, it is too often empty, purposeless, without meaning. Cole says that the cure is to search for meaning; but for Aunt Milly, what is the meaning of her old age? “What’s the point?” What has medical science preserved her to do or to understand or to be? This may be the most important question about the oldest old in our society.

In Praise of Liberalism: Exorcizing a Demon

by J. William Angell, Ph.D.

About the Author



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Both Liberalism and its devotees, Liberals, have been increasingly demonized during the last generation. The intent of this essay is to exorcize the demon by demonstrating that the philosophy is a noble, even glorious one by an examination of its true meaning and by a brief survey of its application in several central aspects of western culture. We shall see that Liberalism is the mother of freedom and progress; hence, rather than being a detriment, it should be considered and adopted as the

most desirable and praiseworthy spirit for human enhancement and value.

A first step toward correcting common distortions of the concept may be taken by an investigation of its true meaning. The dictionary (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, Merriam, 1949, page 484) tells us that the word Liberal, as an adjective, is derived from the Latin *liberalis*, from *liber*, free. It is used as (1) "befitting a man of free birth, not restricted; (2) bestowing in a large and noble way; generous; bounteous; openhanded; (3) bestowed in a large way; hence, abundant; bountiful; ample; (4) free from restraint; unchecked; (5) not narrow or contracted in mind; broadminded; (6) not bound by orthodox tenets or established forms in political or religious philosophy; independent in opinion; not conservative; often, specifically, having tendency toward democratic or republican, as distinguished from monarchical or aristocratic, forms."

Further, *Liberalism*, as a noun distinct from the adjective, *liberal*, its cognate, has been described as "the creed, philosophy and movement which is committed to freedom as a method and policy in government, as an organizational principle in society and as a way of life for the individual and community...As an idea and philosophy it predates its use as a term and can be traced back to the Judeo-Christian-Greek intellectual world, along with the idea of liberty itself with which it is closely linked." (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1969, Vol. 13, page 1017.)

If, therefore, we are to communicate adequately in our public discourse, we must use words according to their real meaning and not load them with alien distortions and false prejudices. We must

exorcize the demons we impose upon our language and fellow human beings by the use of truth and fairness. Those who disagree with us will not be defeated or convinced that we are right by false accusations or torrents of malicious words; rather, we should speak carefully and correctly, with civility, so that fact and logic may do their work of persuasion.

It is wise to remember that we attract more bees with honey than with vinegar, and, wiser still, that "he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword."

If Liberalism, then, is the ancient philosophy of freedom, tolerance, generosity, and progress, that lofty claim should be demonstrable in its applications in history. We are frequently being reminded in recent days that we stand at the close of the second millennium, as we calculate time. Our culture has its primary roots in the thought and work of men and women who inhabited the eastern Mediterranean world two or three millennia ago. Without involving ourselves in the long and exceedingly complex history that has transpired during the many years since those ancestors laid the foundations of our civilization, we may ask whether they valued and exhibited a liberal spirit and philosophy. Did they, at least at important junctures, set the course through time that brought us to where we are in terms of freedom, toleration, generosity, and progress?

We cannot here take time to consider many of the persons, ideas and movements of antiquity that determined subsequent culture. The bare mention of three or four will suffice to indicate our debt. We may well begin with the seminal thought of Plato, about whom

Whitehead said that “all philosophy since Plato has been a series of footnotes on Plato.” Above all else, Plato was concerned with Ideas and their perception, with the free search for truth and its application to life. His mentor, Socrates, attempted to lead his fellow Athenians to probe beyond opinions and conventions in order to discover wider vision and greater human value. Plato bequeathed to us in his Dialogues the tragic yet glorious account of Socrates as he demanded the freedom to question established beliefs and to teach new methods, even as it led to his death at the hands of those who insisted on their own way and their own values.

One of the memorable literary gems of Plato is in his “Allegory of the Den,” found in the seventh book of the Republic. In that well-known story, Plato, speaking as usual through the character of Socrates, depicts the master teaching a student, Glaucon, how one may get beyond the shadows of opinion and custom to at least an improved perception of reality. We are like prisoners chained forever in a dark cavern, observing only the changing shadows that are cast on the back walls and hearing sounds from outside that are thought to emanate from the shadows. If a person were released and forced to go outside the den into the brilliant light of the sun, says Socrates, he would at first feel pain from the light and experience doubt concerning the reality of what he saw. And if he were to return to his former fellow prisoners and attempt to challenge their long-held fancies, telling them what he had come to know as truth, he would no doubt be maligned and rejected. It is difficult and sometimes dangerous to expose false or immature ideas long held, but freedom and vision require it, Plato was saying. His teacher, Socrates, persisted in the effort, nonetheless, and was forced to drink the hemlock by his conservative opponents.

Centuries before Plato and his fellow Athenians, however, the Hebrew prophets dared to break new ground in

opposition to the kings and priests of Israel. In the eighth century B.C., Amos of Tekoa, a poor shepherd, appeared at Bethel, in Israel, the sanctuary of King Jeroboam, and thundered against the powerful and wealthy because of their selfish unconcern for the poor and oppressed. Speaking for God, he said,

“I hate, I despise your feasts,
And I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings
and cereal offerings,
I will not accept them,
and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts
I will not look upon.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”
(Amos 5: 21-24.)

Hearing such audacious words, Amaziah the priest, in the name of the king, both protectors of custom and power, drove the prophet from the sanctuary and out of the kingdom.

Isaiah of Jerusalem, a contemporary of Amos, known as the Prince of the Prophets, spoke a multitude of similar words in Judah. He sharply attacked the empty rituals of the Temple priests, the ostentatious living of the wealthy, and the unconcerned oppression of the poor. Proclaiming the word of the Lord, as Amos has done, he said,

“When you spread forth your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.
Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes;
cease to do evil, learn to do good;

seek justice, correct oppression;
defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

(Isaiah 1:15-17)

Other prophets and sages in Israel continued the same calls for mercy and justice, carrying the message to a wider world with the coming of the diaspora of the Jews among the nations in late antiquity. The inseparable unity of religion and ethics, always motivated by hope for a new age of liberty and justice to come, was given permanent expression in the Holy Books of Judaism, the Law and the Prophets, later interpreted and applied by the great rabbis in the Talmud.

Jesus, the Prophet of Galilee, proclaimed that his new Gospel was based on the eternal will of God expressed in the Law and the Prophets. But his Gospel carried further the social and moral teachings of the older scriptures. He dared to challenge the strict legalism of most of the religious leaders of his day by teaching that his disciples must not only abstain from murder but also from hate; they must not only refuse to commit adultery but also avoid lust; they must not only not swear falsely but make swearing unnecessary by always adhering to such undoubted honesty that Yes or No are sufficient. Jesus pushed the moral requirement so far as to teach that the eternal status of every soul will finally be determined by how the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned have been treated and served. He rejected the rigid orthodoxies and pious rituals of his day with such sternness that, the guardians of the status quo turned him over to the Roman government for elimination. But his followers accepted him as the promised Messiah of deliverance, the Herald of the new and coming Kingdom of the Spirit.

Perhaps it is well at this point to pause and ask what all this has to do with the defense and praise of the much-maligned philosophy of Liberalism. But surely the answer is obvious. If, as we claimed at the beginning, Liberalism by

definition should be understood as “the creed, philosophy and movement which is committed to freedom as a method and policy in government, as an organizing principle in society and as a way of life for the individual and community,” then Liberalism promotes freedom, tolerance, generosity, and progress. The examples we have briefly cited from the Judeo-Christian-Greek beginnings of western culture exhibit the struggle for liberation from illusions and outmoded ideas as well as God-like and God-commanded compassion for the poor and oppressed.

The magisterial philosophers of the ancient world: Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics chief among them; and Moses and the Prophets, and Jesus and the Apostles: the foundation of the Judeo-Christian religion; all combined to form western culture at its best in the promotion of human freedom for the realization of greater knowledge, wider well-being, and creative hope for the future. This is the agenda of genuine Liberalism.

That millennium known in the west as the Middle Ages, stretching from the fall of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance, did not display many examples of liberal thought and action. That would be expected in the light of the character of the times. At least the first three centuries of the period are referred to as the Dark Ages—from the fall of the last Roman Emperor in A.D. 476 to the Carolingian Revival in the ninth century. The pagan and powerful barbarian tribes from northern and eastern Europe swept like a tidal wave over the former Roman lands, from North Africa to Scotland, and ancient culture was unknown or buried in the scattered monasteries or carried for protection to the last western outpost, Ireland. It took centuries for the energetic new masters to absorb the classical civilization of Greece and Rome, including the Christian faith itself. It was no time for Liberalism. For centuries all of Europe was dominated and frequently oppressed by powers of state and church, even as they struggled with each other.

A few creative thinkers dared to

challenge tradition and authority during those benighted centuries. It must suffice here to mention only two, both of them monastics and teachers in the new universities. The brilliant Abelard, perhaps best known for his costly love for Heloise, taught flocks of eager students in Paris and other schools in France during the early twelfth century. He opposed all compulsion in matters of faith and is remembered for saying that “he who believes too readily is light headed.” One of his most influential treatises is entitled *Sic et Non* (Yes and No) in which he demonstrated the fallibility and undependability of tradition by describing one hundred and fifty-eight of the central issues in theology and then quoting many of the Fathers in such a way as to show their disagreement on every one. Liberalism always questions the authority of tradition.

Thomas Aquinas, still considered the most important theologian of the medieval period and a controlling influence on subsequent Roman Catholic thought, also taught at the University of Paris, among other places, during the century following Abelard. His major contribution was the use of the newly-discovered philosophy of Aristotle in theology in place of the Platonism that had supplied the structure of nearly all Christian thinking since the second century. That was a great threat to Christian theology, according to the traditionalists of the day. They had even managed to outlaw the teachings of Aristotle in the university at about the same time that Aquinas was born. However, led by his older mentor, Albertus Magnus, Thomas joined the “modernists” by, as has been said, baptizing Aristotle, or Aristotelianizing Christian theology. In his massive works, *Summa contra gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*, he gave a new legitimacy to the use of reason for the discovery and judgment of theological truths. Grace perfects nature but does not destroy it, just as revelation completes reason. Thomas even anticipated the English philosopher, John Locke, by insisting

“that while private property is lawful it should not be held as if it were one’s own but as if it were common and hence should be freely used for the use of those in want. In accordance with this principle he even goes so far as to declare that while theft is always a sin it is not theft when in extreme need one takes another’s property either openly or secretly for the purpose of supporting one’s life or aiding a destitute neighbor.” (A.C. McGiffert, *A History of Christian Thought*, II, 286 f.)

In this defense and praise of Liberalism, let us come at last to modern times, when its fruit and good works have become manifold. Historically speaking, modern times may be said to have begun around A.D. 1500, give or take a few decades. One familiar way to explain that date is to consider three of the greatest persons living at the beginning of the sixteenth century: Christopher Columbus, Martin Luther, and Nicolai Copernicus. Though he never knew what he had done, Columbus and his fellow explorers discovered for Europeans the western hemisphere. Luther and his colleagues began the Reformation of the medieval church and hence opened up a new world of the spirit. And Copernicus and those who followed him laid the foundations of modern astronomy by demonstrating that the Earth revolves around the sun instead of the sun revolving around the earth, thus putting mankind in his proper small place. What a contemporary trio, and what a historical revolution they initiated! And it was by courageous freedom of thought, freedom of inquiry, and against the stubborn traditions of their day!

The birth pangs of modern times were felt in the cruelty and blood of the Crusades. Those wars of conquest ultimately failed in their purpose of liberating the Holy Lands from the Moslems but they were unexpectedly successful in bringing new learning to western Europe from the deposits of ancient culture. That led to the Renaissance, a rebirth of knowledge and spirit, first in Italy and then to central and

northern Europe. It was as if Westerners were like the chained prisoners in Plato's den, now unleashed from narrow feudalism and oppressive dogmatism. Many suffered, even unto death, for seeing new visions and proclaiming the new truths they now saw in the light of the sun. They turned from a preoccupation with otherworldliness and superstition to learning empirically by experience and testing every claim by reason. As a result we are still today the liberated children of the Enlightenment.

We may plainly observe the good results of the liberal spirit in three major areas of modern culture: science, religion, and political life. There can be no question that modern science, with all of its discoveries and benefits as well as its increased risks, was made possible only by freedom to challenge the accepted opinions and courage, often at great cost, to reject the powerful authority of the state as well as the imposed dogmas of the church.

Andrew Dickson White, president and professor of history at Cornell University, published in 1897 a massive two-volume work entitled *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*. He had joined earlier with his friend, Ezra Cornell, in founding Cornell University, with the explicit purpose of giving to America an institution of higher learning that would be free from the control of state or church. In 1892 Dr. White was asked to serve a term as United States Minister to Russia. While in St. Petersburg he completed his great work and, on April 14, 1894, wrote its preface:

"My book is ready for the printer, and as I begin this preface my eye lights upon the crowd of Russian peasants at work on the Neva under my windows. With pick and shovel they are letting the rays of the April sun into the great ice barrier that binds together the modern quays and the old granite fortress where lie the bones of the Romanoff Czars.

"This barrier is already weakened; it is widely decayed, in many places thin,

and everywhere treacherous; but it is, as a whole, so broad, so crystallized about old boulders, so imbedded in shallows, so wedged into crannies on either shore, that it is a great danger. The waters from thousands of swollen streamlets above are pressing behind it; every one knows that it must yield. But there is danger that it may resist the pressure too long and break suddenly, wrenching even the granite quays from their foundations, bringing desolation to a vast population, and leaving, after the subsidence of the flood, a widespread residue of slime, a fertile breeding-bed for the germs of disease.

"But the patient *mujiks* are doing the right thing. The barrier, exposed more and more to the warmth of spring by the scores of channels they are making, will break away gradually, and the river will flow on beneficent and beautiful...

"My hope is to aid—even if it be but a little—in the gradual and healthful dissolving away of this mass of unreason, that the stream of 'religion pure and underfiled' may flow on broad and clear, a blessing to humanity." (Op. Cit., I, v-vi.)

White's two large volumes proceed in great detail to describe, sometimes shockingly and often amusingly, the long struggle between ignorance and dogma on the one hand and stubborn search for truth on the other. Three of the most familiar of the multitude who challenged the traditions and orthodoxies of their times were Copernicus, Galileo, and Darwin. Though a native of Prussian Poland, Copernicus had studied and taught in Rome until, around 1500, he began to develop the hypothesis that the earth and other heavenly bodies revolve around the sun. This theory, though said to be only an interesting hypothesis, was so contradictory to the theology of the church that Copernicus felt it safer to flee to his native land. There, at Krakow, he composed his treatise on the *Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*. The work was published in 1543 by Osiander of Nuremberg, and soon a storm of protest arose throughout

Europe. Fortunately for Copernicus the text was printed just as he lay dying so that he escaped what might have been imprisonment, torture, and death by fire. His ideas, however, were roundly condemned by the authorities at Rome and by the new Protestant leaders—Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican.

Galileo took up the cause for truth in astronomy and physics during the next generation. He not only developed basic laws of gravity and motion but challenged the dogmatic authority of medieval Aristotelianism. He perfected the telescope so that his opponents could see for themselves what he was teaching about such things as Jupiter's moons. But for his pains he was tried for heresy and condemned by the Inquisition in Rome, his books were rejected, and he was forced by threat of torture to recant. He died in silence and seclusion, still believing that the Earth moves.

It is difficult to believe that the battle against Darwin continues even today, at the end of the twentieth century. His epoch-making book, *The Origin of Species*, was published in 1859, and it has been said that it came "into the theological world like a plough into an ant-hill." The theory of biological evolution was not new with Darwin; it had its roots in antiquity and was given broad philosophical exposition in the grand system of Hegel. During the past century and a half, it has supplied form and structure to many fields of learning including sociology, psychology, astronomy, economics, anthropology, and political theory, as well as religion. However, Darwin came under vicious attack from every side, and the battle continues. Even now we observe attempts by the unlearned and unthinking to substitute so-called "creation science" for legitimate science instruction in the public schools.

The demonizing of Liberalism has come in recent years to be widespread in political life. Calling persons, policies or ideas "liberal" is tantamount to condemning them. If, however, Liberalism is properly defined and

understood, as we have seen, to designate the philosophy and policy of freedom, tolerance, compassion and progress, then it is evident that to reject and demonize the concept is either to distort the language or to be guilty of self condemnation.

Have we forgotten the profound and demanding ethical teachings of our heritage from the Golden Rule of Jesus to the Categorical Imperative of Kant? Do we wish to abandon the Jeffersonian principles of universal human equality and the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or the constitutional claim that one of the reasons for establishing the union of states is "to promote the general welfare?" The self-serving critics of the social application of liberal principles choose not to remember the fortunate failure of the Confederacy at Appomattox, the sweat shops and grinding poverty caused by the masters of the early industrial revolution, the

bankruptcies and bread lines of the Great Depression, the injustices of segregation, and the bleak and hopeless futures of workers retiring with only their last paycheck.

In his recent best seller, *This Noble Land, My Vision for America*, James A. Michener writes: "I believe that the genius of the United States is basically humanitarian. We are idealists who have always been willing to experiment with new social orders and new solutions to old problems. We are not a horde of people who will march backward in lockstep. We cannot long be satisfied with charges that are mean spirited and destructive of our less favored citizens...The current move to demonize liberals, calling into questions their validity in American life and even their patriotism, is a dangerous leap in the wrong direction. It goes against the grain of American life and should be stopped."

Let it be said, finally, that this praise

of Liberalism, this effort to exorcize the demon from it, is not intended to cast the demon onto Conservatism. Both philosophies and emphases are worthy and needed, both are good when properly understood and applied. If Liberalism advocates freedom, compassion and progress, Conservatism defends accumulated wisdom and values as well as all the accomplishments of the past. Conservatism urges caution and security while Liberalism seeks new paths and greater equity.

The two philosophies may well be compared to an automobile. Conservatism is the brakes, and it would be both foolish and dangerous to drive a car without being able to slow the speed or stop when needed. Liberalism is the engine, providing power and progress, and costing money to operate. But more important than either the motor or the brakes is the driver who operates both. Happy motoring!

1999 Paxton Lectureship Award

The Paxton Award, created in honor and remembrance of W. Norris Paxton, past president of the International Association of Torch Clubs and editor emeritus of The Torch magazine, is given to the author of an outstanding paper presented by a Torch member at a Torch club meeting during the 1998 calendar year. The winning author will receive an appropriate trophy, \$250, and paid registration fees at the 1999 annual IATC convention in Toledo, Ohio. The Paxton Award winner will be introduced at the 1999 convention banquet where he or she (or a designated representative) delivers the paper, on June 26, 1999.

Eligibility: The author must be a member of a Torch club and the paper must have been delivered at a Torch club meeting or a regional meeting between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 1998. (Note: Current officers and directors of the IATC are ineligible for this award during their terms of office.)

Procedure: Entries are to be typed (double or triple spaced). Include a cover sheet with the author's name, address, daytime telephone number and the date and place of the presentation of the paper. All identification, including identifying references within the paper, will be masked wherever possible prior to submission to the panel of judges. Entries may be submitted at any time but the deadline for receipt is March 1, 1999. Send to Paxton Award, International Association of Torch Clubs, Inc., 749 Boush Street, Norfolk, VA 23510-1517.

Judging: The reading and judging panel is composed of five people: a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee, a member of the board of directors of the IATC, one of the last five winners of the Paxton Lecture Award, and two Torch club members selected by the IATC board of directors. Judging is based on the principles set forth in the IATC brochure "The Torch Paper." The winner of the Paxton Award and the authors of all other entries will be notified no later than May 1, 1999.

Additional Information:

- There is no limit to the number of papers submitted by any one Torch club for this award.
- A paper may be submitted by the author, by a Torch club colleague or by an officer of the Torch club. It is preferred that, however the paper is submitted, it receive the endorsement of the club as a Paxton Lecture Award submission through its officers, secretary, or the executive or program committee.
- The winning paper is to be presented at the 1999 annual convention by the author or an author-designated representative from the author's local Torch club.
- The Paxton Lecture Award paper will be published in the Fall 1999 issue of *The Torch* magazine. Other entries will be forwarded to the Editorial Advisory Committee for review for possible publication in the magazine.

A little old fashioned skepticism would be a good thing to add to our "Standards of Education."

A Good Foole

by *Kenneth D. Keith, Ph.D.*

About the Author



Ken Keith is professor and chair of the psychology department at Nebraska Wesleyan University. His

interests include improvement of the teaching of psychology at the college and high school levels, and the role of science and reason in everyday life. His major area of research is quality of life, especially for persons with intellectual disabilities.



This paper was presented to the Torch Club of Lincoln, Nebraska September 15, 1997.

Sometimes, at the beginning of my psychology classes, I perform a simple magic trick or a minor “psychic” feat as a way of getting the class into a critical thinking exercise. We discuss how such things are done, and we examine alternative hypotheses that might explain phenomena that could otherwise seem supra normal or perhaps even supernatural. I also ask the students this question: Given a choice, would you prefer to know you have seen a simple trick, or that your professor is psychic?

I suppose it should not surprise me to know that most students would prefer to think the professor is psychic. After all, half of American adults (Gallup & Newport, 1991) and half of college instructors (Edge, Morriss, Rush, & Palmer, 1986) say they believe in ESP; half of introductory psychology students think that dreams foretell the future (Messer & Griggs, 1989); cable TV is glutted with programs pitching psychic phenomena, astrology, and unexplained

mysteries; and some of our most popular movies feature a variety of encounters, close and otherwise, with alien beings. We are, some observers have argued, a gullible lot, a society in which scientific thinking and skepticism are the province of a decreasing minority and in which ignorance is virtually celebrated. The late Carl Sagan (1996) cited the popularity of credulous TV programming on superstition and pseudoscience, and the media message presented by some characters (e.g., “Dumb and Dumber,” “Beavis and Butthead”), as evidence in support of this argument.

There’s One Born Every Minute

While it is tempting to say that an uncritical, gullible populace is a sign of our own deteriorating times, and that we are therefore headed to hell in a pseudoscientific hand basket, the truth is that humans have been prey to fuzzy thinking and addled reasoning for a very long time—perhaps for all time. The ancient world was replete with belief in demons, and Will and Ariel Durant (1961) observed that “Religions are born and may die, but superstition is immortal” (p.575). Thus must have felt Galileo in the face of the seventeenth century religious dogma that forced him to recant the scientific views that he considered truth, just as Jacob Bronowski (1973) felt when, in this century, he stood at Auschwitz and asserted that the death camps were the product of the arrogance spawned by belief in absolute knowledge.

Pseudoscience, Sagan (1996) said, abounds in every field of science, abounding in the minds of all sorts of ordinary people. Thus, widespread belief can be found for astrology, parapsychology, repressed memory, Bigfoot, UFOs, other-worldly sources of

crop circles, and more—each the focus of powerful, sometimes uncritical belief by one group or another. And, like my introductory students, true believers would often prefer to put their faith in fantastic etiologies than in simpler natural explanations.

A case in point is the crop figures of Great Britain. For 15 years or more, two ordinary fellows, Dave Chorley and Doug Bower, used weighted objects to flatten crops in the shape of circles and other figures. They intended to have some fun with UFO believers, and eventually they did; their night-time enterprises were declared to be the work of extraterrestrial beings, and they attracted much attention. Eventually Chorley and Bower, then in their sixties, had enough of these escapades, confessing in 1991. Oddly, however, their confession created much less interest than did the crop circles themselves, and some wanted the media to downplay the hoax so as to allow others to continue to believe in the miraculous nature of these phenomena. A book written to tell the story (Schnabel, 1994) was not a particularly great success. Even in the face of evidence, we seem to want to continue to believe in our myths—a state of affairs that begs the inevitable question “Why?”

Tens of thousands of years ago, the peoples of Africa, Australia and Europe were producing cave paintings and carvings thought to be religious in nature (Roberts, 1993), perhaps looking beyond themselves for explanations, hope, or evidence of another existence. Their motives may not have been so different from those of their religious descendants of today, or from those who seek their explanations and beliefs in other realms that extend beyond the natural. After all, believing, Dartmouth neuroscientist

Michael Gazzaniga (1985) has asserted, is what humans do best. The human brain, Gazzaniga's research has suggested, has an "interpreter" function capable of accommodating our behavior and virtually instantly constructing theories to explain it. And when faced with sensory experience, even if fragmentary or ambiguous in nature, our brains (read "minds") are likely to organize it into meaningful perceptions and patterns (Myers, 1998).

Gazzaniga (1985) tells the story of a woman who, due to a brain lesion, believed herself to be at home when in fact she was in the hospital. When the hospital elevators were pointed out to her, the patient immediately began to explain how expensive it had been to have them installed in her home—an interpretive response that helped her to make sense of an otherwise confusing state of affairs. And we have all, of course, experienced optical illusions that we have arranged perceptually in ways quite different from the objective reality of the objects or events themselves. While researchers have some disagreements about the specific mechanisms of such perceptions, all would agree that they are dependent upon the processing of incoming information (McConnell & Philipchalk, 1992). We are, in short, a species innately prone to organize, interpret, and explain our experience. It should be no mystery then, that we have generated a myriad of explanations, and that, to the extent our incoming information is incomplete, ambiguous, or inaccurate, our explanations may end up being mistaken.

In addition, there is evidence that many people are likely to believe their own perceptions more readily than scientific evidence (McConnell & Philipchalk, 1992); that individuals who consider themselves intelligent observers think that anything they cannot understand must be supernatural (Blackmore, 1986); and that people tend to believe what they see in print or on TV, especially if they consider the source "documentary." With regard to the latter

point, a study by Barry Singer and Victor Benassi (1981) showed that college students, when asked to cite examples of "scientific sources," named such media as *National Enquirer*, *Reader's Digest* and popular movies. Our errors of reason are compounded by the tendency that P.T. Barnum recognized when he said "There's a sucker born every minute." In a variety of investigations, researchers have shown that bogus personality reports or astrological interpretations are enthusiastically received by persons who believe the reports (even though vague and generic) were prepared specifically for them, and that their faith in astrology increases as a result (Snyder & Shenkel, 1975). Research psychologists have dubbed this phenomenon the "Barnum Effect." So, it seems, we are creatures not only of cognitive interpretation and organization, but of significant gullibility, as well. Let's consider a couple of contemporary examples.

ESP and Psychics

The claim that perception can occur via "channels" other than those of normal sensory receptors—so called extrasensory perception (ESP)—fascinates many people, and large numbers report believing in one variety of ESP or another. The telephone psychic business generates income in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year, and some purported psychics have become celebrities (e.g., The Amazing Kreskin and Uri Geller). Clearly, there is an audience for this kind of thing. In his recent book on critical thinking, David Levy (1997) suggests that we ask ourselves some simple questions: "Have you ever had the uncanny experience of listening to the radio, when you are startled to hear the very song that you had just been thinking of? Have you ever received an unexpected telephone call from someone whose memory had just crossed your mind? Have you ever had a dream that coincided with, or even predicted, an event that actually

occurred?" (p.112). Nearly everyone will answer in the affirmative to one or more of these questions, perhaps on numerous occasions, and the temptation may be great to assume an extraordinary explanation. But Levy counsels us to stop long enough to ponder some alternative questions: How often have we been thinking of songs that *didn't* appear on the radio? How often have we heard a song that we *hadn't* been thinking of? Have we had experiences that we *haven't* dreamed about? And so forth. Apparently extraordinary events, he argues, often do not require (and do not have) extraordinary explanations.

More than two decades ago, astronomer Dennis Rawlins (1976) concluded that no experiment had demonstrated, under controlled conditions, the existence of ESP before a neutral scientific body, and that the top ESP experts clung to their faith in the phenomenon only through a process of rationalization that Rawlins considered incredible. Yet the topic continues to be covered in virtually every introductory psychology textbook today. While the authors of these books are not, in any case with which I am familiar, "believers" in ESP, they feel the need to explain the research to beginning students, probably in large part due to the cultural gullibility I have previously discussed. Singer and Benassi (1981), for example, reported having a magician perform "psychic" stunts for a group of university students. Even though the students were told in advance that these were magic tricks, the majority of the students reported that the tricks were *proof* that ESP exists.

Singer and Benassi are not the only psychic debunkers who have resorted to magicians' tricks in their efforts. James Randi, an accomplished magician, has for many years adopted a skeptical stance in relation to psychic phenomena; for example, at the height of Uri Geller's popularity, Randi branded Geller a "fake," and demonstrated that many of Geller's best-known "miracles" (bending

spoons and keys, reproducing sealed drawings, making stopped watches run, etc.) could be easily accomplished using sleight of hand. Randi in fact published, with photographs, an explanation and demonstration of the key-bending trick (Richardson, 1976).

The most frequent (and telling) criticism of ESP is the failure of its proponents to produce repeatable effects (Bem, 1994). One of the most credible efforts to do so involved a careful study in which respondents attempted to guess the position of numbers in random sequences after being given introductory material suggesting that ESP was either beneficial or harmful (Layton & Turnbull, 1975). A small but statistically significant difference was found between the groups, and the skeptical editor of the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* agreed to publish the results if the authors would replicate the experiment and submit the data from both studies. The second experiment produced no significant effect. While other researchers have reported promising efforts (Bem, 1994), the fact remains, according to David G. Myers (1998) that “there has never been discovered a reproducible ESP phenomenon, nor any individual who can convincingly demonstrate psychic ability” (p.203).

Repressed Memory

No one doubts the awful experience of child abuse—whether physical, sexual, or verbal, and no one doubts that such experiences are a part of the lives of too many children in our culture. But in recent years we have seen an epidemic of thousands of people, largely women ranging in age from 20s to 40s, reporting “recovered” memories of abuse in childhood. Thus has arisen the important question: Can memories of incest or other abuse be so totally repressed that victims remain unaware of them until they emerge, usually in therapy, in adulthood (Jaroff, 1993)? To dismiss these memories if they are true would

be, of course, a grave error. But skeptics have begun to wonder about the veracity of many of these reports of repressed and recovered memory. While some writers (e.g., Bass & Davis, 1988) have asserted dogmatically that any uncertain client must be assumed to be the victim of abuse, skeptics are less certain. The traits put forth as descriptive of victims (e.g., feelings of shame, vulnerability, perfectionism, powerlessness, etc.), like the astrological predictions characteristic of the Barnum Effect, are sufficiently generic to apply to nearly anyone. Further, people do not forget the trauma of witnessing murder, terrorist acts, wartime violence, or Nazi abuse (Myers, 1998); why, one might wonder, would *this* particular trauma be repressed? And what are we to make of the fact that some repressed memories seem to come out only under the very directive suggestion of therapists, ministers, or others (Sagan, 1996)?

What James Randi has done for the psychics with his demonstrations of magic, researcher Elizabeth Loftus and her colleagues (1996) have done for repressed memory, demonstrating the plausibility of experimentally creating false memories of childhood trauma. Loftus has shown that it is fairly easy to create “memories” of nonexistent childhood events, and that the “victims” may later insist that the stories are true. Similarly, by the way, Loftus (e.g., Green, Flynn & Loftus, 1982; Loftus, 1979; Loftus, Miller & Burns, 1978) has also shown that eyewitness memory may be quite malleable and subject to construction or reconstruction after the fact, without any deliberate intention to lie or change facts. Loftus does not deny the possibility of repression in the form of avoidance in conscious awareness of unpleasant experience, but says “...if it is a blocking out of an endless stream of traumas that occur over and over that leave a person with absolutely no awareness that these things happen, that make them behave in destructive ways and re-emerge decades later in some reliable form, I don’t see any evidence

for it. It flies in the face of everything we know about memory” (cited by Jaroff, 1993, p.56).

Like ESP, repressed memory has large numbers of adherents, many of them therapists of one stripe or another. It also, like ESP, awaits a clear scientific demonstration. In the meantime, memory phenomena like those associated with repressed child abuse have become fairly widespread among persons claiming to have been abducted by aliens or victimized in satanic rituals.

Of Kings and Fools

I touch upon these two topics— ESPs and repressed memory—not because they are the most important issues or our time, or to proselytize a particular belief in either case. Instead, I bring them up to counsel a broader point of view, a way of examining the world—a kind of healthy skepticism that demands data and that bases belief upon empirical evidence rather than dogma and vague perception. In his discussion of knowledge and certainty, Bronowski (1973) related the effort of Hegel to prove, philosophically, that there could be only seven planets. He went on to point out that Shakespeare had answered the question many years before when, in *King Lear*, the Fool points out to the King that there is a pretty good reason why the seven stars are no more than seven. The King, in his wisdom, nods his agreement, saying “Because they are not eight.” The Fool replies, “Yes indeed, thou would’s’t make a good Foole.”

Perhaps, in our time, we have become too quick to accept what is presented as truth. We are too uncritical of our sources, and we become confused about their veracity. We learn history from docudrama, current events from infomercials, and science from popular movies. We want certainty, failing to appreciate that the methods of science and reason are by definition uncertain and self-correcting. We want proof and are impatient with the proposition that hypotheses are never proven; they simply

stand until they are disconfirmed. Thus, James Randi has not *proven* that ESP is a non-entity; he has simply shown that there exist plausible alternative explanations. Likewise, Elizabeth Loftus has not *proven* that repressed memory is a fraud; she has merely shown that a simpler, more plausible explanation may often exist. And this is in the spirit of scientific inquiry—to prefer the more parsimonious, the more elegant explanation until another is shown to be more plausible.

We stand always on uncertain ground, accepting our explanations tentatively, examining alternative ideas, and remaining open to the possibility that we are wrong. This, Sagan (1996) said, was one of the reasons that organized religions did not inspire his confidence. “Which leaders of the major faiths,” he asked, “acknowledge that their beliefs might be incomplete or erroneous...(W)ho is systematically testing the circumstances in which traditional religious teachings may no longer apply?” (p.34).

We have become accustomed to accepting much on faith—from our politicians, our therapists, our health care providers, our religions, and our media, among others. Governments deal fast and loose with data and truth, led largely by dogmatic party agendas, and religious extremists continue to make a travesty of civilized life. But we see about us the carnage wrought by such dogma, and the increasingly clear consequences of our failure to deal honestly with data—whether in social, moral, or environmental arenas. In science, there are no forbidden questions, no sacred truths (Sagan, 1996), and ideas are subject to honest public scrutiny.

“Science is,” Bronowski (1973, p.374) argued, “a very human form of knowledge...Science is a tribute to what we can know although we are fallible.” “Even if the open windows of science at first make us shiver after the cozy indoor warmth of traditional humanizing myths, in the end the fresh air brings vigor,” Bertrand Russell (1957, p.54)

said, “and the great spaces have a splendor of their own.” A skeptical view of the world is not popular, it is hard work, and it is, perhaps, not as much fun as being a psychic. But it is much to be preferred, in my view, to becoming, like Shakespeare’s Lear, “a good foole.”

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On the need for balance in society.

On Homogeneity and Heterogeneity or Uniformity and Diversity

by *Hubert Martin*



About the Author

Hubert Martin was educated in Germany. A metallurgist, he was Research Director of Reynolds Metals. He has been consulted

by major firms in the United States, Europe, South America and Japan. He was the general manager of Chemstone Corporation and holds seven U.S. patents. He has been both Citizen of the Year and mayor in his present hometown, Strasburg, Virginia.

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This paper was delivered to the Winchester Torch Club on October 1, 1997.

Two seemingly unrelated events spawned the idea for this paper. The one event has never become public and the other has been noted, with great interest, by only a minute segment of our population. Both, however, are intimately related.

One event, never publicized occurred last year during the discussion of a Torch paper in our club. The discussion centered around communities and what makes a "healthy" community. One participant suggested that a healthy community should have a rather homogeneous composition. Without going into detail, it was implied that a healthy community should consist of people of the same race, the same interests. This view was eloquently opposed by another participant, who contended that only a diverse group of people can make a community flourish. It was implied that a multiracial group of people with many differing religious or non-religious beliefs, varying income levels, educational backgrounds, talents and interests has a better chance to form a healthy community.

Here you have it: Homogeneity or

heterogeneity, uniformity or diversity. Both views can be eloquently defended. Who is right?

The second event could readily lay to rest the controversy, telling us who is right. Here is a quote from the Scientific American of February 1993¹: "When a team of investigators announced last April the Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) satellite had discovered minute fluctuations in a faint glow of microwaves left over from the Big Bang, cosmologists were understandably overjoyed. Lacking evidence of inhomogeneity, they would have been hard-pressed to explain how the early universe evolved into its current, rather lumpy condition."

The discovery was later confirmed by an M.I.T./Princeton team. They had, even earlier, in 1989 launched a balloon with instruments over New Mexico. The test results were announced in 1993 and corroborated the COBE findings.

What is the significance of these findings? There was no uniformity in the universe, even at the very beginning of time, or say at least as far as we can go back in time and still apply our physical laws as we know them, which is about 10^{-12} of a second after the beginning of time. The infinitely high initial temperature had, by that time, dropped to a mere 10^{15} degrees. At that time the universe was filled "with a gas consisting of all the types of particles known to high-energy nuclear physics..."²

Let me insert here a word about the Big Bang. There was no "Bang." Sten Odenwald, a noted astrophysicist wrote recently³: "The name 'Big Bang' originally was a put-down cooked up by a scientist who didn't like the concept when it was first put forth. He favored the idea that the universe had always existed in a much more dignified and fundamentally unchanging, steady state. But the name stuck, and with it has come the completely wrong impression that the event was like an explosion" Instead the so-called "Big Bang is still with us and is

the space-time expansion.

Returning to the main theme of homogeneity and heterogeneity, uniformity and diversity, it seems obvious to virtually all educated people, that the evolution of the universe requires a diversity of nuclear particles such as neutrinos, electrons, and positrons. Their existence needs a pre-existing heterogeneity. It is exactly this preexisting non-uniformity, which the COBE and the M.I.T./Princeton teams seem to have found. Once formed, the diverse nuclear particles, as the temperature decreased, converted into matter and antimatter. The first matter formed continuously from protons and neutrons into deuterium, an isotope of hydrogen. Over billions of years, the lighter elements came into existence, galaxies evolved, stars exploded again and new ones were shaped with pressures and temperatures allowing the heavier elements to be born. Truly, a cornucopia of lively particles and events, embedded in the space-time continuum, caused the evolution of the universe, and, much later, of biological life. A homogeneous "Big Bang" cannot cause the lumpy universe. Homogeneity is the death of any dynamic development. Diversity is a necessity for all evolution. Heterogeneity wins our controversy by a long shot. Homogeneity is not even seen. Here I might rest the case.

But it is not quite that simple. There was and is no chaotic evolution. Homogeneity does seem to play an important role in the universe as well as in our daily lives. I discern a continuous interplay in this heterogeneous universe between forces for more diversity and forces for more homogeneity.

The forces towards orderliness, towards homogeneity, have also been with us since the beginning of time. The speed of light is constant. Two and two are always four. The examples of uniformity in and around us abound.

There is a continuity, a sameness, in the laws of mathematics and physics which

appears to govern the heterogeneous universe. All evolution seems to occur within the framework of basic laws. One might call it a homogeneity of basic laws. The law of the conservation of energy prevails uniformly. Heat flows always to a lower energy level but not in the opposite direction.

Saltwater reaches a higher level of homogeneity whenever it is evaporated and comes back as precipitation to be heterogenized again by washing salts from the earth and picking up pollution.

A flow of myriads of electrons, all uniform in electrical charge, power all our electrical devices. Not only that, they hold our very bodies together as part of the atoms and molecules of which we and all matter consist. No matter what chemical reaction might evolve, the electrons maintain their characteristic and even determine largely which reactions are possible and which are not.

It seems as if a built-in mechanism tries to rein in the forces of heterogeneous evolution wherever we look. It says: "Hold it. Not so fast." The forces behind heterogeneity on the other hand seem to say: "Let's go. Venture. Try something new."

In Chinese philosophy, the Yin and the Yang, indicate that interplay. The Yin-Yang express the two complementary forces or principles, that make up all aspects and phenomena of life. Yin is conceived as passive and absorbing. Yang is considered to be active and penetrating. They have to be in balance for a harmonious life.

Hegel's dialectical system of "Thesis - Antithesis - Synthesis," with the synthesis being the new thesis, addressed this interplay philosophically and expands on it. "Thesis" can be compared with the conserving element, "Antithesis" with the new, the heterogeneous force, which in turn results, via an interplay with the thesis, in a "Synthesis," the new "Thesis."

It is in line with Hegel's dialectic, that the liberal students of the sixties have become the conservative parents of the eighties, that Galilei's revolutionizing concepts at his time have become the fully accepted facts of our days.

As a young metallurgist I learned about the crystalline structure of all metals. It means that the atoms are lined up in an orderly fashion, rather conservatively. Such metals, however, would be quite brittle without the irregularities present in the atom line-up. Rather frequently an atom is missing

in the structure. That is called a vacancy. Vacancies distort the surrounding metal structure. They slide around like quicksilver at the slightest force applied from the outside onto the metal body. The vacancies make it possible that metals can be bent. Introducing other heterogeneities in form of other elements and specific thermal treatments, the resulting alloys may increase strength or other desired properties. No airplane or rocket could ever fly, no modern ship sail the oceans, no computer work without such heterogeneities.

The to and fro between the two phenomena is discernible throughout the universe. Humans evolved because of a heterogeneous world. It takes a man and a woman to create a new child. Implied with each birth, however, is a permanent death. Our life is subject to the forces of the universe.

Distinct human cultures with uniform customs, songs, dances, and languages have evolved, so have all kinds of biological species with the same feathers, or the same kind of gills, or leaves, or limbs. They all express a certain homogeneity suppressing unbridled, and heterogeneous, evolution.

Towards the end of World War II, in 1944, I was 17 years old. My growing-up years had been influenced by the indoctrination of the Nazi regime, a rather homogeneous sort. No one but one ex-communist had ever talked to me about the evils of the Third Reich. One day, I visited a cousin, an architect in Munich. He gave me a university pamphlet, written by a professor at a major university in Germany and published during the war. Unfortunately I do not have a reference. The subject was about creativity and societies fostering creativity. The professor's thesis was that creativity blossoms out wherever two or more cultures meet. To support his thesis he mentioned the era of Pericles, when philosophers, mathematicians, poets, sculptors, and orators unfolded a new world. He ascribed this unfolding of Greek culture to the fertilizing exposure to Persian, Egyptian, and other cultures. Similarly, he wrote about the Romans and the Italian Renaissance. Austria was another example. It was under the House of Habsburg that the cultures of Italy, Spain, France, Germany, and Eastern Europe merged, resulting in an unusual blossoming of the arts, particularly music. These were all rather heterogeneous societies. But even more illuminating to my 17-year old mind was the final example. The

professor wrote about the Jews and their inventiveness. First he made the case that there is no Jewish race. Jews are rather a heterogeneous mixture of many races. Their religious culture and history binds them together, not a racial bond. Instead of other cultures coming to them, they entered other cultures. They were forced to adapt to survive. The result is an unusual creativity in this group of people. The number of Nobel Prize winners, composers, painters, physicians, politicians, and inventors is unusually high among Jews. I was impressed. If the author of this pamphlet still lived today, I am sure, he would include our United States as an example of a heterogeneous society, with many cultures meeting, and an explosive creativity.

Contrast this with the desired homogeneity of all dictatorships. Compare it with the heterogeneity of a democracy. Contrast the uniform and the uniformity of any military force, police force, with the richness of garb and free thought at a university.

We would be wrong, however, in assigning always more positive aspects to heterogeneity than to homogeneity. Police and military forces are needed. Athens had a solid legal and government system. Our planet's travel around the sun is well-balanced between two phenomena, the centrifugal and the gravitational force. An unbridled free-for-all in a deteriorating democracy can be as devastating as a dictatorship. (It is for that reason that this liberal tends to support not only the Democrats but the Republicans as well, though to a lesser degree. I like the "loyal opposition" concept.)

Jonathan Weiner writes in his Pulitzer-Prize winning book *The Beak of the Finch*⁴ about the astonishing structural changes of an AIDS virus: "The complete nucleotide sequence of the AIDS virus HIV-1 is 9,749 base pairs long. But this sequence does not stand still, because the virus has no proofreaders. When investigators take a series of samples from an individual patient they see rapid evolution. Individual letters in the sequence change, clusters of letters change, whole chunks of DNA disappear while other chunks insert themselves in new places along the strands... The first virus particle to invade evolves into a swarm of

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Are we wise enough to use the fruits of science for the benefit of the world?

The Human Genome Project: Blessing or Faustian Bargain?

by C.H. Holzinger

About the Author



Charles H. Holzinger is an Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA where he taught

for 37 years. He has been a visiting professor at Stanford University and the University of North Carolina. His graduate study was done at the University of Chicago and Harvard University. His interest in human genetics stems from his study and teaching of biological evolutionary theory. He has been a member of the Lancaster Torch Club for over 40 years and has served as its president several times. He was given the Silver Award of Torch International in 1997.

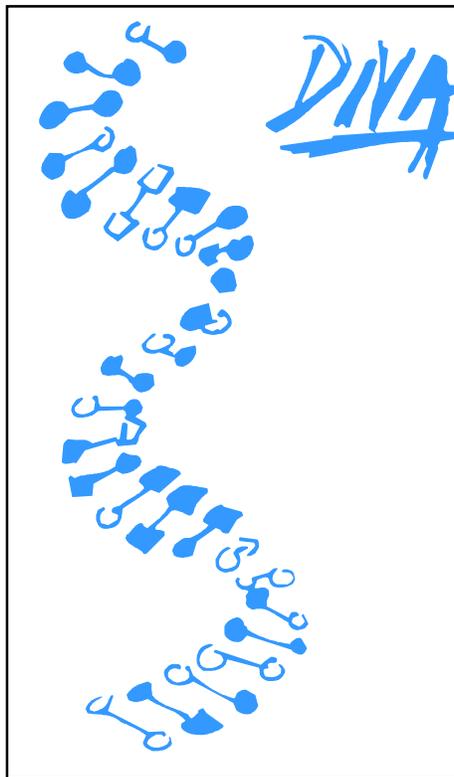


This paper was delivered at the 1997 Wilmington convention.

In the 150 years since the Austrian monk Gregor Mendel published his observations of the inheritance of seven contrastive pairs of traits in the garden pea, a lot has happened. It has been suggested that the present century may well be described as science concerned with the nature of matter. The beginning of the coming century seems destined to be preoccupied with the nature of life itself. This, in large part, is the result of the Human Genome Project, a 15-year program designed to lay bare the blueprint of the human organism. First conceived by geneticists in the 1980's and officially launched by the United States Congress in 1990, the work is ahead of schedule. To understand this enterprise requires some back-tracking.

In 1953 J.D. Watson and F.H.C. Crick published their paper, "A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid," in the journal

Nature. DNA, as Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid is commonly known, is the stuff found in the nucleus of almost all cells that directs the development and functioning of organisms. The molecular structure of DNA resembles a twisted ladder or, in Watson's famous term, the "double helix," in which each rung consists of a bonding of a pair of compounds



known as nucleotide bases. There are only four kinds of these compounds: adenine, thymine, guanine, and cytosine. To form a rung of the ladder adenine bonds only with thymine and guanine only with cytosine. As a result there are four types of rungs depending upon which of these bases is on which side of the rung. Thus the pairs may be A-T or T-A and G-C or C-G if we use the initial letters to stand for each nucleotide. In the human species it is estimated that there are 3 billion such rungs in the DNA in each cell.

This DNA is organized into 46

chromosomes in humans, 23 of them from the mother and 23 from the father of the individual. These chromosomes vary widely in size, some with only a few million nucleotide rungs in the DNA ladder, others with hundreds of millions.

There is one more level of organization that we must be aware of. Along the length of the somewhat rod-like chromosome are segments of DNA that are the actual determiners of the structure and functioning of offspring and, in fact, life throughout its duration. These are the genes. The best estimates place the total number between 70,000 and 100,000 in all. The sum total of the genes of an organism is called its genome. The genome of a species determines the structure, growth and physiological functioning of members of that species.

The Human Genome Project has a number of aims. Its major goals are to determine the structure of each of the 3 billion rungs of the DNA ladder. It seeks to determine the function of each of the 80,000 to 100,000 genes and to locate each on one of the chromosomes. Among the spin-off goals sequencing the DNA of a variety of pathogens, both viral and bacterial. A number of these have already been completed. Just this year (1997) the genome for *Escherichia coli* has been decoded by a University of Wisconsin team and completely independently by a Japanese one. *E. Coli* has a genome of 4,638,858 nucleotide base pairs comprising nearly 4,300 genes. The genomes for the pathogens causing influenza, Lyme disease, streptococcal pneumonia, gastric ulcers and tuberculosis are under intensive analysis by drug companies. The smallest genome ever decoded was a virus, phi-x174, done in England, which had slightly more than 5,000 rungs divided into 9 genes.

Academic laboratories are intensively engaged in sequencing the DNA of a tiny transparent nematode worm *Caenorhabditis*

elegans and the common mouse, both of which serve as models for the study of gene action.

For a gene to do its job it is not enough for its message to be present in the rungs of DNA. Its message is to direct the production of proteins, the basic building blocks of life. For this to happen the DNA has to be copied into messenger RNA by having the DNA ladder unzipped along its length and allowing segments to escape the nucleus of the cell and be captured by organelles called ribosomes. These use the messenger RNA to synthesize proteins. The raw materials of proteins are 20 amino acids which when combined in various combinations to form proteins.

The molecular structure of the evoked protein is determined in the following manner. Each three rungs of the ladder code for one of the 20 amino acids. As each of these triplets (called codons) is read in turn, the ribosome adds the appropriate amino acid to the growing protein molecule until it comes to a punctuation triplet which says, "Stop, the protein is complete."

Proteins not only make up the structure of the body in the form of muscles, nerves and connective tissues, but also form all the more specialized tissues comprising the organs of digestion, excretion, and endocrine secretion. All of the regulatory enzymes of the body are proteins. Genes direct the production of these proteins in several senses. The orchestration of beginning and ending the production of proteins in a meaningful sequence is as necessary as the actual determination of the chemistry of a protein.

If anything should alter the sequence of the nucleotide bases in the DNA, then the protein produced is changed. Usually when this happens the new protein product is defective and some genetic defect results. But not always. Sometimes different codings exist that produce alternative traits that do not differ significantly in biological fitness. Eye color and the ABO blood types are examples. These alternations in the coding of DNA are called mutations and have many causes. Aging speeds up the rate of mutations in humans so that many diseases increase in occurrence. Virtually all forms of cancer are related to mutations in genes which normally protect against endless cell proliferation but which lose this capacity in their mutated form.

The Human Genome Project involves

the integration of 16 laboratories found in countries around the world. The effort is being coordinated by an international organization of scientists called the Human Genome Organization. Laboratories in the U.S., Canada, Japan, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Russia and very recently Australia are involved. The U.S., Japan and Great Britain are the major players.

When Frederick Sanger of Cambridge University discovered a method of sequencing the nucleotides of DNA in 1975, it required a great deal of dull laboratory work. Improvements by Leroy Hood of Cal Tech and Craig Venter of the National Institutes of Health have vastly speeded up the process. Today most laboratories consist of automated machines tended by a few technicians. Many laboratories post their findings immediately at a Web site.

Clearly the Project must take into account the diversity in the human species with respect to all of the visible racial varieties and also the many invisible ones relating to health and disease and physiological functioning. Less than one percent of the human genome seems to be involved in creating the individual differences among us. Overwhelmingly, our genes determine that we are members of the human species.

The three billion dollars necessary to finance the Human Genome Project to completion by the year 2005 was sold to the governments supporting sequencing laboratories by the promise that the Project had for improving the health of their populations.

The project promised a revolution in medical practice. While most of the past gains in life expectancy in the modern era are due to the conquest of infectious diseases, the Human Genome Project promised an attack on the major killers today, the degenerative diseases such as cardiovascular pathologies, cancers, diabetes, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, and muscular dystrophy. It is believed that in all of these there is an important genetic component. Advocates of the program foresaw that faulty genes might be replaced by normal ones, that widespread genetic screening would permit physicians to foresee potential or portending disease and take preventive measures by gene therapy.

Among the other touted benefits used to promote the Human Genome Project were the possibility of prolonging life, and an

understanding of the determinants of human behavior. In this connection, hardly a week goes by without the announcement of the discovery of genes related to shyness, aggressiveness, curiosity, gender preference, obesity, sexual drive, criminality, schizophrenia and the manic-depressive state.

Let me also note that many such claims have been withdrawn as further research has shown much greater complexity in the determination of these traits.

But it was in gene therapy that the greatest benefits were to be realized. Gene therapy is the intentional introduction of genetic material, DNA, into a patient so that the mutated gene which is responsible for the disease is replaced by a gene directing a health-giving response (providing a "blue-print" for the production of a normal, therapeutic, protein).

A variety of methods have been employed to introduce genes into the nuclei of cells. The simplest is to use microsurgical techniques to physically inject DNA segments or small circular DNA structures called plasmids into the desired target cells. This method is highly labor intensive and inefficient so that greater emphasis has been placed on using various kinds of viruses which inject foreign genes into cells as a normal part of their life cycle. Most prominent among those involved in current research are the retroviruses which include the Human Immunodeficiency Virus which causes AIDS. The retroviruses are able to splice copies of their genes permanently into the chromosomes of the cells they invade. Retroviruses currently in use in gene therapy have the disadvantage that they are not selective in the cells which they invade and so sometimes modify the DNA in inappropriate tissues.

Several other types of vectors are involved in current research. These include the adenoviruses which have demonstrated a ready ability to invade human cells. An example is the virus which causes the common cold. They are effective vectors for gene transport but in many cases the introduced genes do their remedial work only temporarily because the introduced DNA gradually disappears as the treated cells die.

The disadvantages associated with viral vectors has led to a search for other methods of gene transfer. One active research thrust is using liposomes (also called lipoplexes), small fatty spheres totally fabricated in the

laboratory which are made to contain a circular loop of DNA called a plasmid. These liposomes have the advantage of having no danger of mutating into pathogens. So far these have been less efficient than viruses in transport but work continues to seek their improvement.

Recent successes have been announced in making totally artificial chromosomes into therapeutic genes can be placed and which duplicate themselves in cell division just as the natural chromosomes do. It's too soon to know the future of these.

The real visionaries in gene therapy are looking forward to the time when not only the individual could be thus cured but if the harmful mutated gene could be replaced in the sex cells of such an individual, the ova or spermatazoa, then the disease could be eliminated from all future descendants. This germ line gene therapy, as it is called, is highly controversial and its use is rejected by nearly all scientists at the present time. But as we become more sure of our methods and the safety of gene therapy, the temptation to remove permanently some genetic scourge from a human line of descent will certainly come.

Few of the benefits promised by the advocates of funding for the Human Genome Project have been realized. There have been some very limited successes in which transferred genes have functioned for several years in patients. Some brain tumors have been reduced, some cystic fibrosis patients have found temporary relief from the mucous clogging their lungs.

Our knowledge of the genetic factors involved in many human diseases has grown exponentially since the start of the program in 1990. It is only in treatment that there has seemingly been little progress. But the project has raised a number of issues that have stirred discussion of ethical issues. Will the success of the project enable us to "play God" in devising the future of the race? What will be the effects of universal genetic screening of individuals that is envisioned? Will this change the selection of marriage partners as a potential genetic defect is predicted in the offspring of a couple? Already this is the case in mate selection among Askenazi Jewish persons where one in 40 persons is a carrier for Tay Sachs disease. Widespread testing for this gene is already practiced and Jewish marriage brokers use this knowledge in advising potential marriage partners. Will potential parents demand the opportunity to design

their offspring? Do you want a musician, a basketball player, a math whiz or?

Will employers be permitted to demand all applicants be genetically screened to keep them from hazardous positions or to forestall absenteeism or sick benefits? Already there have been cases of insurance companies' refusing to insure persons whose genetic testing revealed high risk of future debilitating disease. The Kasselbaum-Kennedy Act passed by Congress in 1996 prohibits the dissemination of the results of genetic testing. But as the CEO of one insurance company testified that when his company could not give genetic causes as a reason for refusal to insure, their agents searched assiduously for other preexisting conditions in the person's medical history that could be legitimately used to deny insurance. The confidentiality of genetic screening data will be a major concern of the time when genetic screening becomes widespread.

Incidentally, all states do some genetic screening of new-born babies. Pennsylvania does just three—for hypothyroidism that leads to cretinism, for sickle cell anemia, and Phenylketonuria (PKU disease). Already over 950 women have had a double mastectomy as a result of genetic testing that revealed that they had two mutated genes, BRCA1 and BRCA2, that meant that there was a greater than 85% chance of their developing a fatal form of breast cancer.

Getting rich on human genes has been a dream shared by geneticists and investors alike. This hope rests on gaining exclusive property rights to the identification and sequencing of genes. This confers power to biotechnology and pharmaceutical firms to use this information in many ways, such as the making of vaccines, of creating missing or defective enzymes and hormones, of creating strains of animals suitable for organ transplant to human patients.

Although laboratories in many countries have secured patents on DNA segments that they have sequenced, there are still major problems to be resolved. The first gene to win a patent was in 1980 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Ananda Chakrabarty, a molecular biologist working for General Electric, was permitted to patent a genetically engineered bacterium that could digest and clean up oil spills.

More than 1,500 such patents have been granted but more than 5,000 applications still await disposition. Their ultimate fate is far from certain. Academic scientists and at least

one major pharmaceutical company have launched a campaign in opposition to such proprietary claims on the human genome by encouraging researchers to post discovered sequences in public databases. It seems probable that the issues involved in genome patenting will eventually be resolved in the courts and this will take time. Many observers believe that most human genes will be identified and sequenced before these issues are finally resolved.

As an anthropologist I am particularly interested in aspects of the genome project which have not received as much publicity as the medical and eugenic implications. Biologists hope that by comparing the genomes of various animals they will be able to trace the tree of evolution back to beginnings. In much the same way, anthropologists hope to reconstruct recent human evolutionary history. By comparing genomes of various racial and ethnic groups, relationships will be revealed and the degree of that relationship measured. Geneticists have begun the analysis of DNA from ancient human remains from mummies and frozen individuals. There are even hopes that some Neanderthal remains may reveal the fate of that human variety.

In this connection the Human Genome Diversity Project's goals are relevant. This undertaking is directed by a committee of international members who seek to make a genetic study of the various racial and ethnic groups which presently make up the human species. To this purpose it plans to establish a centralized collection of DNA from these many groups.

This project ran into explosive trouble when blood collected from a highland New Guinea tribesman showed a feature which United States National Institutes of Health scientists patented in March of 1995. The patent was for the DNA structure of a T cell lymphotropic virus named HTLV-1. The knowledge of the structure permitted the development of vaccines that would protect against a form of lymphatic cancer and which also permitted the development of treatments for the disease. A group of organizations and individuals have thundered condemnation of this patent. Does the potential value of this knowledge belong to the United States, to the tribe of some 260 persons from which the blood sample came, or to all humanity? The United States has hastily disclaimed any interest in profiting

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A thoughtful look at the issue.

Gun Control?

by William H. Searles

About the Author



William Searles entered business following WWII after active duty in the U.S. Navy and receiving his M.B.A. from Harvard

Business School. He has held numerous marketing and manufacturing positions across the U.S. He is past president and life trustee of Grace Community Center of Toledo, which provides education enrichment for inner city youth.



This paper was delivered to the Toledo, Ohio torch club on April 15, 1996.

When Ed Weber requested I prepare a Torch paper on any one of a variety of controversial subjects, I chose Gun Control and added the question mark because I did not at that time have a clear picture of what I could advocate as good public policy. With all the noise and clamor, I believed strongly that we Americans need some straight thinking and forthright action in this field for the sake of our public and individual well being. Let me share my journey in pursuit of these goals with you, so that one person's exploration may add to or subtract from your convictions on the subject.

If we think generically about guns for a moment, and describe their potential, we have a list something like this:

They have the potential to maim or kill living creatures (humans included) at an extended distance, with or without the awareness of the targeted party. However, with an awareness, the threat of harm is an extreme coercion—to force actions which would not otherwise be taken.

So—guns are issued to military forces to destroy or force the surrender of the human "enemy"; they are employed in the hunting of animals for both sport and animal population control; they are carried by police officers to enforce the laws of our nation at the "hands-on" level. On the flip side of this equation, guns are used by law breakers to enforce their demands on others.

An equally disturbing use of guns is not by the professional lawbreaker, but by individuals in a moment of fear, passion or just plain carelessness, the person who harbors deep resentment and expresses it by killing employees in the workplace. The person who occasionally contemplates suicide and has the gun at hand to do it now. The drug addict that just has to get a "fix,"—and has a gun at hand. The enraged husband or wife who in a fit of anger kills spouse and children. The fearful homeowner who thinks he hears a thief and tragically kills a family member. The young boy, showing his macho or just horsing around, who kills himself or his friend.

Both by example in what we watch and read, and by the frequent availability of the instrument of force, we are becoming in our actions, a far more violent society. I am sure that violent human emotions are not new! What is new is the multiplying availability of guns (sales of about a 3.5 million handguns a year) and today's teaching of "no consequences."

Today's teaching, principally via television "entertainment" is that shooting a person has little consequence, other than a big "UGH" and rolling over on the ground. Heroes never die, never shoot the wrong person and are never accountable for taking so called "justice" into their own hands. *This teaching* has not had a reality check! The bad learning is *coupled* with a broad availability of guns and ammunition.

Before getting into the issue of handgun control, I thought we should look at the size of the issue: How many guns are out there, how many are sold each year and what level of fatalities are we talking about.

	Total* Handguns	Assault
Private Possession	222	76
Annual Sales (licensed)	7.5	3.5

Source: U.S. Bureau - Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, Nov. 1994 (* # in millions)

	Death by firearms):		
	Total	Handguns	Others
Total (b)	37,500		
Murders (a)	15,300	12,500	2,800
Suicide (b)	18,200		
Unintentional Deaths (b) & Other	1,400		2,600

Source: (a) F.B.I. Uniform Crime Report for 1992 (b)

National Center for Health Statistics, 4/21/94

It was frankly a shock to me to see that suicide was a larger cause of firearm deaths than murders.

Also, when we see the 12,500 handgun murders on this table, it is easy to ascribe this to the murderous intent of criminals. This is an incorrect conclusion. The F.B.I. in their 1992 Uniform Report Crime Report includes a table of "Murder Circumstances by Weapon." It records that all felonies and suspected accounted for only *one-third* of the handgun murders. Out of the remaining *two-thirds*, garden variety *arguments accounted for 60% and juvenile gang killings 10%*. This is significant when we get to the question of carrying concealed weapons.

For my own education, I wanted to check the experience of individuals whose work brings them much closer to the reality of gun use in our own community.

Toledo Chief of Police, Gerald Galvin was willing to spend a half hour with me relating his experiences. Chief Galvin has had a long acquaintance with firearms with 8 years of military service (including Vietnam duty) and over 20 years of police work. He had no problems with the broad ownership of sporting rifles and shotguns. Handguns kept in the home or place of business did not pose an unreasonable threat assuming their owners were trained and guns were properly stored.

On the subject of concealed weapons, namely handguns, Chief Galvin spoke adamantly. Handguns have one purpose, close in, hand combat. Concealed weapons substantially increase the risk of violence to the owner, the public at large and to law officials. There should be no excuse to carry them in public places and prohibition is still the law in the State of Ohio. Little wonder that police chiefs across the state came out solidly this year against Senate Bill 68 which would have opened the door on permits to carry concealed weapons in the State of Ohio.

On the subject of gun safety, Chief Galvin stated accidental gun discharge was always a threat no matter how well a person is trained. It has happened to him three times in his career. His sons, also well trained, had

it happened on a deer hunting trip last year. Fortunately, their only casualty was the transmission of their truck. Accidental gun discharge happened to me when pheasant hunting with my Grandfather many years ago and what could have happened still scares me.

Another perspective came from a probation officer with our Toledo Courts. He sees an ever increasing number of young black men on drug violations who are still recovering from gun shot wounds associated with a prior offense. The drug trade has increased the stakes and in spite of injuries, they are fearful NOT to have a gun. In any theft, guns are the first item taken, good for sale or kept if better than what they now own. They are in the midst of their own armaments race to be one up on their competitor. Guns do not create the violence but they do make it far more lethal.

The probation officer commented that these young men do not see "consequences of their actions" as you and I would. In his words, with no support system, few positive role models, little education, a painful past and little hope for the future, the present becomes everything! Simple arguments turn violent with disastrous results. And prison isn't all that bad. They will be with people they know, have free medical care, get three meals a day and a place to sleep.

His consuming worry is that our society is building more prisons, moving to the suburbs and doing very little at the prevention end of the scale. He reminds us that prison terms come to an end and those convicted today will return to open society and the cycle is set up to repeat itself in ever increasing numbers.

A third interview was Mrs. Toby Hoover who has been active in gun control initiatives in Toledo and across Ohio since 1973. That year, her husband was shot and killed in the family hardware store at 10:00 a.m. on a Friday morning. In brief, a 54 year old man with a 34 year old criminal record escaped from a Michigan penal farm, bought a handgun on the street and kidnapped a truck driver for a ride to Toledo. At a bar, he was directed to their store as a place to buy ammunition. In the store, after the purchase, he proceeded to load his gun. When asked to refrain from loading, he became abusive and the clerk called out for help from the manager. When her husband emerged from the back room, he was immediately shot and killed. The criminal was later apprehended, convicted and, thanks to Mrs. Hoover's efforts, denied parole. He died in prison 20 years later.

These events were traumatic in the life

of this young family and Mrs. Hoover's anti-handgun crusade keeps going because of the great fear she sees in the community, particularly among school children. Fear puts a gun in their hands and fear produces a hair trigger reaction. Then there is no way to reverse the tragedy of the moment.

Now let's hear what the other side has to say about all this! I solicited the legislative agenda, programs for gun safety and supporting rationale from the following organizations:

International Shooting Coaches Association
American Shooting Sports Council

National Rifle Association of America (which we know as the NRA)

National Shooting Sports Foundation (Trade Association of Firearms Manufacturers)

The most succinct response was from the President of the International Shooting Coaches Association. I quote "We are basically made up of Olympic type shooting sports coaches and make it a strict rule never to mix politics or religion with sports. "Shooting is a Game, Friendship is our Aim."

The response from the National Rifle Association promoted two primary positions: (1) That there be no restrictions on the sale and transfer of firearms and (2) That criminal law enforcement be substantially strengthened.

On the first position, there was a wealth of material on the second amendment promoting the position that the right to own and bear arms not be infringed. The actual interpretation of the law aside, the National Rifle Association has very successfully promoted this position among the U.S. electorate.

On this subject, I quote retired Supreme Court Justice Warren Burger—a gentleman of substantial conservative credentials. Speaking of the NRA and its interpretation of the Second Amendment—

"This has been the subject of one of the greatest pieces of fraud, I repeat the word, "fraud," on the American people by special interests that I have ever seen in my lifetime."

If you want a good summation of the law and court decisions on the second amendment, I suggest you read the Torch paper in the Winter 1996 issue entitled "Is There a Right to Bear Arms?" by Richard A. Repp. He recaps the courts' interpretation of the law holding that the second amendment prohibits the national government from limiting State militias' use of arms—but does *not* grant an unfettered right to individual citizens to bear arms. The right to own and use firearms for defense of

person and property is instead a common law right. However the definition of that right is the province of the police power of individual states and lesser political jurisdictions.

Included in the NRA material was a reprint of an article from the March 1994 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, entitled "The False Promise of Gun Control" by Daniel D. Polsby. Although the statistics were inconclusive, there was much well reasoned logic in the article which I would like to relate.

- Professional criminals consider their gun a "tool of the trade" and will generally carry a weapon more adequate than the oft described "Saturday night special!" Their sources are often gun swaps, trade on the street or theft.

- A person with criminal intent may very well be deterred by the probability of his intended victim being armed. Police with a display of side arms are not sought out as victims.

- Restrictions on gun sales will inevitably drive up the price of guns through reduced availability.

- Restrictions on gun sales such as by the cities of Chicago and New York are easily thwarted by buying in the suburbs, outside the jurisdiction of the city. Federal restriction on gun sales have a greater effect than State laws although national borders are often breached as we have seen in the drug trade.

- "In the long run, there is no substitute for addressing the root causes of crime, i.e. poor education, lack of job opportunities and disintegration of families which leaves crime as an easy choice." Stated positively, "nothing guarantees prudent behavior like a sense of the future! With average skills in reading, writing, and math, young people can look forward to constructive employment and the straight life that steady work makes possible."

The response from The American Shooting Sports Council, representing the Firearms Industry struck me as better balanced than that of the N.R.A. The American Shooting Sports Council speaks for the firearms industry trade association, namely the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute. Their combined position is summarized as "Responsible Distribution,—Responsible Ownership." More specifically, it supports:

- Appropriately thorough background checks of individuals seeking to obtain a Federal Firearms License (for gun dealers).

- Advocates a system of instantaneous point-of-sale background checks on retail sales.

- The Industry position goes on to support efforts to eliminate guns in schools, —Urges the entertainment industry to reconsider its portrayal of gun violence, —Urges strengthening our criminal justice system, —Urges Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to intensify its effort to prosecute *illegal* gun sales and pledges to sell their products to only legitimate retain firearms dealers.

Switching now to the other side of the confrontation, most of you will be familiar with Handgun Control, Inc. and its sister organization, Center to Prevent Handgun Violence. These organizations, both chaired by Sarah Brady have been largely responsible for moving two major pieces of legislation into law. In these efforts, they have been joined by the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. The Coalition is made up of about 45 organizations with which many people will have an affiliation.

The first legislation is the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, which became effective February 28, 1994. Its principal provisions are:

- A 5 day waiting period on the purchase of handguns through licensed dealers, allowing local law enforcement offices search time to accept or reject applications dependent upon felony, drug and court records.

- A requirement that dealers notify local police of the purchase of 2 or more pistols or revolvers by a party within a period of 5 consecutive business days.

- Makes theft of firearms from a federal firearms licensee (dealer) a federal crime with a fine up to \$10,000 and imprisonment up to 10 years.

The second piece of current gun control legislation is the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, becoming effective September 14 of that year. Its major provisions are these:

- The assault weapons ban - bars the importation, manufacture and sale of these weapons. The bill names 19 types and defines their characteristics. It also contains express exemption for hunting and sporting firearms, listing 670 types and exempting others that do not fit the assault weapons profile.

- Gun dealer licensing reform - requiring applications to conform to applicable state and local laws, permits warrantless search of licensee's records relating to firearms involved in a criminal investigation and requiring the reporting of the theft of firearms.

- Bans juvenile possession of handguns and the sale, delivery or transfer of a handgun to someone 18 years old or younger.

- Bars possession of a gun by those under a restraining order because of threats against their spouse, former spouse or their children.

Beyond these gun control provisions, there were many other provisions of this act including funding for six years, FY 1995 through FY 2000. It authorized \$8.8 billion for aiding localities in placing 100,000 additional policemen on the street, authorized \$8.9 billion for building additional prison space and \$5.35 billion for crime prevention programs.

We have seen the House of Representatives vote to repeal the assault weapons ban but the Senate does not appear anxious to follow suit. Before going further, let us look at U.S. handgun violence in an international perspective.

1992 DEATHS BY HANDGUNS

	Deaths*	Per Million Pop.
Japan	60	0.5
Great Britain	33	0.6
Australia	13	0.7
Sweden	36	4.1
Canada	128	4.5
Switzerland	97	12.4
United States	13,495	51.9

* *Handgun Control, Inc. Washington, D.C.*

The contrasts here are extreme with U.S. handguns deaths roughly 100 times the per capita rate experienced in Japan, Great Britain and Australia and 10 times the rate in Sweden and next door Canada. Switzerland with its national militia will have army machine guns in about a quarter of its homes, but has fairly tight restrictions on handguns.

Yes, the United States is different! We have a legacy of guns on the homestead and family farm. Hunting was for anyone who cared to participate with a consequent widespread acceptance of firearms ownership. But then again, so was Canada.

But today, most of us live in an urban setting and we need to rethink the place of guns in our present day society. Actually, the focus of what needs to be done is not just *gun control*, but the larger issue of how do we, *control gun violence!* Let me share with you the position which I now feel holds the best promise for reducing the level of gun violence.

F.B.I. data from 1985 to 1993 - show that murders committed by adults age 25 or older decreased 20 percent. In the same period, homicides committed by 18 to 24 year old males increased 65 percent. Even worse,

homicides committed by 14 to 17 year olds increased by 165 percent. Since 1984, the number of teenagers committing murder with a gun has quadrupled. I think this tells us where our problem is!

In terms of gun control legislation, I would first speak in terms of the large majority of the U.S. population which does not live in daily fear of personal assault or the theft of their property. I believe their best interests are served by the retention of present Federal Laws, namely

- Let the ban on assault weapons stay in place. These arms have not legitimate role in the hands of private citizens.

- Let the Brady law stay in place. The 5 day waiting period in the first 11 months screened out 3.5% of handgun applications. The 3.5% refusal rate translates to a national total of about 130,000 refusal per year. The reasons for denying the applications for handgun purchases were 71% had felony records, 15% were fugitives from the law, 11% were illegal drug users and 3% were under restraining orders.

I do not believe that further federal restriction on handgun sale or ownership is either necessary or desirable. The reasons are that there is already enough available law to allow enforcement agencies to proceed against criminal activities and further restrictions might well give rise to pervasive undercover gun trafficking as we have seen in illegal drugs.

The real future contests regarding gun control will be at the state level on the issues of carrying concealed weapons. Let us take a quick look at the present patterns across the country.

Licensing: Carrying Concealed Weapons Prohibited in eight states (including Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and Kentucky)

Permitted by police issue in 15 states (must demonstrate specific need, restricted to stated times and places)

Permitted by police issue in 26 states (excludes convicted felons, lawful purpose such as self defense)

No license or permit required in only 1 state (Vermont)

I am thankful that Ohio is one of 8 states which still prohibits carrying concealed weapons. My rationale is very simple. The problem of encountering armed criminals is bad enough. I do not want to increase this risk by the threat of encountering Mr. Average Citizen—ready to pull a gun on me or my family because of accidental encounters and flare of tempers. I firmly believe that our society needs to remain dependent upon police powers to preserve

rights under law and not be subject to vigilante reactions.

Now let us look at the small but growing portion of our population which does live in real fear for their life and property on a day to day basis. This includes:

- The individual pursuing a criminal career - constantly under threat from the law and competitors in the same trade—all using guns to force their will on others.
- Both juveniles and adults living on the perimeter of criminal activity who by what they see, where they live, work or go to school, fear an immediate threat to their lives.
- People encountering not criminals, but others already armed with guns, who then get caught up in a microarms race because they too feel threatened.

These groups are going to be able to get the guns they want with little regard to restraints placed on legitimate retail gun trade. There are enough guns in circulation and added each year by theft from legitimate purchasers to supply this arena for decades.

So what do we do about gun violence in our society, a malignancy that good folks living in a rough part of town already contend with, a malignancy that is spreading to your neighborhood and mine! And like a cancer, it appears to be caused by a myriad of circumstances. Those who have spent a career studying the problem of gun violence, come up with many answers, but they do point in the same direction! The direction is simple, remove the conditions which breed the sense of need to own and carry guns for personal and property protection. Let me list some of those that seem most pertinent.

- Let's work on community policing so that there are no abandoned areas of our city, but let's do it with the concurrence and support of the people that live there.
- At the same time we enforce existing laws on punishing criminal behavior, let's remember we pay about \$35,000 per year for confinement of convicted criminals. To which we must add the cost to society of having a non-productive person for this time. The old adage about an ounce of prevention being worth a pound of cure got the 1 to 16 cost ratio about right.
- Let's maintain Ohio's law against carrying concealed weapons and slow the proliferation of handguns in our community and state. It may not stop felons, but it will slow the opportunities for murderous arguments, suicide, and accidental deaths. Although I have dealt primarily with fatalities this evening, those of you in the medical profession could undoubtedly recite the very large cost for patching up the gunshot wound

which, thanks to your efforts, are not fatal.

- Let's concentrate on what young people in disadvantaged neighborhoods live with—for their learning and attitudes will influence whether our society slowly begins to cure itself or continues in its present spiral toward increased gun violence. Let's use criminal law enforcement more creatively and right along with it, let's look at how to replace a host of negative experiences with more positive ones.

Can we offer good playground areas and activities which are clean, safe and well run for positive play and learning experiences, especially over the summer months. Or do we let the troublemakers set the agenda for the young people?

We can more fully support both public and private agencies working on youth problems with our tax dollars, contributions and our personal time. It is so important that these young people acquire the skills to succeed and achieve a positive sense of their own future!

What we can do, either directly or through agencies to offer summer and starting employment opportunities so that young people experience positive results from work and see good role models? Unemployment rates of 40% to 50% among young black males is a frightful problem, both for them and eventually for us.

Lastly, let's do something for all the young people of our nation. By the end of high school, the average young person has already seen 18,000 murders on television. Each year, children see more than a thousand stylized and explicit rapes, murders, armed robberies and assaults on television. And there are hundreds of studies which have arrived at the same conclusion that—"viewing violence increases violence." At least one answer is in public boycott. Write the advertiser, "I don't like your violent program and I will not buy your product."

So this is the journey that I have traveled, from the noisy debate about gun control to a hard look at the personal and community circumstances which breed gun violence.

"Kevorkian," from page 9

along with the necessary safeguards to prevent exploitation or abuse.

We need carefully crafted guidelines and regulations containing such features as a waiting period between the request for physician-assisted suicide and the issuance of the prescription; requirement for a second independent physician opinion, mandatory psychiatric evaluation if symptoms of depression are evident.

We must be willing to participate in the debate responsibly, with charity and openness; willing to look at the complexities of each situation rather than falling back on some ideological orthodoxy, careful to protect both the right to live and the right to die.

* "DRG" means Diagnostic Related Group. It is the designation used in the Medicare plan for hospital reimbursement. Medicare, for example, says that a hospital will be reimbursed X dollars for removal of a gall bladder, regardless of the actual cost. If the cost is over the DRG, the hospital loses. If it is under the DRG, the hospital gains. This provides an incentive to keep costs at a minimum. There are many, many such DRG's for all sorts and conditions of disease.

"History," from page 6

physics I studied long ago? Or for those of us who are older, why isn't my point of view or attitude towards gender or government or marriage or religion or anything else what it used to be? These things are different from what they were because we are alive. Living things change; so does the history of living things. The only things appearing not to change are inanimate or dead, and even inanimate and dead things change, only at a slower rate.

Let me end with a statement about history by Henry Kissinger that seems worth remembering: "History is not a cookbook of pretested recipes. It teaches by analogy, not by maxims. It can illuminate the consequences of actions in comparable situations. Yet each generation must discover for itself what situations are in fact comparable."⁵

References:

- ¹ For the flavor of Parkman's view, see the introduction to his *Pioneers of Frances in the New World* (Boston, 1865).
- ² Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *Growth of the American Republic*, 4th Edn. (New York, 1950), Vol. 1, pp.537-39.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 5th Edn. (New York, 1962), Vol. 1, pp.525-529.
- ⁴ Gregory M. Pfitzer, *Samuel Eliot Morison's Historical World* (Boston, 1991), pp.256-59.
- ⁵ Quoted in the editorial pages of the *Washington Post* during the summer of 1997. I neglected to cite the source when writing it down and a subsequent search in the *Post* and in recent articles by Kissinger failed to turn it up.

"Diversity," from page 23

variant strains. In the AIDS virus the gene known as env is the one which evolves fastest. Env codes for the envelope of the virus, which is what the human immune system tries to grasp and destroy. The env gene changes about a million times faster than the normal mutation rate of the host, the human body. In this way, according to present thinking, it keeps eluding the grasp of the immune system. In a sense, the weapon of the virus is variation itself."

Actually, both the pioneering forces as well as the conserving forces, are fraught with dangers. Explorers of the Arctics, of the pinnacles of human wisdom, of space, and the arts, the Madame Curies are all exposed to often deadly attacks. On the other hand, the sleeping warrior, the preserver of the status quo, the King during the French Revolution, the rabbit frozen to the ground with fear of the attacking eagle are all equally exposed to mortal danger. What will be the effects of cloning? What about the leveling effects of the same pop culture around the globe? What about the spread of Western civilization over other continents. What about the human power to destroy species and rain forests, reducing thus the heterogeneity of our planet and the potential for more evolution.

It is a rich field to study the pros and cons of homogeneity and heterogeneity. It goes beyond the bounds of this essay.

There are some conclusions we may draw.

- Heterogeneity has been with us since the beginning of time.
- Heterogeneity makes the evolutionary process possible.
- The evolutionary process has been with

us since the beginning of time.

- The evolutionary process is permeating the whole universe.
- The evolutionary process results mostly in increasing heterogeneity.
- Forces to stem and channel the evolutionary process have been with us since the beginning of time.
- Forces to stem and channel the evolutionary process permeate the whole universe.
- Forces to stem and channel the evolutionary process result mostly in more order or a degree of homogeneity.
- A certain balance between forces causing heterogeneities and those striving for homogeneity appears to prevail throughout the universe.

A picture comes to mind: Heterogeneity provides the substance for even more diversification. Homogeneity provides the glue to hold the substance together. If there is no glue to hold, evolution will come to a chaotic dead end. By the same token, if there is no new substance for more diversification the glue becomes unnecessary and the world dies of boredom.

One of the starting points of this paper was the question about a "Healthy" community. The cursory glance provided the answer that a heterogeneous community is clearly superior to the homogeneous community. Now, my answer is: It depends. It depends on the size of the community, on age, on the basic philosophy of the individual or the group.

A young society needs most likely an emphasis on homogeneity (strong laws, a strong will to succeed, common goals). A mature society - and these United States are a prime example - can celebrate and unfold

its heterogeneity under the laws of the land.

Some groups may well be strengthened by homogeneity of purpose, of belief. But the danger of inbreeding of thought may result in fanaticism, in an intellectual dead end. The world abounds with such groups, particularly in the areas of religion and political convictions.

Looking at a micro-community, I can imagine that an elderly person, who wants to live in the sunshine of the late-fall of life, likes a quiet and homogeneous surrounding, conducive to contemplation or just plain rest. The intellectually and artistically active and the physically active person, on the other hand, will prefer the daily exposure to young and old, to lively discussions, to politics and the arts, to people of differing beliefs, race, and opinions, to new challenges to hone a craft. If such an individual also enjoys a balance between new discoveries and quiet contemplation, that person has a good chance to grow. That person lives near the center of our universe until the end.

Concluding, I maintain that the quest for a healthy community is related to the quest for knowledge about the evolution of this universe. The universe provides answers.

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1. John Horgan, "COBE Corroborated," *Scientific American*, Vol. 268, Feb. 1993, p.22.
2. Steven Weinberg, "Life in the Universe," *Scientific American*, Vol. 271, Oct. 1994, p.44-49.
3. Sten Odenwalk, "Why the Big Bang is NOT an Explosion," *The Washington Post*, May 14, 1997, p.H1.
4. Jonathan Weiner, *The Beak of the Finch*, Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York.

"DNA," from page 26

form this patent but the protest continues nonetheless.

In conclusion, is the Human Genome Project a blessing or the way to lose our soul? Will the increased biologizing of human motivation lead us to a loss in the sense of responsibility for our behavior? Do we become puppets to the directions given by our genes? What would such a loss mean to our legal and justice systems?

Is it possible that an increased knowledge of heredity patterns in ethnic groups will bring about a stigmatizing of

these people? Will genetic screening mean that some persons will be disadvantaged in seeking jobs or insurance? Will parents try to produce designer children meeting some parental whim for superiority? Despite all the dire predictions of critics of the program, I believe that in the very long run it will prove to be a blessing. I do not believe that its greatest blessing will be in prolonging human life, but rather in the ability to give health and vigor to the approximately one percent of all babies born with some major genetic defect, and to those individuals doomed to an early death due to a degenerative disease.

We can only hope that as science gives us more and more control over cosmic forces, we as a species develop the wisdom and humility to exercise that control in enhancing human well-being. You can speculate on what direction that might take.

James Watson, the codiscoverer of the structure of DNA and the first director of the Human Genome Project, when asked what he foresaw for it for the future, said, "I guess we'll make ourselves a little better." Let's hope he was correct.

A blessing or a curse? Only time will tell.

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Things to Do While in Toledo

Friday and Saturday activities include the Toledo Museum of Art, which boasts a glass collection from ancient to modern times, paintings, sculpture, furniture and more, and the Toledo Zoo, one of the highest rated zoological parks in the nation. See the history of the 1813 siege by Indians and British on the Maumee River Historical Trail, and the bustling riverfront on the Maumee Bay Maritime Cruise. Also, feel free to visit the Center of Science and Industry and the Old West End National Historic District, 25 blocks filled with homes designed and built in the Victorian era.

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Reflection

*"Every man is encompassed
by a cloud of comforting
convictions, which move with
him like flies on a summer
day."*

--Bertrand Russell: *Sceptical Essays*
