

In this issue:

- Thoughts on the darker side of the human experience...
- ... on war
- ... on terrorism
- ... on slavery
- But also why Western values have held and still hold the best hope

THE WESTERN WORLD: NOT PERFECT, BUT STILL BETTER

It would be stretching things somewhat to claim that the four essays in this issue of *The Individual* contained an explicit, over-all theme. There is, however, a thread running through them: the superiority of the Western world.

Professors Levitt and McNaron and then the latter on his own describe how the darker passages in the *history* of the West have been translated into an enduring antagonism towards the very *idea* of the West—the superiority of which *vis-à-vis* the non-West they amply illustrate—by means of multiculturalism.

Peter Richards describes one of the most infamous of these darker passages, the Atlantic slave trade. However, he does so with reference to the fact that the West was both far from the worst offender and moreover voluntarily relinquished the practice from a position of power and internal moral rejection rather than defeat and external compulsion.

Richard Garner’s contribution to this thread may seem the most tangential and

implicit, but it is, I suggest, an important one. He robustly demolishes the bar-room and lecture-hall posturing of those who claim to see no difference between the actions of the armed forces of civilised Western nations—and I refer the reader to the three other essays in this journal—and, let’s be frank, those of barbarians.

This leads me to a final point. This issue of *The Individual* isn’t so much “libertarian” as “Western”, with libertarianism being but one—and sadly, a minority one—form of the Western tradition whereby political settlements are pluralist and open to peaceful revision. And yet it’s sad to hear libertarians denouncing political opponents from *within* the Western tradition with the sort of venom that ought to be saved for those from *without*. I should know. I’ve done it too often myself!

Nigel Meek

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EUROCENTRISM VERSUS MULTICULTURALISM

Professor Stephen R. Levitt & Professor David L. McNaron

Searching for an Illusory Idyll

If you had been a university professor in 1958 working in Europe, Canada or the United States, how would you have viewed European civilization? At that time, the Continent was divided between two hostile camps, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. In 1956, the Russians had brutally suppressed the Hungarian uprising; in 1939 the Nazis unleashed the most horrific war in history, which led to forty million deaths and devastation on a scale hitherto unimagined.¹ In 1914, the European powers went to war and succeeded in four years to kill off or cripple an entire generation of young men and to birth the first modern totalitarian state in Russia, thereby shattering the promise of the Enlightenment. In 1958, thirteen years after the ovens of Auschwitz had cooled and the rubble from bombing raids had been cleared, there were profound reasons for scholars to cast a jaundiced eye on European civilization. Conversely, the lives of the indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia and South America must have appeared, at a remove, peaceful, safe and idyllic.²

The impact that the horrors of the first half of the twentieth century in Europe had upon the outlook of the intelligentsia cannot be underestimated. A number of scholars came to view European civilization as tainted by slavery, conquest, oppression, and genocide.³ This anti-European bent in the 1960s found momentum and direction not only in the rejection of European values, but also the search for a replacement doctrine: a view which was at once tolerant, anti-colonial, non-European, relativistic, and cultural; in short, "multiculturalism." The new view would lack the universalistic tendencies that rationalized the aggression of the West, an impulse that ran from Alexander through the Roman Empire, Charlemagne, and the Catholic Church to the expansionist modern state. Because its modus operandi was will-to-power, Europe's intellectual prowess, inventiveness and dynamism became highly suspect. Academics' sympathy went out instead to those who suffered under Western hegemony.⁴ After all, it was Enlightenment thinking that spawned the industrialization that made possible, if not inevitable,

total wars and total states.

This retrenchment by academics fueled a rejection of the Enlightenment values of truth, objectivity, and rationality that extended to the rejection of Europe itself as the font of humanity and progress.⁵ The fear of the European was acted upon by politicians on the international level in the 1960s and 1970s as well.⁶ In order to make the peoples of the world more self-determining and autonomous, the European powers were restrained and their colonies around the world liberated (at least in the negative sense of throwing off external domination).

The Reality of the "Third World"

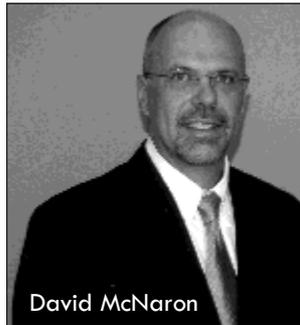
Fifty years later in 2008, the geopolitical landscape has changed dramatically. First, the German problem in Europe has been resolved; central Europe enjoys unprecedented peace and prosperity. Second, not only has no international European war occurred since 1945, but with the birth of a European Union many groups have learned to live peacefully with one another under a common legal and economic framework. When one looks at factors such as longevity, income, access to culture, vacation time and medical care, European nations excel, offering quite possibly the highest standard of living and quality of life in history to the vast majority of their citizens.⁷

By contrast, how has the non-European world fared? African, Asian and South American nations have had at least two generations of freedom from colonial rule to set a new course and determine their own political destinies. Some, like Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea have generated, if not democratic republics, at least legitimate governments that provide high levels of prosperity to their people. However, the vast majority of "Third World" nations appear, by comparison to Europe, as backward, corrupt, violent, and disorganized.⁸ The rhetorical change—replacing the qualifier "primitive" with "developing"—did nothing to alter the facts.

"... the vast majority of "Third World" nations appear, by comparison to Europe, as backward, corrupt, violent, and disorganized."

Multiculturalist Revisionism

Nonetheless, rather than re-examining the paradigm created in the 1950s of a troubled Europe and utopian Asia, Africa, and South America, in light of significant changes, older scholars and many of their present-day disciples cling tenaciously to post-war notions. Instead of revising their theories in light of new evidence, they have become revisionist



David McNaron

and forced these unpleasant facts into the procrustean bed of their old theories, or else developed *ad hoc* explanations of the anomalies. An example of this occurs when one reads that

the leaders of “developing” nations with poor educational policies and corrupt governments are not responsible for the situation of their failed economies. Rather, after more than fifty years some postulate that when something goes very wrong it must be the fault of Europe’s colonial legacy.⁹ The phrase “internal colonialism” was introduced to ensure a non-falsifiable rationale. Notice that this move is itself subtly hegemonic in that it denudes non-Europeans of agency, implying that only the European can act and be held responsible. Other peoples are passive; they are merely acted upon. One could counter that it is indeed possible that the Third World’s problems do stem historically from colonial exploitation. The artificial division into nation states and the exposure to urban civilization have been anathema to some tribal peoples. Likewise, American Blacks’ problems may be owing to the legacy of slavery, racism and segregation. Be that as it may, what is to be done now, and by whom? The indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia and South America as well as the minorities in the West would be best served by focusing forwards upon the future and development, not backwards upon recrimination and blame.

All of this relates to an article by Nigel Meek, published in *The Individual* in 2003 about multiculturalism.¹⁰ If scholars influence politicians, and these politicians take it as a given that European civilization and its values are wicked, then a logical next step is not only to free non-Europeans of colonial influence but to dilute European culture at home. Hence the anti-Europeanists advocate multicultural-

ism: Europe’s status, despite its pretensions, is but one particular culture among many. But all this assumes that “the European” is some monolithic tradition hostile to others. In fact, ancient Rome offers a prime example of a multicultural, successful European society. The Romans generally permitted other cultures and peoples to flourish within their borders—they neither hated nor feared them. The Romans allowed this cultural diversity because they wished to pursue international trade and commerce and to govern their territories more effectively.¹¹

If multicultural influences are introduced to Britain and Europe for positive reasons, to enhance trade, to bring in new perspectives, to build up the arts and sciences, this will probably be a good thing. However, if immigrants are used instead to diminish “Britishness” and European values for the sake of pursuing a self-hating policy of cultural dilution and to lower wages, this state of affairs will not produce, in the long run, healthy results. When one delves into the thinking of Western multiculturalists, one sees in their exaggerated love of others a hatred of self.

This outlook is undesirable for the following reasons. In the beginning of the twentieth century what led to two horrific wars was

unbridled nationalism combined with violent and irrational racism. The multiculturalists rightly rejected these values. However, in their

exaggerated rejection of these old values, they have taken the energy from racism and nationalism and transformed it into a new movement.¹² One has to admit that in the transformation from racism and nationalism into multiculturalism and globalism, some of the destructive energy of the former has dissipated. However, the underlying irrationalism of the old system remains a key component of the new construct. Put more specifically, what remains is a hatred and rejection of the values of Europeans and the Enlightenment.¹³ So with the hatred of others transformed and given new life into the hatred of self, the old nationalist and white supremacist contempt for European liberalism survives and thrives, and now finds new and fertile breeding



Stephen Levitt

“... [in] the thinking of Western multiculturalists, one sees in their exaggerated love of others a hatred of self.”

grounds on university campuses throughout the world.

The Shared Outlook of the “new Left” and “old Right”

So, in this way, the new Left as well as the new and old Right share a similar viewpoint. Instead of the scientific method being applied to the social sciences, which was a central idea of the Enlightenment, the multiculturalists make use of established (i.e. accepted among themselves) ideological positions. The goal of research, teaching and writing seems more akin to indoctrination than fostering a critical attitude.

The Left seems more interested in what conclusions one holds than the arguments that can be marshaled for one's positions. This is the obscurantism of the twenty-first century, and in many respects it resembles the older version practiced by the Catholic Church in the 16th century, by the Russian Tsars in the 17th and 18th centuries, and by the Germans in the twentieth century during their book-burning campaigns. Multiculturalists, like their counterparts in the past, are not particularly interested in debates which challenge their outlook; rather they seek a discussion of the accepted doctrines to find new ways of “proving” the established truths.

The old Right used terror to silence discussion. The new Left, which does not respect individual rights, uses instead character assassination to silence or redirect discussion. If someone raises a question about immigration policy or cultural dilution in Europe or America, he is often portrayed by the multiculturalists as a racist or fascist.¹⁴ Who among us wishes to be likened to George Wallace standing at the doors of the University of Alabama forbidding bright and capable Black students the chance to better themselves? Who wishes to be likened to a Spanish Conquistador cutting off the hands of natives when they were incapable of handing over the required yearly tribute in gold or silver? So a discussion of the most fundamental questions about the nature of society is postponed again and again, often, we aver, to avoid being smeared. And of course this all-too-common attitude among academics is mimicked uncritically by reporters and media commentators who have been schooled by them.

Possible Responses

So what is to be done? First, there needs to be more open discussion about the direction of Western societies. For example, if there is a right for aboriginal peoples to maintain their cultures, then one must ask, is there a corresponding right for European peoples to maintain their cultural identities? If there is a right for Palestinians to have a state to pursue their “Palestinianness,” is there not a corresponding right for British persons to have a state to pursue their “Britishness?”¹⁵ Second, there needs to be some better organization of the forces in the middle of the political spectrum to challenge the multiculturalists' rhetoric. To some extent, this journal is one such mechanism. Third, political parties need to become more candid about their cultural and immigration policies. If there is indeed democracy, then citizens need to be given the choice whether or to what extent multiculturalism is furthered in their land, and at what rate, as this might be the most long-lasting and fundamental decision they are ever asked to make. Fourth, it seems to us that a thorough and more honest discussion of immigration policy, and its connection to foreign policy, needs to take place—this will involve cutting through the “St. Louis dilemma.”¹⁶

In 1939, a shipload of assimilated and well educated Jews from Germany arrived in Cuba. At the last minute, the Cuban government refused to admit the refugees, and they sailed toward America. The American government under Roosevelt, although sympathetic, sent Coast Guard ships into the Atlantic to keep the ship out of American waters. Ultimately, the British, French, Dutch and Belgians gave refuge to the unfortunate passengers. The solution to the St. Louis problem, as it is postulated by liberal academics, was to allow the refugees sanctuary in the United States. Contrarily, we suggest that the solution to the problem of the St. Louis was not to grant the refugees sanctuary. The solution to the St. Louis was for the United States to step up the military pressure on Nazi Germany. Had America pursued a much more aggressive military policy in 1939, aimed at controlling the Fascists in Europe and Asia, instead of waiting until 1940 and 1941 to take action, millions of lives might have been saved. And so the St. Louis scenario repeats itself in the minds of scholars. They busy themselves saving the thousand refugees again and again from the decks of the St. Louis, and at the same time, they ignore or fail to ameliorate the plight of

“... there needs to be more open discussion about the direction of Western societies.”

hundreds of millions. In the United States, the multiculturalists help Mexicans find refuge. This is noble and good. However, is admitting one or two hundred thousand Mexicans each year to work in low paying jobs the only response of decent persons? Isn't the best way to help Mexicans to improve the economy in that nation? The best way to help Africa is to demand higher standards from their governments.¹⁷ This might include military intervention or sanctions, instead of granting a few thousand sorrowful refugees sojourn in Europe and America. And if political refugees are admitted, shouldn't they be admitted with some goal of returning to their homelands and providing an enlightened and educated intelligentsia to these nations, when their exile comes to an end?

So, while Pim Fortuyn lies dead,¹⁸ the issues he raised about the nature of European society and its relationship with the outside world in the twenty-first century are very much alive. As well, in the interests of all peoples, European and American immigration policy needs to become rational. It cannot be used as a mechanism to permit an educated elite to feel self-righteous because it has saved a few thousand people. There should be genuine concern for helping the hundreds of millions who remain oppressed and hungry around the world, and sincere, long-lasting solutions must be offered to help the developing world achieve more meaningful and permanent economic development as well as peace and stability. And when we drop the irrational hatred of self, and replace it with balanced and well-thought-out policies, we in the West will be much more able to help nations around the world achieve prosperity, rather than perpetuating dependence.

A new approach will ultimately involve demanding much higher standards from the leaders of the developing world and their peoples and responsible conduct. In a Europe free of self-hatred, academics and politicians will no longer find excuses and *ex post facto* rationalizations for bad behavior by irresponsible leaders in the Third World because they feel guilty about being European. Immigrants will be invited to Europe to further European interests, not to put a band-aid on the bleeding wounds of the Third World, to artificially lower wages, or to assuage feelings of guilt and self-loathing.

Most importantly, as the last buildings destroyed in World War II are now being re-

paired,¹⁹ hopefully the European psyche can be healed from the catastrophes of the twentieth century, such that it will exhibit a healthier and more rational demeanor.

Notes

(1) See Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (London: Pimlico, 1997). Davies estimates that there were slightly more than fourteen million military losses as well as more than twenty-seven million civilians killed. The figure of eight to nine million military deaths attributed to the Soviet Union includes "3-4 million Soviet POWs killed during Nazi captivity or on repatriation to the USSR" (p. 1328).

(2) About seventy-five thousand German Jews found refuge from the Nazi regime in Central and South America. See: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005468> The German film, *Nowhere in Africa*, is a fictionalized version of a true story of a Jewish family who finds refuge from the Nazis in Kenya. See Zeitgeist Films page for more information: <http://www.zeitgeistfilms.com/film.php?directoryname=nowhereinafrica>.

(3) Rosa Luxemburg argued in the second decade of the twentieth century that modern capitalism itself generates wars in order to create profit for the ruling class. One sees Luxemburg's view reproduced in the following passage written by Clara Zetkin in 1919 found at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1919/05/junius.htm>:

"But it was German imperialism, late-born and madly aggressive, which, by way of the provoking ultimatum of Austria to Serbia in 1914, carried out the war stroke that lit the pyre of capitalistic civilization. It was driven on irresistibly by the gold-hunger of German finance—represented in particular by the German Bank, the most concentrated, best organized institution of capitalistic finance in the world—which longed to exploit Turkey and Asia Minor, and the lust of profit of the armament industries; it received its ruinous fool's liberty from the barely-curbed despotism of Wilhelm II and the voluntary weakness of the bourgeois opposition."

One of us (Levitt) believes that one should not exclude economic profit as a factor that might explain why governments support wars. However, the authors of this paper reject a mono-causal explanation for historical phenomena.

In the 1960s, not only the system of economics of the West came under attack, but the entire civilization. John Searle writes:

"It runs something like this: The history of Western Civilization is in large part a history of oppression. Internally, Western Civilization oppressed women, various slave and serf populations, and ethnic and cultural minorities generally. In foreign affairs, the history of Western civilization is one of imperialism and colonialism. The so-called canon of Western civilization consists in the official publications of this system of oppression..."

John Searle, "The Storm over the University" in *Debating PC: The Controversy of Political Correctness on College*

"A new approach will ultimately involve demanding much higher standards from the leaders of the developing world..."

Campuses (New York: A Laurel Trade Paperback, 1992), p. 93.

(4) "It is primitive cultures that we are asked to study, to appreciate and to respect—any sort of culture except our own. A piece of pottery copied from generation to generation is held up to us an achievement—a plastic cup is not... An oxcart is an achievement—an airplane is not. Stonehenge is an achievement—the Empire State Building is not ..." Ayn Rand, *The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution* (New York: First Meridian Printing, 1993) p. 168.

(5) Paul Berman writes in the introduction to *Debating PC*: "According to the accusations, a new postmodern generation from the 1960s has come into power in the universities, mostly in the humanities departments but also in the central administrations. The post-modern professors promote a strange radical ideology that decries the United States and the West as hopelessly oppressive and that focuses on the reactionary prejudices of Western culture" (p. 1).

(6) Consider for a moment some of the resolutions of the United Nations from the 1960s and 1970s. Resolution 1514, "Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples," passed on December 14, 1960, states in the preamble that "the process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible...an end must be put to colonialism and all practices of segregation and discrimination associated therewith..." A full copy may be found at: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/993392.4.html> Resolution 3070, "Importance of the universal realization of the rights of peoples to self-determination and of the speedy granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights," passed on November 30, 1973 states in the preamble "Recognizing the imperative need to put an early end to colonial rule, foreign domination and alien subjugation, 1. Reaffirms the inalienable right of all people under colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation to self-determination, freedom and independence..." A full copy of this resolution may be found at the following site: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/787421.html>.

(7) According to the United Nations Human Development Index Rankings for 2007, twelve of the top twenty nations are members of the European Union. The other eight are: Iceland, Norway, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, Japan, the United States and New Zealand. See: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>.

(8) According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2007, the ten most corrupt nations are respectively: Laos, Afghanistan, Chad, Sudan, Tonga, Uzbekistan, Haiti, Iraq, Myanmar and Somalia. The least corrupt nations are: Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, Iceland, Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada and Norway. See: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007.

(9) BBC, "Africans on Africa: Colonialism" July 5, 2005. "Tajudeen Abdul Raheem, General-Secretary of the Pan-African Movement, believes that the corrupt and despotic governments that preside over many African countries have their roots in the colonial power structure." <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4653125.stm>.

(10) Nigel Meek, 'The UK is Not a "Multiracial, Multicultural" Country', *The Individual*, No. 34, May 2003, pp. 7-10.

(11) Donald R. Dudley, *The Civilization of Rome* (New York: Meridian Books, 1993) pp. 179-180.

(12) In his introduction to *Debating PC* Paul Berman writes that "a new generation of writers came along... who were worried about the mind-blowing ultra-radicalism of the older generation. These younger writers began to suspect that '68 Philosophy, in turning so ferociously against liberalism, sometimes bore a closer relation to the old German romantic philosophies of the far right (the cult of irrationalism, the eagerness to disparage universal ideas of rights, etc.) that anyone seemed to imagine when the theories were in vogue" (p. 10).

(13) Allan Bloom writes: "The American university in the sixties was experiencing the same dismantling of the structure of rational inquiry as had the German university in the thirties." *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 312-313.

(14) Stephen Levitt, "Newspeak: When Words can Kill," *The Individual*, No. 34, May 2003, pp. 2-3.

(15) The problem of self-determination and the question what could and should constitute the "nation" is universal. Senator Elma Campbell, in her maiden speech before the Upper House of the Bahamas Parliament, stated "The people of the Bahamas have long expressed their dissatisfaction and displeasure with the immigration problem in our country... They claim, Madam President, that the immigration problem has contributed to a growing burden on our nation's education, health and social services, and increasingly, the cultural identity and way of life of Bahamians... we have a problem, and that, if not addressed, it could tear us apart as a people and as a nation." This speech is found on the webpage of the political party, the Free National Movement, at: <http://www.freenationalmovement.org/news.php?id=424&cmd=view>.

(16) For a good discussion of the St. Louis incident see Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry, 1933-1945* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973). She notes that "the St. Louis was one of a small fleet of refugee ships roaming American waters at the time in search of a port" (pp. 141-142).

(17) Prime Minister Tony Blair on visit to South Africa said: "African governments should deliver their promises to consolidate democracy, build the capacity of government institutions to deliver essential services, redouble efforts to stamp out corruption, and encourage the private sector to grow. African governments should also hold other African governments to account." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6708917.stm. (May 31, 2007).

(18) See: BBC News: "Obituary: Pim Fortuyn" <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1971462.stm>. May 6, 2002.

(19) As recently as October 30, 2005 a moving ceremony occurred at the Church of Our Lady in Dresden. Among the six hundred distinguished guests were President Köhler, Chancellors Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel, as well as the ambassadors of France, Russia, the United Kingdom and United States. The Duke of Kent represented the British royal family. <http://www.frauenkirche-dresden.de/weihegottesdienst.html>.



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"According to the United Nations Human Development Index Rankings for 2007, twelve of the top twenty nations are members of the European Union."

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THE TROUBLE WITH MULTICULTURALISM

Professor David L. McNaron

Introduction

In our accompanying essay, Stephen Levitt and I have argued that multiculturalism has outrun its original justification and is having a pernicious influence. I wish now to enumerate its logical and ethical liabilities.¹ First of all the term "multiculturalism" is a rhetorical device: a "slanter" expression akin to the emotive phrases "pro-life" and "pro-choice" in that its denial seems to commit one to an indefensible position, "monoculturalism." The multiculturalists' alternative is the equal validity of all cultures—evidently at the expense of what was hitherto the dominant one. So I take multiculturalism, as an outlook, to consist of the conjunction of something like the following claims: (1) All cultures are equally valid or valuable; (2) Europe has oppressed and exploited other cultures; (3) justice requires that we promote cultural diversity. Claims (1) and (3) will be the subjects of my discussion.

The Superiority of Western Philosophy

Let us begin by understanding the intellectual underpinnings and origins of what we call "the West." Western civilization began in ancient Greece. The Greeks were the first thinkers to separate reason from myth. They provided naturalistic explanations of phenomena—and, indeed, of the cosmos itself—and developed systematic philosophical inquiry. While other cultures made advances in science, mathematics and engineering their discoveries never went beyond the realm of practical application.² The Greeks were the first to devise formal proofs and to conceive the world in purely rational terms based on logical argument and evidence. So what we refer to as *Western* is not so much a set of doctrines as

open-ended inquiry that follows the argument wherever it leads.

Frankly, Western philosophy *is* philosophy. The word "philosophy" may be used in a popular non-technical sense, so that it is true to say that most anyone has a philosophy in the sense of a general outlook. However, the term, when used to name a distinct academic/intellectual discipline refers to an enterprise that began in Greece and continued, in Europe, through the modern period on to this day. The fact that thinkers in other cultures held views on the nature of things does not make them philosophers. It's the *kind* of answers the Greeks gave (the kind that could be improved upon) and the way they *rationaly justified* their views that sets them apart. "Eastern Philosophy" is hence something of a misnomer, since historically no non-Western country divorced rational thinking from myth and religion or self-consciously focused on the resolute analysis of arguments. Rational theoretical inquiry—philosophical and scientific—undertaken for its own sake began in ancient Greece and provided the West with its characteristic outlook. For these reasons Antony Flew allots little coverage to Eastern thought in his *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, adding these words of explanation:

"This, and not European parochialism, is why the classics of Chinese philosophy get such short shrift. The Analects of Confucius and the Book of Mencius are both splendid, of their kind. But neither sage shows much sign of interest in the sort of question thrashed out in [Plato's] Theaetetus. The truth is that these classics contain little

"Frankly, Western philosophy *is* philosophy."

*argument of any sort.*³³

Now we find many philosophers, in the strict sense of the term, across the globe, East and West, so that what may at first have appeared a European cultural product achieved universal status. There should therefore be as little temptation to speak of Western philosophy as there is to speak of Western mathematics, physics, or logic. These words are not meant to disparage others; only to speak the truth. These fields are common coin, belonging to everyone who will partake of them. What matters is less *who* discovered these things than the *significance* of the discoveries themselves. Still, let's give credit where credit is due and resist fudging the facts out of a misplaced sense of "inclusiveness."

There can be no doubt that Europe has produced intellectual and artistic works of tremendous value as well as democratic government. The achievements of *ancient Greece alone* are stunning; and it is only the *foundation* of Western culture. Add to this the whole of modern science and philosophy and suffice it to say the case for cultural greatness is hardly baseless. But no one asserts, for this reason, that other cultures lack value or that their study should be excluded from college curricula in Western countries.⁴

So one could reply that European culture *deserves* the high esteem in which it has been held.

The Contradictions of Relativism

The relativist-minded will of course ask "By whose standards are Europe's products deemed so admirable?" This suggests the "Eurocentrist" has begged the question by assuming standards of evaluation biased in favor of the European. Those in power, so the argument runs, set the standards—in this case the hegemonic Europeans. The antidote to this "ethnocentrism" is to assume the multiculturalist thesis of the equal validity of all cultures and their standards. But the claim is self-refuting, since one standard is that not all standards are equally valid. Hence the claim undermines itself. Compare: if all truth is relative then the claim that all truth is relative is also relative. Further, if all *moral values* are relative to culture, it is inconsistent to claim that we should all be tolerant of other cultures. That is just the sort of universal moral principle that cultural relativism denies. The relativist cannot have it both ways. If cultural ethical

relativism is true, there are no universally valid moral truths, including a duty to be tolerant of other cultures or a universal claim to the equal validity of all cultures. Likewise, even the emphasis on cultural identity that multiculturalism alleges to protect must proceed from a non-cultural universal principle. In other words it is the "master narrative" of Western liberalism (to indulge in some post modernist-speak) itself that recognizes the importance of culture to people's identity and extends it beyond its own cultural confines.⁵

Western Similarity versus Multicultural Difference

The more subtle problem for multiculturalism is that there does seem to be something different about European civilization, such that it is not *merely* one culture among many. The reader will pardon me for speaking of "Europe" very broadly so as to include the UK. Europe—in its fundamental outlook, rather than matters of custom—is not merely a *particular culture*. This is because it is the society that *theorizes*. Philosophy and science aspire to rise above convention to discover first principles, laws, and universals that underlie the appearances. A famous example of this impulse, with implications for our discussion, involves the Stoics' principle that natural law binds everyone in a rational commonwealth, the cosmopolis. Rome went on to use this *jus naturalis* to underpin its *jus gentium* or law of peoples. The naturalist thesis is one of sameness and inclusiveness, as is Aristotle's essentialist definition of man as the rational animal and Locke's theory of natural rights (the origin of human rights doctrine). Relativism and multiculturalism stress *difference*, based on superficial factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, culture: odd, since these are the very traits on the basis of which persons have been discriminated against.

The view that makes people into nothing more than molded products of "culture" is vulgar and demeaning—is it not a cultural version of Hitler's "Blood is destiny" view?—and bears partial responsibility for furthering the worlds' terrible divisions. If peoples differ so greatly as to occupy different paradigms or worlds, if they do not speak the same language literally or figuratively, then rational persuasion breaks down, leaving only the self-exertion of identity politics, force, and violence. While the West does not represent a monolithic outlook, its rationalism (broadly construed) and value-individualism work to

"The view that makes people into nothing more than molded products of "culture" is vulgar and demeaning..."

include more people over time. Thomas Jefferson's words held sway against his limited understanding of the scope of "all men". While it is true that the United States practiced slavery, its founding documents contained the very notions that when properly understood would undermine arbitrary discrimination of any sort.

Compare the multiculturalist attitude that has taken hold. An episode of *The Simpsons* has Marge attending college. Her professor rails away against the American Founding Fathers as white male European racists, an attitude so familiar as to become an object of satire, though no less prevalent for that reason. A recent article in *The New Yorker* quotes from Senator and Mrs Barack Obama's minister, Dr Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., in his book, *Africans who Shaped our Faith*. Reverend Wright refers to the United States as "a Eurocentric wasteland of lily-white lies and outright distortions."⁶ *ABC News* broadcast video segments of a sermon in which Wright speaks of the "US of KKK A," which he accuses, among other things, of creating AIDS to wipe out blacks.⁷ The less the discrimination, it seems, the more the accusations fly. A *ressentiment* industry has taken shape whose rhetoric resembles Nietzsche's critique of moral reasoning as an underhanded strategy for gaining power over an opponent. Nietzsche's view always seemed a parody of rational moral discourse, but perhaps it has now found its mark in a form of posturing favored by multiculturalists.⁸ Rather than following the argument wherever it leads, multiculturalists identify their political conclusion first—ostensibly to promote the welfare of a chosen class of victims—and then assess the worth of views according to whether they further the political agenda.⁹ Reason and evidence are secondary to achieving the ideological goal. Educational curricula are often designed more to amplify conclusions rather than to examine arguments over difficult issues. This resembles propaganda more than inquiry.

Ascertaining truth through critical skeptical analysis and empirical inquiry rather than receiving it from authority is a hallmark of Western thought. In this sense revealed religions of any sort chafe against Western rationalism. The narrator of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* reports the character Angel having once said to his father,

"... in a moment of irritation, that it might have resulted far better for

*mankind if Greece had been the source of the religion of modern civilization, and not Palestine; and his father's grief was that of blank description which could not realize that there might lurk a thousandth part of a truth, much less a half truth or a whole truth, in such a proposition."*¹⁰

Christopher Hitchens adds this: "If the Jews had not made the crucial mistake of rejecting Hellenism and philosophy and submitting themselves, or being reconquered, by the Maccabean ultra-Orthodox, everything would have been better and we'd never have had to endure Christianity and Islam."¹¹ Hitchens' case is instructive, and potentially damaging to my thesis. Does my view imply that the Jews should have surrendered their particular culture to the Eternal City? I would say the Romans were too demanding of ideological conformity. The law the Romans sought to impose need only have provided the barest framework, largely procedural in nature.

Here is an example of a genuine question regarding Western culture, properly understood: Are Western nations, at least in principle, perhaps under the auspices of the UN, justified in intervening to enforce universalistic moral norms, such as a belief in human rights in countries which systematically violate those rights? Or should national self-determination and sovereignty always hold sway? This is a pressing question for philosophers and policy makers alike.

One-Sided "Diversity"

Multiculturalism's agenda to "promote diversity" is beset by crippling inconsistencies, hence Hitchens's apt phrase, "one-sided multiculturalism." Multiculturalists do not advocate fair rules such as "Speak the host country's language," which would dictate an American or Briton who moves to a Spanish-speaking country speak Spanish and a Latin American speak English in the USA or Canada. Their rule seems rather to be "Always speak Spanish" or "Persons from 'developing countries' may do as they please." What does this portend if not reverse assimilation? Not only is this attitude blatantly inconsistent, it infantilizes people, robs them of agency and responsibility, and makes them into ethical wards of sorts, incapable of entering into social contracts. "If we go there we should accept their culture, but when they come here we

"Ascertaining truth through critical skeptical analysis and empirical inquiry rather than receiving it from authority is a hallmark of Western thought."

should accept their culture” seems to be the implicit rule or maxim of the act. This is *partiality* with a vengeance: making a special exception of oneself, treating others as mere means, as Kant would say, to one’s own designs.

An instance of this partiality involves the Left’s criticism of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (I have in mind protestors who drew no distinction between these). A certain vocal type of dissident or “activist” criticizes *only* the Bush administration and Tony Blair’s government. The criticism does not issue from a general principle such as “Do not wage unjust wars,” “Do not intervene without good reason in the internal affairs of other countries,” or “Do not violate the rights of innocents.” Such critics demur from protesting injustice in Muslim countries, for example, or the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Their criticism is directed only against Western countries. Why don’t they loudly protest genital mutilation in Africa, especially given multiculturalists’ penchant for feminism, or the oppression of Christians in the Middle East? Why is Israel, a rational democratic Western-style country, so often the object of multiculturalists’ rancor and accusation? It is hard to escape the conclusion that the multiculturalists’ stance represents a breakdown of reason and impartiality.

Even if Western countries were nothing more than particular cultures, they too, by the multiculturalist’s own lights, deserve to have their cultures preserved. But the culture of many European countries is threatened by Arab immigration; the U.S. reels under Hispanic and Asian immigration, much of it illegal. True diversity preserves the separate identity of disparate groups and thus should require the *protection* of America’s European heritage.

The situation is dire. Recently the mayor of San Francisco ordered city officials to refrain from enforcing federal immigration laws and declared his city a safe haven for illegal immigrants. A movement is underway for the state of California to follow suit. Compare:

“Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa likes to say that Los Angeles will soon be the world’s most important city—a proving ground for a multicultural society, a place where well over a hundred languages are spoken within four hundred and sixty-nine square miles, where there are many ethnic communities that are the largest outside of their native

countries.”¹²

Why is this necessarily a good thing, a fact to be celebrated? Is there a suggestion that the less Caucasian or European the better? Would anyone insinuate the same if Hispanic, Black, Indian or Asian cultures were undergoing radical diversification? Encouraging hatred of things European amounts to throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Western liberalism’s core values include toleration and respect for minority rights. But instead of extending such principles, multiculturalists reject the very standards of reason and political morality that form the West’s greatest contributions to civilization.

Affirming Philosophical Eurocentrism

The multiculturalist will no doubt wish to debunk my claim about European universalism as so much false consciousness: particular, historically-conditioned interests paraded as something transcendent or natural. But I issue a counter accusation and say that multiculturalism, which is itself a product of European thought, counts as *bad consciousness* over one’s European roots. Multiculturalism leads to an intellectual dead-end: the denial of the universality of mathematics, logic and science, along with ethics. The result: we should reject multiculturalism’s muddled critique of “Eurocentrism.” The European tradition promotes the search for objective truth and the flourishing of human potential. This much maligned outlook also fosters tolerance, within limits determined by the rights of others, for the expression of people’s cultural and individual particularity.

Notes

(1) I would like to thank Professor John Valentine for making valuable comments on an earlier draft of this essay. The discussion is much improved as a result.

(2) See, for example, Bruce S. Thornton, *Greek Ways* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000), p. 141.

(3) Antony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, revised second edition (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), p. ix.

(4) For an illuminating discussion of the politically charged issues over the curriculum in American universities see John Searle, “The Storm over the University,” in *Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*, Paul Berman, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 85-123.

(5) For a clear and accessible discussion of whether multiculturalism is logically compatible with political liberalism see Ranjoo Seodu Herr, “Liberal Multiculturalism: An Oxymoron?” *The Philosophical Forum* 38, 1, pp. 23-41, Spring 2007. Debate centers on whether liberalism im-

“Why is Israel, a rational democratic Western-style country so often the object of multiculturalists’ rancor and accusation?”

plies, or is compatible with, tolerating illiberal immigrant groups' practices toward their own members such as women and children. The issue was brought to prominence by the Canadian philosopher Will Kymlycka.

(6) Lauren Collins, "The Other Obama," *The New Yorker*, Mar. 10, 2008, p. 94.

(7) *ABC News*, Monday, March 17, 2008.

(8) Compare Alastair MacIntyre's observation, made over thirty years ago, that moral discourse in the United States had come to resemble the Emotivist's analysis of moral language. C. L. Stevenson's prominent Emotivist theory analyzed moral utterances as non-cognitive expressions of attitudes functioning as verbal ejaculations or disguised

imperatives. See Alastair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, third ed. (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); and Charles L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944).

(9) I have benefitted from discussions of this point with Prof. Darren Hibbs.

(10) Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Ed. William E. Buchler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 139-40.

(11) Christopher Hitchens, interview: <http://nymag.com/arts/books/features/31244/>.

(12) Connie Bruck, "Fault Lines," *The New Yorker*, May 21, 2007, pp. 44-45.

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TERRORISM, COLLATERAL DAMAGE AND DOUBLE EFFECTS

Richard Garner

Consequentialism and the Deaths of Innocents

There is a classic and obvious way of defending the loss of innocent life in acts of war as morally justifiable that draws on the utilitarian or consequentialist tradition. This is, broadly, that "the ends justify the means." In practice, this means that the innocent people are "expendable" in order to achieve a weightier goal; for instance, the saving of even more lives. The phrase "collateral damage" is used to refer to such innocent casualties and it lends itself perfectly to this idea: collateral is what we put up for risk in order to achieve some higher end.

Let's take, as a paradigmatic example, the idea that collateral damage in war is justified so long as the loss of innocent life is outweighed by the lives that would be saved as a result of the military action. So, for example, if 50 people will die in a bombing raid on village where a chemical weapon laboratory is based, but the chemical weapons there would be used to kill thousands if the raid were not to go ahead, then the attack, on this consequentialist line of argument, would be justified.

Alleged Problems with Consequentialism

However, what may be problematic in accepting such an argument is that defenders of such casualties in war may well not also be able to reject terrorism as a legitimate means. After all, a terrorist might equally say that a terrorist attack in which fifty people are killed is justi-

fied if it fosters public pressure and influence on government to get it to reject a policy that would kill thousands. So, just as with the village example, the terrorist could say, "yes, fifty people were killed, but thousands were saved, so it is justified." The argument is precisely the same: so long as the benefits (in numbers of human lives saved) outweigh the costs (the number of human lives lost), the action is justified. Indeed, terrorists could likewise refer to the lost lives as "collateral damage" in a war. I have no idea if they really do, but terrorist characters did in an Arnold Schwarzenegger film. In this film the terrorist leader tells Arnie that his family, killed in a bombing, were collateral damage—the name of the film, as it happens—no different from when the US goes to war.

The "Double Effect" Response

Another common argument is used to justify "collateral damage", and I think it may be a merit of this argument that it avoids what may be, for consequentialists, the problem of avoiding justifying the use of terrorism. This is the doctrine of double effect,¹ an ethical theory developed by the scholastics and, most importantly, the Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas. I am not intending, here, either to justify the doctrine of double effect, or to justify the loss of innocent life as collateral damage. All I intend to do here is to show how the doctrine of double effect helps highlight normatively significant differences between loss of life as collateral damage and as terrorism.

"After all, a terrorist might equally say that a terrorist attack in which fifty people are killed is justified..."

Terrorism, for the purpose here, is defined as ideologically motivated violence, or threats of violence, against otherwise innocent or unrelated people (hence different from assassination) for the purpose of generating terror, which, in turn, is for the purpose of generating pressure to effect public policy (either to change from a given status quo, or to reverse a course of change). Terrorism is, then, a means to a means to an end. The initial act, say a bombing, is a means to generating widespread fear or terror, which in turn is a means to changing policy or social habits.

The doctrine of double effects says that a harmful affect of an action is justified, under four conditions:

1. The nature of the act is itself morally good, or at least neutral.
2. The bad effect is not intended, though it may be foreseen.
3. The good effect of the action outweighs the bad effect.
4. The good effect does not go through the bad effect.

An Example of Double Effect

So, let's take two cases:

(A) The air force conducts a bombing raid on a chemical weapons lab that is certainly known to be located in the centre of the village. The airforce knows that innocent people will be killed in the raid, but also knows that the chemical weapons will be used by the government of that village's country to gas a thousand innocent people. 50 innocent civilians die in the otherwise successful raid.

(B) A terrorist cell bombs the village hall of a village where there is a chemical weapons laboratory. It does this to generate fear amongst the populace of a country that they could become victims in similar events unless the terrorists' demands are met. These demands are that the government closes down a chemical weapons laboratory producing a weapon that would a kill thousand people. 50 people die in the terrorist bombing and the government shuts down the factory.

In both these cases the consequentialist seems to say that the action was justified, whether it is the air force bombing raid or the terrorist attack. However, the doctrine of double effect allows us to point out significant and morally relevant differences between A and B.

The most obvious difference that leaps out is regarding conditions 2 and 4 above. The bad effects, though foreseen, are not intended in A, but are in B, and the good consequences in both cases (getting rid of the chemical weapons factory and so saving a thousand lives) does not go through the bad effect (killing the 50 innocents) in A, but does in B. The air force foresaw the innocent deaths, but did not intend those deaths. Their intention was not to kill the innocents but to get rid of the factory. They would have gone through with their bombing even had there been no innocents there. On the other hand, the terrorists intended to kill the innocent people. Had there been no innocents there, they would not have bombed where they did.

Likewise, the good consequences of the air force's raid was not achieved by achieving the bad consequences. The air force did not get rid of the factory by killing the innocents, whilst that was precisely how terrorists accomplished it.

Not a Blanket Excuse, But an Indication of Moral Difference

So, to reiterate, I am not intending either to defend collateral damage or to defend the doctrine of double effect as a tool. What I intended, and what I think I have done, is to show that the killing of innocents as collateral damage is not the same as killing innocent people in terrorist acts. Terrorism and collateral damage are different in normatively significant ways.

Note

(1) Alison McIntyre, 'Doctrine of Double Effect', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 28th July 2004, retrieved 24th May 2008, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/double-effect/>.



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"Terrorism is, then, a means to a means to an end."

SLAVERY AND THE SLAVE TRADE: APOLOGIES, ABOLITION AND JUSTIFICATION

Peter Richards

Introduction

The bicentenary of 'The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act' was celebrated in 2007. It was this anniversary that prompted me to express some thoughts on the subject of slavery.

Slavery and the slave trade were and (where they still exist)¹ are abominable.

I think it is reasonable to assume that everybody who values liberty would agree with that statement. This much is uncontroversial. The questions I pose and discuss in this essay are: is it appropriate for nations, cities, institutions or even individuals to apologise for slavery; should any individuals, groups or nations be praised for the abolition of slavery; and finally are there any circumstances under which slavery is justifiable?

Apologies given

In 1994 Liverpool made a public apology for its involvement in the slave trade. In 2006 the Church of England apologised to the descendants of slaves for the 'dehumanising and shameful' consequences of slavery and in the same year Tony Blair expressed 'deep sorrow' for Britain's role in the slave trade. Also in 2006, a descendant of Sir John Hawkins apologised for his ancestor's part in the slave trade. The following year Ken Livingston apologised for London's role in the transatlantic slave trade. On February 24, 2007 the Virginia General Assembly passed Joint Resolution Number 728 acknowledging "with profound regret the involuntary servitude of Africans and the exploitation of Native Americans, and call for reconciliation among all Virginians". This list is by no means complete but the question I raise here is: are all these apologies really necessary? To answer this I think it is appropriate to take an historical overview.

Historical overview

"Blacks were not enslaved because they were black but because they were available. Slavery has existed

*in the world for thousands of years. Whites enslaved other whites in Europe for centuries before the first black was brought to the Western hemisphere. Asians enslaved Europeans. Asians enslaved other Asians. Africans enslaved other Africans, and indeed even today in North Africa, blacks continue to enslave blacks."*²

This quote is not a prejudiced view expressed by a white racist but the remarks of the eminent black American economist Thomas Sowell. When discussing slavery in the USA he puts it into an historical context:

*"Although slavery in the United States was referred to as a "peculiar institution," slavery was in fact one of the oldest and most widespread institutions on Earth. Slavery existed in the Western Hemisphere before Columbus' ships appeared on the horizon, and it existed in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East for thousands of years. Slavery was older than Islam, Buddhism or Christianity, and both the secular and religious moralists of societies around the world accepted human bondage, not only as a fact of life but as something requiring no special moral justification. Slavery was "peculiar" in the United States only because human bondage was inconsistent with the principals on which this nation was founded. Historically, however, it was those principles which were peculiar, not slavery."*³

If slavery has been so widespread throughout history then why is it that nations like Britain and America are singled out as nations which should feel morally obliged to apologise? Is it a question of scale or duration?

It is sometimes assumed that the transatlantic

"If slavery has been so widespread throughout history then why is it that nations like Britain and America are singled out ..?"

slave trade was greater in volume and longer lasting than other forms of slavery in history and thus more deserving of criticism. When the facts are examined this is found not to be true. As Thomas Sowell points out:

“Over the centuries, somewhere in the neighborhood of 11 million people were shipped across the Atlantic from Africa as slaves, and another 14 million African slaves were taken across the Sahara Desert or shipped through the Persian Gulf and other waterways to the nations of North Africa and the Middle East.”²⁴

This means that the Arab slave traders transported greater numbers of Africans than their European counterparts, and all this occurred over a longer period of time as Jeremy Black stated:

“In the Arab world, for example, the slave trade from Africa, both across the Sahara Desert and by sea, across the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, was more long-standing than in the Atlantic world.”²⁵

The Arab slave trade had its beginnings in the 7th century AD and continued relentlessly right up until the 19th century and beyond, thus becoming an established trade for well over 1000 years. By contrast the transatlantic slave trade, which began in the 16th century and came to an end in the 19th century, persisted for a period of less than 400 years. And so to focus on the transatlantic trade seems to me to be unjustified and prejudicial. At the root of this prejudice I believe is a desire for compensation by those who regard themselves as victims of colonial exploitation.

But Russell Lewis noted:

“It is none the less often suggested that we should compensate the present descendants of slaves for the injustices suffered by their ancestors. Yet as Thomas Sowell has pointed out, in the case of American blacks, if the principle of compensation is to make up for the difference in the standard of living due to being transferred from Africa to the USA, ‘the grotesque conclusion of this arithmetic might

be that blacks pay whites compensation’.²⁶

And Thomas Sowell makes another interesting observation:

“Some have attempted to claim that profits from slavery provided the investments that made the industrial revolution possible in Britain. But even if all the profits from slavery had been invested in British industry, this would have come to less than two percent of Britain’s domestic investments during that era.”²⁷

I suspect that those making these arguments are the same people who are urging for reparations to the descendents of slaves.

It should also be noted that some African tribes were themselves involved in the African slave trade, providing captives to the European slave traders. This makes the problem of who should apologise to whom a little difficult.

No Apologies required

As slavery has occurred throughout history and has been conducted by different races at various times across the globe then it is illogical to require any particular nation or city to apologise, whilst allowing others, who have also been involved, not to apologise. The transatlantic slave trade, which is the focus of those who are demanding apologies, turns out to be secondary in terms of numbers and duration to the Arab slave trade, for which no demands for apologies are being made. I therefore believe that Britain and other European countries, as well as the USA, should resist demands for apologies, as there is no logical reason why this should be necessary.

I also think that people today should not be blamed for the sins of their forefathers any more than they should be praised for their ancestors’ virtues; this is because they are not personally responsible for the actions of others. This brings me to my next question: who if anyone, should be praised for the abolition of slavery?

Abolition

Whenever the abolition of slavery is being discussed one nation comes to the fore. Tho-

“The transatlantic slave trade ... turns out to be secondary in terms of numbers and duration to the Arab slave trade, for which no demands for apologies are being made.”

mas Sewell explains:

*“After lasting thousands of years, slavery was destroyed over most of the planet in a period of about one century, and over virtually all of the planet within two centuries. The destruction of this ancient and worldwide institution was all the more remarkable because it was accomplished in the face of determined opposition and cunning evasion at every level, from the individual slaveholders to the heads of nations and empires. Moreover, the impetus for the destruction of slavery came not from any of the objective, material or economic factors so often assumed to be dominant in history, but from a moral revulsion against slavery which began in the late eighteenth century in the country which was the largest slave-trading nation of its day, with highly profitable slave-plantation colonies—Great Britain.”*⁸

I think it is quite right to single out this particular nation for praise as it holds a special place in the history of the abolition of slavery and this should not be forgotten. Professor Antony Flew has raised concerns that this is not fully explained in British educational programmes:

*“Certain relevant truths are not being clearly presented to children subjected to these programmes: that the institution of slavery has at no time been recognized or sustained by the Common Law of England; that it was our country which led the campaign to abolish the slave trade, and that the emancipation of all slaves held within the British Empire preceded that in the USA and other countries by decades.”*⁹

There are also certain individuals and groups who should quite rightly be given recognition for the important part they played in the abolition of this vile trade and these include the Quakers, the first group to reject the validity of the slave trade, and William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton, who led a small group of evangelicals within the Church of England known as the Clapham Sect, to campaign

against slavery in order to get the trade outlawed by Parliament.

Another leading campaigner against slavery was Thomas Clarkson, who whilst at Cambridge University, entered a Latin essay competition with the title *Anne Liceat Invitos in Servitutem Dare?*, which translated means “Is it lawful to make slaves of others against their will?” He won the prize and the following year he published his essay in English under the title, *An essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, particularly the African, translated from a Latin Dissertation, which was honoured with the first prize in the University of Cambridge, for the year 1785.*

In 1787 he formed the Committee for the Abolition of Slavery with Granville Sharp, who acted as chairman. Many of its members were Quakers, who at that time were barred from standing for Parliament. Clarkson took on the role of gathering evidence for the Committee, and travelled the country interviewing thousands of sailors who had served on slaving vessels. He also purchased all sorts of iron instruments used in the slave trade such as branding irons, leg shackles, thumb screws and handcuffs, to assist him in his presentation of the case against this barbaric trade. Clarkson supported William Wilberforce’s efforts to get the slave trade prohibited and should be remembered as one key figures in the abolition movement.

Also worthy of mention is Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797), a Negro, whose best-selling book, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London, 1789), described his own experience of being kidnapped by black Africans as a child and being sold to white slave traders. This first-hand account, the earliest autobiography to be written by a freed slave in England, was very effective in influencing public opinion in Britain in favour of abolition.

Josiah Wedgwood, Britain’s celebrated pottery-maker, was also a dedicated supporter of the anti-slavery movement. He was a member of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery and his most important contribution was the mass production of the Slave Medallion, worn by thousands of people to show their support. It was oval in shape and carried the image of a kneeling slave in chains with the inscription, “Am I not a man and a brother?”

“Josiah Wedgwood, Britain’s celebrated pottery-maker, was also a dedicated supporter of the anti-slavery movement.”

Another to add to our gallery of heroes is the prominent American abolitionist and libertarian, William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879), editor of the abolitionist publication, *The Liberator*, and one of the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society who said: "Urge immediate abolition as earnestly as we may, it will, alas! be gradual abolition in the end. We have never said that slavery would be overthrown by a single blow; that it ought to be, we shall always contend."¹⁰

But the first real success of the anti-slavery movement came in Britain. Thomas Sowell explains:

"Repeatedly and resoundingly defeated in Parliament on bills to abolish the slave trade, Wilberforce, Thornton, and their supporters persisted for 20 years, until finally—on February 27, 1807—the House of Commons passed such a bill, 283 to 16. It was a remarkable victory from a mass mobilization of public opinion—and, once mobilized, this public opinion proved so strong, so tenacious, so enduring, and ultimately so irresistible, that the anti-slavery crusade was swept along beyond its original goals of stopping the international trade in human beings to abolishing slavery itself throughout the British Empire, and eventually throughout the world."¹¹

Recognising a nation, as well as certain groups of people and individuals and giving credit for their role in the abolition of slavery, is certainly justified. This is not the same as saying people living today should take credit for the actions of their ancestors; it simply means that history should attribute praise where praise is due.

The Triangular Trade, from Britain to West Africa, and then to the Americas and back to Britain, with its notorious Middle Passage, where the slaves were tightly packed in slave ships, was particularly brutal and those who campaigned for its end, and for the end of enforced slavery of every kind, are truly worthy of our respect.

Justification

This brings me to my final question: is slavery ever justified? This seems a strange question,

especially as I have already proclaimed slavery to be abominable, but this disapproving statement refers to slavery that is enforced and therefore involuntary. The exception I want to discuss here is that of voluntary slavery i.e. when a person chooses slavery of his or her own free will.

The philosopher Robert Nozick is quite clear on this:

"The comparable question about an individual is whether a free system will allow him to sell himself into slavery. I believe that it would."¹²

Walter Block, America's leading Libertarian philosopher agrees:

"...if I own something, I can sell it (and should be allowed by law to do so). If I can't sell it, then, to that extent, I really don't own it. ...if I really own my liberty, then I should be free to dispose of it as I please, even if, by doing so, I end up no longer owning it."¹³

This question is almost academic because in practice examples of voluntary slavery are extremely rare but this question is of particular interest to philosophical and political theorists.

David Ellesman (writing under the pseudonym of J. Philmore), takes the right-libertarian argument to what he believes is its logical conclusion, i.e. that of supporting voluntary slavery. Ellesman, who is not a right-libertarian himself, uses the article to show where the argument leads and offers the following conclusion:

"There are many types of human activity that occur in both voluntary and an involuntary form, such as the voluntary transfer of property and theft, or voluntary intercourse and rape. Since both forms occur, it is easy to separate and distinguish them, and to understand that a libertarian society would permit the voluntary form and prohibit the involuntary form. However, there are certain human institutions, such as slavery and nondemocratic government, which have, as a matter of historical fact, almost always occurred in an in-

"... is slavery ever justified?"

voluntary and coercive form. These uniformities of historical experience have led to the common liberal prejudice that those institutions are somehow intrinsically coercive. The coercive forms of these institutions have been appropriately prohibited. But the prohibition has been carried over, by the inertia of prejudice, to voluntary and noncoercive forms of the institutions.

This situation has led to what might be termed the fundamental contradiction of modern liberalism: it claims to lay the foundation for a free and just society and yet it coercively prohibits certain voluntary contractual arrangements. This basic contradiction is best summarized in the Rousseauian dictum that people must be "forced to be free."

The problem of voluntary slavery and its political analogue is the fundamental paradigmatic problem of modern social philosophy. The time has come for liberal economic and political thinkers to stop dodging this issue and to critically re-examine their shared prejudices about certain voluntary social institutions. Under the leadership of the Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick and the Chicago school of free-market economists, this critical process will inexorably drive liberalism to its only logical conclusion: libertarianism that finally lays the true moral foundation for economic and political slavery.¹⁴

There are however many libertarians who disagree with this view. Murray N. Rothbard for example opposed voluntary slavery:

"The distinction between a man's alienable labor service and his inalienable will may be further explained; a man can alienate his labor service, but he cannot sell the capitalized future value of that service. In short, he cannot, in nature, sell himself into slavery and have this sale enforced-for this

would mean that his future will over his own person was being surrendered in advance. In short, a man can naturally expend his labor currently for someone else's benefit, but he cannot transfer himself, even if he wished, into another man's permanent capital good. For he cannot rid himself of his own will, which may change in future years and repudiate the current arrangement. The concept of "voluntary slavery" is indeed a contradictory one, for so long as a labourer remains totally subservient to his master's will voluntarily, he is not yet a slave since his submission is voluntary; whereas, if he later changed his mind and the master enforced his slavery by violence, the slavery would not then be voluntary."¹⁵

John Stuart Mill, in his classic work *On Liberty*, denied the legitimacy of the voluntary slave contract:

"By selling himself for a slave, he abdicates his liberty; he foregoes any future use of it beyond that single act. He therefore defeats, in his own case, the very purpose which is the justification of allowing him to dispose of himself. He is no longer free; but is thenceforth in a position which has no longer the presumption in its favour, that would be afforded by his voluntarily remaining in it. The principle of freedom cannot require that he should be free not to be free."¹⁶

Clearly libertarian theorists and philosophers are divided on this issue.

I will take a view.

I think the argument hinges on how we define slavery. If we mean by slavery (absolute slavery) that the slave becomes the property (akin to livestock) of another human being and as such is a commodity to be sold or disposed of as the owner thinks fit, the owner thus having the power of life and death over the slave, then I think both voluntary and involuntary forms are morally abhorrent and inherently evil. Clearly humans are not objects or livestock and so to treat them as such, in my view, is

"... libertarian theorists and philosophers are divided on this issue."

beyond justification.

However, if we define slavery (voluntary slavery) as a system in which the right to the future labour or service of a person is defined as alienable capital (i.e. an opportunity for benefit that is transferable), then a case can be made for a person to be permitted to voluntarily trade the guarantee of his/her future labour or service for security, subsistence or other rewards, thus agreeing to severely limit his/her freedom for some other benefit. It is feasible for example that someone could agree to a lifetime (or until retirement) labour contract in return for welfare. Long term agreements, in which people give up degrees of liberty, are not unheard of. For example, in Christian marriages people vow to stay together 'until death us do part'. When people sign up to military service for a minimum number of years, fixed by contract, is another example. These examples show that degrees of future liberty are voluntarily transferable.

It could be argued that this second kind of slavery (where the future labour or service of a person is transferable), in its voluntary form, is not slavery at all, and perhaps an alternative word or phrase could be substituted, but for the sake of this discussion I will continue to use the term slavery.

I will attempt to make the case for this kind of voluntary slavery.

I think we should be free to choose not to be free.

I believe I have a right to my life, my liberty and my property (and by property I mean my body as well as my legally acquired possessions and real estate) and that I also have a right to relinquish these things. For example I think I should be legally entitled to commit suicide if I wish, or give away all my worldly possessions if I so choose, or donate a kidney to someone for a transplant if that's my decision. By the same token I think I should be entitled to either sell or give my liberty (or a large proportion of it) to slavery. I think the details of any such arrangement could be outlined in a legal contract or not, depending on my preference and that these options should be legally permitted.

These new arrangements I am suggesting would not allow adults to sell children into slavery; nor would children be permitted to sell themselves into slavery, because children

lack the necessary maturity to make such a decision. No person would be permitted to sell another human being into slavery, only themselves. Unethical methods used by a purchaser, such as coercion, deception, or fraud; intimidation, entrapment or trickery; abduction, physical force or the threat of violence, would all automatically render any slave contract null and void. The children of slaves would not automatically become slaves themselves. Nor could a debtor be forced into bonded labour to repay a debt. The only acceptable arrangement would be that of consensual adults.

Someone who opted to become a voluntary slave would be giving up (or allowing a severe restriction on) their freedom but not their humanity and so should be protected from inhumane treatment by law. This is not unprecedented; for example convicts held in state prisons of civilised countries retain basic rights despite having lost their liberty.

With these limitations in mind, I find myself coming down on the side of those who support voluntary slavery, because the arguments are so compelling and consistent.

A simple example of voluntary slavery might be when a person agrees to participate in activities involving sexual bondage, becoming a sex slave and submitting to the will of their sexual partner, known to practitioners as BDSM.¹⁷ Even though this may only be a short-term arrangement, in theory this could be classified as voluntary slavery and is I believe justifiable.

More long lasting or permanent arrangements of voluntary slavery, whether social or contractual, political or economic, are very rare but nonetheless I believe equally justifiable.

Finally I would like to add that although I have attempted to justify voluntary slavery, I am certainly not recommending it as a sensible thing to do—I just think people should have the right to decide for themselves.

Conclusion

I conclude that it is not necessary for nations, cities or descendants of slave traders to apologise for slavery, because the institution has been so widespread that such an apology would be meaningless.

However, I do believe that education and his-

"I think we should be free to choose not to be free."

tory should credit any nations, groups of people, or individuals, who have assisted in the abolition of this vile trade.

And finally I think it should be recognised that there is such a thing as voluntary slavery, which according to some libertarian theorists is justifiable and which I too have come to the conclusion is acceptable.

However, despite differing views on the issue of voluntary slavery, I think libertarians would all agree that involuntary slavery is morally unacceptable.

Notes

- (1) Slavery still exists in a number of countries in the world today, including West Africa, and the victims are predominantly women and children. See www.anti-slavery.org/
- (2) http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Thomas_Sowell.
- (3) Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture*, Basic Books, New York, 1994, p. 186.
- (4) *Ibid*, p.188.
- (5) Jeremy Black, *The Slave Trade*, Social Affairs Unit, London, 2006, p. 9.
- (6) Russell Lewis, *Race Warriors*, New European Publications Limited, London, 2003, p. 90.
- (7) Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture*, p. 215
- (8) *Ibid*, p. 210.
- (9) Antony Flew, *A Future for Anti-Racism?*, The Social Affairs Unit, 1992, p. 34.

(10) Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto*, Collier Books, New York, 1978, p. 15.

(11) Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture*, Basic Books, New York, 1994, p. 211.

(12) Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Oxford, 1974, p. 331.

(13) http://www.mises.org/journals/jls/17_2/17_2_3.pdf, Walter Block, 'Toward a Libertarian Theory of Inalienability: A Critique of Rothbard, Barnett, Smith, Kinsella, Gordon and Epstein', *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, Volume 17, no.2 (Spring 2003), p. 44.

(14) <http://cog.kent.edu/lib/Philmore1/Philmore1.htm>, J. Philmore, 'The Libertarian Case for Slavery', *The Philosophical Forum* 14, no.1 (Fall 1982), p.9.

(15) Murray N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty*, New York University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 40-41.

(16) John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism: On Liberty: Essay on Bentham*, Fontana Press, Glasgow, 1962, p. 236.

(17) According to Wikipedia, BDSM is an abbreviation derived from the terms bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism.



Peter Richards is a Hampshire businessman and writer. Besides being a member of the Society for Individual Freedom, he is a life member of the Rationalist Press Association, and a member of the British Humanist Association and the Freedom Association and a subscriber to the Libertarian Alliance. He has also contributed to *The Freethinker* and *Right Now!*

“... libertarians would all agree that involuntary slavery is morally unacceptable.”



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