

Written by LIS KOREA Editorial Staff and Copy-Edited by Duane Vorhees

Topic-Discussion Textbook

2

WHAT DO YOU THINK

**30 Controversial Issues Today for
Very-Advanced
Classes**



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ISSUE 31

TIME OUT

Plagued by stress, a growing number of people in modern society say they think time is becoming more precious than money and they're trying to slow down. People say they have become worn down.

But the exhaustion represents *a paradox*¹. They are extraordinarily stressed out even though they make more money, have more leisure time, and enjoy more time-saving and efficient technology than adults did a generation ago. The reasons underlying this paradox are varied. Many people, especially married women, are working longer at their jobs now than they were then - although they have cut back on the amount of work they do around home. The anxieties wrought by the increasingly competitive global economy also have put many on edge, not to mention the fact that work can intrude via fax, E-mail or cellular phone anywhere, from the living room to the family minivan.

In addition, analysts have found that the proliferation² of labor-saving devices in the home makes it easier for folks to fret more about how to spend their free time - an option they largely lacked as recently as 50 years ago. Moreover, some of the stress arises from a *burgeoning*³ consumerist sense of entitlement and expectation about what life ought to provide. Finally, there's the thesis of economist Stefan Linder, who argued in a book called *The Harried Leisure Class* that affluence itself *engendered*⁴ "an increasing scarcity of time." His argument: Productivity increases the "value" of time spent at work, and folks who want to maximize their worth then feel they should work more.

¹ A situation exhibiting an apparently contradictory nature

² Excessive and rapid growth

³ Sudden growth or development

⁴ Caused or begot

Now, a growing number of citizens have begun to unplug their lives from a system that they feel leaves little or no time to recharge. They have begun to retreat into their private corners, demanding at least some quiet time.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) The anxieties wrought by the increasingly competitive global economy also have put many on edge.
- (2) The proliferation of labor-saving devices in the home makes it easier for folks to fret more about how to spend their free time.
- (3) Productivity increases the "value" of time.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) Why are people still stressed out even though their living standards are improving?
- (2) Why do time-saving machines make people fret more?
- (3) According to Stefan Linder, how does productivity affect people?

What Do You Think?

- (1) What are the important things in your life? (family, spiritual life, religion, good health, art, money, job, romantic life, love, leisure time, education, friends, children, hobbies, etc.)

- (2) Would you rather have more free time even if it meant less money, or earn more money even if it required working longer?
- (3) Do you want to live in the city or in the country?
- (4) What causes stress in your life?
- (5) What do you usually do when you are under stress?
- (6) What do you like to do when you have free time?
- (7) What kind of job do you want to have?
- (8) What kinds of jobs do you want your children to have?
- (9) Do you think you could be free from stress even if retired?
- (10) Who feels more stress, men or women?
- (11) What are the toughest jobs, causing the most stress?

Opinion Samples

- (1) No corner of society is safe because virtually everything can cause stress. Even knowledge can cause trouble. For example, 25 years ago doctors could do a fair amount of good and not much harm, but now they are well aware not only of potential lawsuits but of all the things within the health care system that can do potent harm. And that stress literally **racks**⁵ the body. As pressures mount - the knowledge of the harm modern medicine might do, long working hours, family needs or guilt over the death of a patient - the body and mind rise to meet the occasion. Energy burns at a higher rate.

⁵ Distresses or strains

Respiration and heart rates and blood pressure increase. Body temperature rises. **Metabolism**⁶ shoots up. The immune system **braces**⁷ for an **onslaught**.⁸

(2) The stress toll on working women tends to **eclipse**⁹ that on men, partly because women still take more responsibility for life at home. Many women who are bringing home the bacon are still expected to fry and serve it, too. There really are relatively few homes where child care and domestic work are truly shared. Even unemployed husbands are reluctant to do the housework. When women can't be perfect at both jobs, they often drive themselves off the edge. Women seem to be good at guilty feeling, and guilt is exhausting. The extra pressure on women is also **attributable**¹⁰ to the fact that they tend to hold repetitive jobs with high stress and no glamour.

(3) Our society has become **schizophrenic**.¹¹ We praise people who want balance in their lives, but reward those who work themselves to death. The

⁶ The chemical activity in your body that uses food to produce energy you need to work and grow

⁷ Prepares for something unpleasant that is going to happen

⁸ A very strong attack against someone or something

⁹ Surpass or outshine

¹⁰ Likely to be caused by something

¹¹ Typical of schizophrenia, a serious mental illness in which thoughts and feelings become separated from what is really happening around the person afflicted

pressures on the famous and on the anonymous are both real and increasing. Employers and politicians are not likely to solve these problems, so we ourselves have to learn to unplug the fax once in a while and ignore the click of call waiting.

During an auction, proceedings were halted and the auctioneer announced:

"A fellow in the room has just lost his wallet containing one thousand dollars. He offers two hundred bucks of its return."

Came a voice from the rear: "Two hundred and ten!"

ISSUE 32

DOLLARS FOR DEEDS

Each time Lisa Jones arrived at an East Baltimore, Maryland, health clinic for a pregnancy checkup last year, the 19-year-old was given a yellow **voucher**¹² worth \$10. After 10 visits, from which she improved her diet and learned how to care for an infant, she gave birth to a healthy baby daughter. **“There are a lot of girls out there who are naive,”** Jones says. “The vouchers are a good way to get them to come in.”

This program is part of a larger national trend toward offering schoolchildren money and other prizes to **notch up**¹³ their performance. Some schools are fighting truancy by awarding students “warrior bucks” for getting to class on time, which can be exchanged for televisions, CD players and 10-speed bikes. Perhaps **the most controversial plans reward schoolchildren for informing on one another.** The “Better Kids, Better Dollars” program pays students up to \$50 for turning in other youngsters carrying weapons or drugs to school. Many teachers, parents and behavioral psychologists love these programs because they seem to work quickly.

In ***Norman Rockwell’s***¹⁴ America, good behavior was its own reward. Accepting cash for performing a civic duty or taking care of one’s own health would have been embarrassing, if not downright **degenerate**.¹⁵ But that is exactly the approach that is being championed by a growing number of people desperate to reverse the social trends of the past 20 years.

¹² A kind of ticket that can be used instead of money for a particular purpose

¹³ Achieve something, especially a victory or a particular score

¹⁴ A popular 20th-century illustrator famous for his nostalgic portrayals of American society

¹⁵ Having fallen below a normal or desirable quality or condition

Taking a lesson from the business world, they have discovered the power of incentives. Critics call it bribery. But proponents argue that they are only being realistic. In many U.S. cities and suburbs, a culture of violence and drugs has crushed young people's hope for life's rewards. Hundreds of thousands of students drop out of high school each year. Many young girls find their only source of self-esteem in motherhood. "We can pierce the disillusionment a lot of kids have by providing clear, concrete incentives," says Michael Carrera, an adolescent sexuality expert in New York City. "Maybe our means wouldn't have to be so dramatic if this were the 1940s or 1950s. But this is the 1990s, and we have to be daring."

What Does It Mean?

- (1) There are a lot of girls out there who are naive.
- (2) The most controversial plans reward schoolchildren for informing on one another.
- (3) Many young girls find their only source of self-esteem in motherhood.
- (4) Maybe our means wouldn't have to be so dramatic if this were the 1940s or 1950s. But this is the 1990s, and we have to be daring.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) Which are the most controversial among these kinds of incentive programs?
- (2) Why do parents and teachers welcome them?
- (3) Where did the idea of incentive programs come from?
- (4) What do critics call these programs?
- (5) How do proponents respond to the critics' view?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think it's a good idea for schools to give financial aid to students with good behavior?
- (2) What do you think is a long-term effect?
- (3) Which do you think is a more effective way to lead teenagers, material incentives for good behavior or harsh punishment for bad?
- (4) When you give pocket money to your children, which do you think is better: unconditional giving or giving only when they do something worthy of reward?
- (5) What do you think about applying these kinds of incentives to our own educational system?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Rewards could **backfire**¹⁶ by fostering an atmosphere in which people refuse to do anything for free.
- (2) A lot of students are just after the extra money, and the rewards do not change their ordinary behavior.
- (3) It is a good idea when the system works well. We know some of the students are more interested in the cash they are given than the education itself. To prevent this the program should include tough penalties for **slackers**.¹⁷

¹⁶ Result in consequences that were to be avoided

¹⁷ Persons who avoid their work

- (4) Bribing students doesn't work over the long **haul**.¹⁸ Money focuses kids in the wrong direction. For example, they too easily become enamored of **extrinsic**¹⁹ motivators - money or prizes. The best result should derive from intrinsic motivation that is its own reward. Material incentives - as well as disincentives like harsh punishment - can undermine interest and reduce the quality of one's work. The key is to facilitate inner motivation.
- (5) The bonuses may not bring lasting improvements unless the underlying structure of the program is sound. Anyone who has a lousy education system and thinks students are going to learn because they are given so much for an A or a B is **barking up the wrong tree**.²⁰ But the recognition and attention that prizes, honors and cash bring may sometimes spur **the indifferent**²¹ toward greater achievement.

¹⁸ Long period of time

¹⁹ Not essential or inherent

²⁰ Having a wrong idea, especially about how to get a particular result

²¹ Those without interest or concern

ISSUE 33

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

For the families of John Wayne Gacy's victims, his death was long anticipated. The man who tortured and murdered 33 young men and boys during the 1970s was finally executed by lethal injection at the Illinois Stateville Penitentiary. Justice would be served, swiftly and cleanly, as three chemicals were introduced intravenously into his bloodstream. The first drug would knock him out, the second would suppress his breathing, the last would stop his heart - in no more than five minutes. But Gacy took 18 minutes to die. A clog developed in the delivery tube attached to his arm. He snorted just before death-chamber attendants pulled a curtain around him as they struggled to clear a tube. Finally, the two lethal drugs streamed into him. The monster was dead.

On Sept. 2, 1983, Jimmy Lee Gray, sentenced to die for the rape-slaying of a three-year-old girl, entered the gas chamber in Parchman, Mississippi. Executions of this sort are supposed to end with a quick loss of consciousness. But eight minutes after his execution began, witnesses cleared the viewing area, repelled by what they were seeing. Gray, suffocating and purple-faced, died slamming his head against a steel pole.

Opponents of capital punishment charged that the mishap again proved that **the death penalty constitutes cruel and unusual punishment**. "A lot of people think lethal injection is like putting a dog to sleep," says Kica Matos, research director of the Capital Punishment Project of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Legal Defense Fund. "But things still go wrong with all types of executions. It's as gruesome and barbaric as torture."

What Does It Mean?

- (1) The death penalty constitutes cruel and unusual punishment

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) How many chemicals are applied in a lethal injection, and what do they do?
- (2) Why are some people against the death penalty?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Are you in favor of the death penalty?
- (2) Would you still be in favor of the death penalty if you knew 1 in 100 victims is innocent?
- (3) Some people argue that society is responsible for violent crime. Do you think so? Or do you think the lawbreakers should be condemned, not society?
- (4) Do you think capital punishment discourages criminal behavior, or has nothing to do with it, or is just an inhumane way of getting revenge?
- (5) Which do you think is crueler, life in prison or the death penalty?
- (6) Do you think we have a moral obligation to consider the most humane way of applying the death penalty?
- (7) Do you think family members of victims have the right to see criminals die?
- (8) Do you think the prisoner on death row should be free to choose the kind of capital punishment meted out?
- (9) Which do you think is the least barbaric way of killing a man: hanging, firing squad, lethal injection, gas chamber, electric chair?
- (10) Would you volunteer to be on a firing squad?

- (11) In our country execution requires final approval by the minister of law. Would you sign execution documents if you were that official?
- (12) Do you think executions should be open to the public?
- (13) What if the prisoner wanted his execution to be open?
- (14) What do you think about giving whatever the condemned person wishes for a last meal?

Opinion Samples

- (1) If life-imprisonment became a widespread substitute for the death penalty, nobody would benefit. Life in prison is crueler to the convict than the death penalty is. Capital punishment actually plays an important role in deterring criminal acts that deserve death.
- (2) No reason to give the death penalty special status. It's plain and simple, and it saves taxpayers money. Justice should be for the victims, not for the criminals.
- (3) Is it wrong for an individual to kill but right for the state? The death penalty is not fair, and is never **foolproof**.²² The death penalty is always inspired by vengeance, not by justice.

²² Never failing

- (4) We are often told that in our modern, enlightened society, we do not have the right to condemn another human being to death. But must we continue to expose our society to those individuals who show little respect for the lives of their victims? When cells in the human body exhibit deviant behavior, they're eliminated. Is not much of our society today cancerous because the so-called rights of "deviant cells" are elevated above the rights of the "body" of society? We should not shrink from our duty any longer. Extreme behavior calls for extreme measures.
- (5) We can't deny the fact that violent crimes come out of our own world. Our society is losing moral responsibility. No one can escape responsibility. We are all guilty of whatever illegal behavior our neighbors do.

ISSUE 34

BIG BROTHER

Workplace privacy has always been a sensitive issue that weighs a boss's right to know what's going on in the office against an employee's right to be left alone. But in Illinois that delicate balance has been upset by a new state law that permits bosses to eavesdrop on employees' work phones. As originally conceived by telemarketers and retailers, the law was intended solely to enable supervisors to monitor service calls for courtesy and efficiency. But on its way to Republican Governor Jim Edgar for a Dec. 13 signing, the measure was reworked to embrace any listening in that serves "educational, training or research purposes" without defining inappropriate monitoring. The final bill is more *permissive*²³ than laws in many other states as well as the federal wiretap law, which instructs listeners to hang up if they chance upon a personal call.

This leaves Illinois workers skittishly wondering who might be listening in, and when. After all, in this era of expanding work hours and contracting leisure time, who hasn't used the office phone to learn the results of an anxiously awaited medical test or to do battle with a creditor? "I don't condone the misuse of company telephones, but suppose you call home with a marital or financial problem. Clearly, you are in jeopardy if your employer knows something about those kinds of things," says a union chief whose organization represents Northwest Airlines telephone-reservation operators. "It's a *George Orwell*²⁴ kind of thing."

²³ Excessively lenient or tolerant

²⁴ British novelist, essayist: author of 1984, which depicts an authoritarian government, known as Big Brother, that retains power by controlling all information.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) conceived by telemarketers and retailers
- (2) You are in jeopardy.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What does the new law lack that would avoid some of its possibility for abuse?
- (2) Why was the bill originally introduced on behalf of retailers and telemarketers?
- (3) Why are unions opposed to the new law?
- (4) What has happened in modern society that makes it more likely that employees will use company phones to conduct private business?

What Do You Think?

- (1) What do you think about your boss tapping your work phone?
- (2) How would you feel if someone were listening in on your private phone conversations?
- (3) Do you think this "Orwell" law improves work efficiency? What are the side-effects?
- (4) Do you think it's OK to use company phones for your own private calls?
- (5) Talk about the different points of view between bosses and workers.
- (6) What do you think about establishing a CCTV at home to monitor baby-sitters? Do you think it would violate the baby-sitter's privacy or would it guarantee children's safety?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Who wants to be Big Brother? Nobody. Employers are simply interested in profits. If workers are fooling around during the working hours and employers have no right to listen in, nothing controls for increased productivity. Workers do not need to worry about their privacy if they do their jobs right.
- (2) Working responsibly is one thing, but being eavesdropped on is another. The statement that workers need not worry about privacy if they do their jobs right is nonsense. **Surveillance**²⁵ is a violation of privacy regardless of work fidelity.
- (3) Calling it an "Orwell" law is just propaganda. Employers pay huge amounts of money on modern phone systems - but only to improve communications efficiency and enlarge their profits. Workers shouldn't get a free ride at their companies' expense. It is a form of stealing.
- (4) Bosses have a right to expect their employees to be honest, productive, loyal, and hard working. Workers have a responsibility to perform their tasks - for which they are being paid - as fully and completely as possible. However, in order to do the job effectively, both groups need to recognize that human beings are imperfect but essentially well-meaning. A certain amount of socializing helps to build up good employee relations. If people have to

²⁵ A watch kept over a person, group, etc., especially over a suspect or prisoner

get something important done and they can't use the office phone to do it, then they will simply "**call in sick**"²⁶ and not work at all. Plus, of course, the "costs" to the company are not real costs, they are in part immaterial accounting figures.

²⁶ telephone to say you are not coming to work because you are ill

ISSUE 35

DO-IT-YOURSELF DEATH LESSONS

The book, *Final Exit*, is a manual for committing suicide or helping someone else to do so. It sold out its first printing of 41,000 copies and will top next week's list of how-to and advice bestsellers in the *New York Times*. The volume explains, step by step, how to end a human life; it includes charts for lethal dosages for 18 *prescription*²⁷ drugs, primarily pain killers and sleeping tablets; it debates and debunks the merits of cyanide; it offers abundant practical advice about asphyxiation by plastic bag or auto exhaust.

Even more jarring to critics, the book exhorts doctors and nurses actively to abet the "self-deliverance" of the terminally ill. Author Derek Humphry contends that such assistance is common but tacit. "Part of good medicine is to help you out of this life as well as help you in," he argues. "When a cure is no longer possible and the patient seeks relief through *euthanasia*,²⁸ the help of a physician is most appropriate."

What Does It Mean?

- (1) Such assistance is common but tacit.
- (2) Part of good medicine is to help you out of this life as well as help you in.

²⁷ A written order for the preparation and use of a medicine or remedy

²⁸ The act of putting to death painlessly a person suffering from an incurable disease

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What is the book *Final Exit* about?
- (2) How many copies did the first printing sell?
- (3) What are the contents of this book?
- (4) What is the most frightening part of this book?
- (5) How does the writer justify his book?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think government should permit sales of *Final Exit*?
- (2) Do you think this book encourages suicide by normal people, or is it just good guidance for the terminally ill?
- (3) If you were a bookstore owner, would you sell this book?
- (4) If your friends or family members asked you to buy the book for them, what would you do?

Opinion Samples

- (1) At some point we may have to make a decision and should be able to have this information on hand. Some people are worried that their death will be prolonged and painful. With this book, it is clear that we have entered a new phase in the right-to-die movement.
- (2) People want to take control of their own dying, and this book is a sort of insurance policy, a comfort on the bookshelf that they can voluntarily escape from this world rather than suffer unbearably.

- (3) The book might encourage suicide among the unstable. I am afraid people cannot distinguish between “rational” suicide, undertaken by the irreversibly handicapped or the terminally ill, and “emotional” suicide by those who are depressed.
- (4) Many people who accept the idea of ending the pain of a loved one find it impossible to watch the actual suicide. For the one who dies, the act may be a final exit. But those who live on might have to dwell with ceaseless doubt, guilt or scorn. Even if suicide is rational, mankind remains emotional.
- (5) If we look at the other side of the coin, the book teaches people how to kill other people. I agree that people who are dying do not deserve to suffer during their final days, but this book should not be out on the shelves.
- (6) We were born with free will. Adults should have the right to decide when and how to go.
- (7) Unfortunately, death is a taboo topic in our culture. I welcome any book that makes it less difficult for the severely ill to discuss death and dying with dignity.

He figured out a good way to save money on his honeymoon - he went alone.

ISSUE 36

DON'T SPARE THE ROD

As he awaited flogging - the sentence handed down by a Singapore court after he pleaded guilty to vandalism - 18-year-old American Michael Fay could take little solace from the reaction in the United States. The draconian justice routinely meted out in the city-state is drawing effusive praise from Americans fed up²⁹ with juvenile³⁰ crime.

Last week, despite appeals from U.S. President Bill Clinton and protests from human-rights groups, the Singapore High Court rejected Fay's appeal for leniency. His only hope now is an appeal for clemency³¹ to President Ong Teng Cheong. Otherwise he will be stripped naked, bound to a wooden trestle, and given six lashes on his buttocks with a rattan rod. The resulting wounds usually take about two weeks to heal.

Singapore is committed to harsh penalties - even for first-time offenders like Fay, who has lived in Singapore since 1992 - in order to deter the kind of lawlessness it perceives as endemic³² in the United States. It has always based its survival on tight discipline. Singapore, which inherited its criminal code from British colonialists, cracks down hard against anything that smacks³³ of a political challenge - including, in an early era, men with long hair. Its heavy fines - 1,000 Singapore dollars (\$640) for such offenses as using chewing gum, spitting or feeding birds - are legendary. And holding a foreign passport has never been a guarantee of immunity. While Michael Fay faces the cane, a Dutchman and a young Hong Kong

²⁹ Disgusted, bored or impatient

³⁰ Characteristic of or suitable for young people

³¹ The will not to punish someone too severely

³² Peculiar to a particular people or locality

³³ Has a taste, flavor, trace, or suggestion

woman - who like Fay were only 18 years old when arrested - face the gallows for drug smuggling.

Fay's crime was to spraypaint a number of automobiles and to pelt others with eggs. His parents claim that Singapore is making an example of their son to send a signal to Singaporeans about Western permissiveness. Local officials deny that, noting that 12 Singaporeans have been caned for vandalism since 1989.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) vandalism
- (2) The draconian justice routinely meted out in the city-state is drawing effusive praise from Americans fed up with juvenile crime.
- (3) It has always based its survival on tight discipline.
- (4) And holding a foreign passport has never been a guarantee of immunity.
- (5) face the gallows for drug smuggling
- (6) Singapore is making an example of their son to send a signal to Singaporeans about Western permissiveness.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) Of what is Michael Fay guilty?
- (2) What kind of punishment does he face?
- (3) What kind of punishment do the Dutchman and the young Hong Kong woman guilty of drug smuggling face?

- (4) What do Fay's parents argue about Singapore's court decision?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think caning for vandalism is appropriate or excessive?
- (2) Do you think caning is likely to reduce the number of crimes?
- (3) What are the most effective ways of reducing juvenile delinquency?
- (4) What do you think about applying caning to all crimes such as assault, robbery, drug dealing, and rape? Do you think it would produce the intended results?
- (5) Do you think the United States has a right to complain to the Singapore government about Fay's case? By what moral authority can America, with its high rates of lawlessness and license, preach about human rights to a safe society?
- (6) Would there be less crime if more parents spanked their children at home?

Opinion Samples

- (1) The issue of caning those convicted of vandalism is a matter of justice. Why should an individual who has not physically harmed anyone be hurt in return? Vandals should pay for all damages incurred and be fined or jailed, but whipping offenders is an injustice.
- (2) The Singapore government should be ashamed of the

brutal, barbaric and gruesome act of caning. Caning is a variety of vandalism. Both leave something indelible behind.

- (3) At 18, Fay should have known better. I'd tell him to face his punishment like a man. Maybe he won't commit any acts of vandalism again.
- (4) The expansion of the right of the individual to behave or misbehave as he pleases has come at the expense of orderly society. Americans should not foist their system indiscriminately on societies in which it will not work.
- (5) Most Americans may balk at caning people, but from the president on down they don't mind killing them.
- (6) Caning is inhumane and insensitive. I don't think it's a punishment that should be used by civilized people. It is a sad fact that civilized people often use inhumane punishments, which never help reduce the number of crimes.
- (7) The caning of offenders in Singapore is not a human rights abuse. Caning is a traditional method of punishment in most countries and, though it can leave a permanent scar, has proved to be an effective deterrent to crime. Thanks to its strict law-enforcement policies, Singapore has one of the lowest crime rates in the world. The U.S. has no business criticizing the equally legitimate values of other peoples.

- (8) Singapore is an independent state that deals with criminals in its own effective way. It should not be criticized; rather, it should be urged to carry out the sentence on Fay. The United States has no right to bully Singapore into treating a young vandal leniently just because he's an American. What kind of future do we offer our children by disregarding consequences? Remember liberty without discipline is anarchy.
- (9) It's time for Fay to take responsibility for his actions, quit whining and accept his punishment like a man. Breaking the law in America too often results in **plea bargaining**³⁴ and suspended sentences; breaking the law in a foreign country that values law and order means that the offender has to play by the rules he violates. Fay should have thought about this before he started vandalizing the property of others.
- (10) Do you think **amputation**³⁵ of a thief's hand is an appropriate punishment - as in Afghanistan, for example? Caning is nothing more than a lawful form of torture.

³⁴ The practice of agreeing to admit in a court that one is guilty of a small crime, in exchange for not being charged with a more serious crime

³⁵ Cutting off someone's arm, leg, finger, etc.

- (11) The task of parents and other adults with responsibility for the young consists of moral training and supervision. That, in turn, consists of teaching by rule and precept - but most of all, it means teaching by example. It means providing order and loving discipline. At home, might this involve an expertly wielded rattan cane? No. Spanking? Occasionally. Parents know a spanking or a slap is often a quick reflex that may bring temporary respite. But it is no substitute for the better elements of parental and moral guidance: together spending lots of time, doing chores and errands, playing, reading, doing homework, and patiently explaining the way the world works and the way people - mothers, fathers and children - ought to live and how they fall short.

ISSUE 37

GAMBLING

G ambling has always had its dark side. It was not so long ago that most countries were content to leave the business to a few cities like Las Vegas, Macao and Monte Carlo. In respectable nations, gambling was considered inherently immoral. It corrupted public officials, attracted **racketeers**³⁶ and organized crime. It addicted and indebted the most vulnerable and gullible of the citizens. And so it was outlawed or kept under tight state control. But look around now. Cash-strapped governments are turning greedily to lotteries to raise an extra buck - or hundred million. They are rushing to approve new casinos so they can tax a golden stream of revenue that totals more than \$16 billion a year in the United States alone.

The decline of Communist and authoritarian states has unleashed what gambling expert Nelson Rose calls the biggest gambling boom since Francisco Franco's death in 1975 turned Spain into the slot-machine capital of the world. Manila recently announced plans to build the world's biggest casino. Uruguay has hired Hilton to build South America's biggest casino. Greece is building an American-style megacasino.

It looks like easy money, but, as governments are starting to find out, it's not Easy Street. In Russia the gambling scene seems like something out of Vegas in the mobster days. Burly guards politely ask patrons for their guns - and that's at the good places. There are 264 casinos already, and new ones open at the rate of five a week. Many are reputed to be money-laundering fronts for the Mafia, while the government officially taxes casino at a rate of 90%.

³⁶ Persons engaged in an organized illegal activity

The United States, where gambling is highly regulated, is having an explosion of its own. Americans have made gambling their country's most lucrative pastime - a bigger business than Hollywood and baseball combined. They bet nearly \$500 billion and lost \$39 billion on legal gambling last year - a fourfold increase in just 10 years.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) Gambling has always had its dark side.
- (2) cash-strapped governments
- (3) money-laundering

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What do many countries think about gambling?
- (2) What are the side-effects of gambling?
- (3) Why are many countries busy permitting new casinos?
- (4) Why isn't it easy for governments to collect taxes from gambling?

What Do You Think?

- (1) What are the good things and bad things about gambling?
- (2) Do you know why many people can't stop betting even after they lose a lot of money?
- (3) What's the difference between betting on horseracing, gambling, and playing the lottery?

- (4) Which do you think government should do, make gambling illegal or make it legal and collect taxes from it?
- (5) Talk about the psychological side effects of gambling.

Opinion Samples

- (1) Lots of people who first start gambling as a pastime become easily addicted in a short time. Often they lose control. Salaried people bet their paychecks while housewives bet their grocery money. Gambling is a dangerous and potentially lethal thing, comparable to alcohol. Gambling also increases the rates of suicide and spousal or child abuse. And too often with casinos come pawnshops, massage parlors and sexshops.
- (2) Gambling provides many job opportunities and generates tax income for local governments. It doesn't make sense to prohibit casinos simply because some problems exist. Most of the problems concern pathological gamblers, only about one percent of the population.
- (3) Gambling reduces the amount of donations to charity. And it definitely causes an economic slump because gambling empties people's pockets.

Judge to defendant:

"I note that in addition to stealing money, you took watches, rings and pearls."

"Yes, your honor," he replied.

I was taught money alone doesn't bring happiness."

ISSUE 38

CONFUCIAN LAW

The *Confucian*³⁷ tradition of respect for the aged shows signs of eroding in one famous island-state. Alarmed by the number of elderly citizens facing financial distress, Singapore legislator Walter Woon has proposed a law permitting parents to sue their offspring for support. Many see the bill - thought likely to pass - as **a cynical effort to shift the cost of caring for the elderly from the public to the private sector.** Others resent what they see as an attempt to legislate *filial*³⁸ responsibility. Said Lim Siew Inn, a middle-aged mother of two: **"We certainly did not bring children into this world just to have them around to look after us when we are old!"** Complained a Singaporean in her early 20s: "The government has such a negative view of youth. Everything we do is wrong."

What Does It Mean?

- (1) a cynical effort to shift the cost of caring for the elderly from the public to the private sector
- (2) We certainly did not bring children into this world just to have them around to look after us when we are old!

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What has happened in society that led Woon to propose the new law?
- (2) What is Mrs. Inn's attitude toward having children?

³⁷ Of the teachings of Confucius

³⁸ Of a son or daughter

- (3) How do Generation X'ers view the Singaporean government's attitude toward them?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think a law of this nature is something government should propose, or is it just a matter of personal morality?
- (2) Would you take your children to court if they refused to support you?
- (3) Do you think a law like this would have the intended result?
- (4) What are the immediate side-effects of the law?

Opinion Samples

- (1) In most countries, divorced fathers are required by law to provide financial support for their children. The dads who take their responsibilities seriously usually give far more money to their kids than required to do, but the uncaring ones do everything to avoid paying. Keeping track of the payments, and tracking down the delinquents, is a time-consuming, expensive task that is never fully successful.
- (2) Government care can never compare or compete with family care. If parents can sue their children for failing to provide adequately for their so-called "golden years," then why shouldn't children sue their parents for failing to give them a proper education or social teaching or moral upbringing or whatever?

ISSUE 39

TRAFFIC JAM

Asian places such as Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong have taken on the fourwheeled menace and tamed it, in light of environmental policies, traffic fatalities, high cost, and other factors. Others (including Korea, which enjoyed annual growth rates as high as 67% over the past decade since its motorization boom began in the early 1980s) with increasingly rich and car-happy populations will no doubt have to follow their example sooner or later. The first thing they will find is that they should have started sooner: even less prosperous Asian cities, such as Manila, Jakarta and Bombay, are getting car-clogged. The second lesson is that **gearing up a country or a city for a major car population is expensive** - for governments as well as individuals - and requires planning and strong political will.

All over Asia, the need for more and better roads is rising. Manila's traffic jams used to be seasonal, coming during the summer rains and at Christmas time. Now, goes the local joke, it's Christmas all year round. Jakarta has built relatively few roads since 1986, when there were 600,000 cars in use. The current number: 2.3 million. In several Chinese cities, streets have been upgraded - although complaints abound that the ramp designs, taken from the West, do not accommodate the country's 1.4 million urban bicyclists. India is virtually **starting from scratch**: half of its 2 million kilometers of roads are **unsurfaced**, and per capita government spending on road construction is among the world's lowest.

Building more roads is one answer, limiting their use another. In Japan government makes getting a driver's license difficult and expensive; every new car buyer is required to prove he has a place to park his vehicle. Hong Kong keeps public transit fares low and car prices high through a 100% duty on new vehicles as well as stiff annual fees.

Nowhere is traffic taken more seriously than in Singapore. New cars carry a 200% tariff, and a would-be owner must spend as much as \$71,000 for a

“certificate of entitlement” just to have the privilege of buying one. To drive in the city center during the day, a motorist needs a \$43 monthly permit, which will be replaced in 1998 by a scanning system that will bill car owners who use congestion-prone roads.

Some Asians might argue that tough controls take the fun out of having a car. But sitting in a permanent traffic jam isn't a lot of laughs either - though getting winched out by a helicopter could be interesting.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) Gearing up a country or a city for a major car population is expensive.
- (2) starting from scratch
- (3) unsurfaced

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) When did Korea's motorization boom begin?
- (2) Which country has the lowest per capita government spending on road construction?
- (3) How do Japan and Hong Kong curb the dramatic increase of car ownership?
- (4) What does Singapore do to discourage car usage?

What Do You Think?

- (1) People say that it's too easy to get a driver's license in Korea. Do you think so?
- (2) What do you think about making a driver's license more difficult to procure? Do you think it would

solve the traffic problem?

- (3) Do you think a dramatic increase in traffic fines would help decrease the number of traffic accidents?
- (4) What do you think about lowering the legal driving age to 16?
- (5) What do you think about making full insurance coverage mandatory?
- (6) What do you think about the law that requires drivers to buckle up?
- (7) In some shopping centers in Korea, certain parking areas are exclusively reserved for female drivers. Do you think this discriminates against men?
- (8) What do you think about shipbujje, requiring people to stop driving every ten days? Do you think this solves traffic problems or is it just a violation of personal rights?
- (9) Car pooling is on the decline in spite of a government campaign to encourage it. What do you think are the reasons for the decrease?
- (10) What do you think about the law that imposes a heavy tax on a second family car?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Fines have a very limited effect. Motorists always behave carefully if they know they are being watched by the police, but otherwise they do as they like. If someone is not caught violating the law, he will not pay any fine, no matter how large. If caught, he will pay the fine but remember how often he got away with the violation and continue to repeat the offense.
- (2) The best thing about "woman-only" parking areas,

from a rapist's point of view, is that it makes the targeting of victims relatively easy.

- (3) People who work together do not necessarily live near each other. Those who live in the same neighborhood may work in widely diffuse areas. Besides, people drive so that they can use the car to shop and take care of personal business, not just to go to work. The car gives them the freedom to travel as they please; car pooling erodes this individual liberty and holds the individual hostage to the group's need to get to work and back home efficiently.

ISSUE 40

DOWNSIZING

Dubbed "window-side employees" in Japan, a work-obsessed country, they are paradoxically being paid to do almost nothing at all. Japanese corporations have always had some of these people on staff, but, despite a weak economy, the ranks of the "in-house unemployed" are now estimated at 2 million and growing. The workers' fate hinges³⁹ on this broader question: Must Japan follow in America's footsteps - by among other things, unleashing deregulation, fostering intense competition and creating a more flexible labor market - or can it sustain a wholly different Asian model of capitalism with a more human face?

That's an issue that increasingly confronts Japan as the country digs out of a four-year recession. Battered by a strong yen, high production costs and weak domestic demand, Japanese firms have launched a fresh wave of restructuring. Companies like Nissan, the car maker, have adopted personnel practices aimed at trimming payrolls: hiring freezes, early-retirement incentives and efforts to shrink jobs via attrition. But so far, Japanese corporations have drawn the line at American-style job cuts in which thousands of jobs are eliminated wholesale. Japan is a country where workers often refer to their company as home. "Lifetime" employment at the same large firm has been a national ideal for a long time and a reality for about a fifth of the work force. Small wonder that corporations don't want to risk opprobrium by putting people out on the street.

So they deal with overstaffing in a peculiarly Japanese way: They move it to another location. Thousands of Japanese workers have been packed off to corporate subsidiaries and affiliates, where they stay on the job but seldom do much meaningful work. By internalizing unemployment within firms - and saddling companies, rather than the rest of society, with the associated costs - Japan has kept the official unemployment rate low. Keeping workers on the

³⁹ Is dependent

job may also have minimized the social impact of the recession, since workers who still have a job may retain self-esteem and a sense of structure in their lives.

There is one obvious problem: This seemingly humane treatment of workers costs a lot of money. And because some of these on-the-job “unemployed” remain quite industrious - writing reports, shuffling paper and the like - “they create work for other people to do. It’s a **vicious circle**,” one prominent executive complains. Not surprisingly, some Japanese businessmen now speak admiringly of U.S. companies that have downsized and re-engineered their way to greater productivity in response to similar pressures.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) window-side employees
- (2) America’s footsteps
- (3) flexible labor market
- (4) Japanese corporations have drawn the line at American-style job cuts.
- (5) vicious circle

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What determines the fate of window-side workers in Japan?
- (2) How does Nissan try to reduce its payrolls?
- (3) How has Japan kept the official unemployment rate low?
- (4) What are the problems in keeping unemployed workers in-house?
- (5) Why do many Japanese businessmen admire American companies’ downsizing method?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Are you satisfied with your job?
- (2) Are you afraid of losing your job?
- (3) What are the most important qualities people should have in light of downsizing trends?
- (4) Which do you think is a better way to strengthen a country's economy - guaranteeing lifetime employment or giving corporations the power to downsize?
- (5) What do you think about introducing a lay-off system in our country?
- (6) Which is the most responsible for lay-offs? Corporate managers' greed, ordinary employees' laziness, or the economic cycle?
- (7) What are the common methods corporations use to adjust employment?

Opinion Samples

- (1) When companies downsize, performance isn't an issue. The fault lies in the wrong place, something totally out of your control. The skill set you have developed works great for one company, but it doesn't **translate**⁴⁰ well for other jobs. And an advanced degree is becoming merely a ticket to enter the rat race rather than a head start toward winning it. Job hunting for years to come is expected to be unfriendly and competitive. Running your own business is the best option.

⁴⁰ Apply

- (2) People in business and government should understand that symptomatic relief, easing the pain, is not sufficient for those who have lost their jobs. What's needed is an economy that recognizes employees as valuable assets and also as individuals who have to take home a living wage every day.
- (3) Downsizing is a necessary evil. Only a competitive company can serve the interests of its employees, stockholders and society at large; a noncompetitive firm can't. But staying competitive today is harder than it used to be. The big difference is the breadth, intensity and speed of change, which has meant lower prices and more choices for customers but has also brought fundamental risks to the way business is done. Another important lesson is that the best time to act is when a company is strong. Delay just jeopardizes the interests of all concerned.
- (4) My husband lost his job last year. Since then, despite sending out hundreds of resumes and making hundreds of phone calls, he has had no job offers. He has two master's degrees, a 16-year-old daughter and me, a wife. After being out of the work force for 20 years I'm working again, but earning only slightly above the minimum wage, and with no benefits. How can these merciless CEOs sleep at night? How do they spend their huge, unwarranted salaries?
- (5) Companies slashing their work force typically respond to criticism by saying that they're businesses, not social-welfare agencies. Perhaps it's

time for consumers to make corporate social responsibility a relevant business issue. I've stopped purchasing products and services from a number of uncaring firms.

- (6) I'm sick of all this ***thumb-sucking***⁴¹ and crying over lost jobs. The last thing we need is for some journalists to stroke the negative attitudes of these "victims" wallowing in self-pity. What we need to hear is how great we are and how great we can be. Self-reliance is the theme we're looking for. Business exists for profit, not as some gigantic baby-sitting outfit. We need not fuss over how a layoff occurred; we need to deal with it and move on. The sooner we realize this, the sooner we can take control of our lives without depending on anyone else for our financial well-being.
- (7) Corporate managers bear solemn responsibilities to creditors, share holders, customers and - last but not least employees. That our corporations are competitive, our economy vigorous and pension funds rich is compelling testimony that managers are doing their job. Because corporations are healthy, they spawn the creation of new businesses which, in turn, absorb displaced workers, keeping unemployment low. This is how the free-enterprise system is supposed to work. Without question the pressure of technological change and foreign competition is forcing corporations to make hard choices that impact some people severely, at least in

⁴¹ Childish act

the short term. Serious issues are involved that warrant informed public debate, but cheap name-calling serves no one.

- (8) Are big job cuts good news or bad news for the economy? In the long run, probably good news. One of a free economy's strengths is that it shuffles labor from less productive to more productive places - away from firms that no longer have a competitive **edge**⁴² to those that do. If we tried to stop the process, economic growth would stagnate. Shuffling seems likely to accelerate as firms continue to encounter heightened domestic and global competition.
- (9) To get rid of staff, companies often take people out of manufacturing and put them into sales. If they can't sell, they face constant criticism, get an ulcer and quit. Another strategy is to announce a search for early-retirement candidates, and companies are often successful in persuading employees to go voluntarily. But they don't ask you to go; they make you go.

⁴² Advantage

ISSUE 41

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

This week marks the fifth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, by which Chinese troops crushed a nonviolent protest by pro-democracy students. The image of the hopeful youths with their "Give me liberty or give me death" signs still linger. Now, five years and one administration later, America still gropes for an effective human-rights policy in China. Last week, President Clinton, who more than once *assailed*⁴³ George Bush for coddling dictators, discarded last year's policy - which linked Beijing's progress on human rights to renewal of its **most-favored-nation trading privileges** - and unveiled a Bush-like "broader strategy" to promote human rights in China.

Although Beijing failed to meet many of Clinton's conditions for renewing MFN status, the president's punishment was barely **a slap on the wrist** - a ban on imports of the cheap Chinese semiautomatic rifles that neo-Nazis and gang members favor.

Clinton's threat to revoke MFN privilege was always a problematic policy. Even Chinese dissidents were deeply divided over it, fearing renewed isolation. U.S. businesses and many members of Congress opposed it, as did many of America's traditional allies in Asia. But while wisely severing the linkage between trade and human rights, Clinton has not put forth a convincing long-term approach to making human-rights progress. When asked why China's pace in improving human rights has been so slow, he repeated the familiar argument that Asians are entitled to their own definition of human rights. "We see in the culture of China, and in many other Asian societies," he said, "a desire to preserve order in the interest of the group, often at the expense of the individual."

Many Chinese, Vietnamese, North Koreans and others have suffered terribly because they have opposed the tyrants in charge, and many **human-rights advocates** believe **Clinton's comments comfort the enemies of**

democratic principle instead of its champions. They also say his view echoes a distortion of Confucian culture that has been perpetuated by the region's authoritarian regimes. The Confucian leader earns the right to rule, the "Mandate of Heaven," through virtue and moral rectitude. When he loses those qualities, he abrogates the social contract.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) most-favored-nation trading privileges
- (2) a slap on the wrist
- (3) human-rights advocates
- (4) Clinton's comments comfort the enemies of democratic principle instead of its champions.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What did President Clinton do when China failed to meet his conditions for renewing MFN status?
- (2) How did he respond when he was asked about China's slow pace on human rights issues?
- (3) What did human rights advocates think about his comments?
- (4) What is the Confucian notion of leaders' job qualifications?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think the definition of democracy should be different in different countries?
- (2) Do you think it's OK for government to sacrifice individual freedom to benefit the group?
- (3) Do you think the U.S. government should police China and link its progress on human rights to trade policy?
- (4) What do you think about the Clinton government's giving up the role of international policeman in terms of China's human rights problems?
- (5) Which do you think has greater priority for underdeveloped and developing countries - economic or political development?
- (6) Do we have to speak out about North Korea's human rights abuses? Do you think the issues should be linked to any future economic cooperation?

Opinion Samples

- (1) The government's responsibility is always to work in the best interests of the largest group in its domain - the nation itself. However, other groups, to promote their own interests (which may or may not be in the nation's own interest), use influence of all the sorts to try to get the government to act on their own behalf. Individuals also try to get their governments to protect them against the greed of special interest groups. Sometimes the entire nation - and many individuals as well - benefit from special favors shown to private interests, but it is difficult to predict which times this will be. Nevertheless, the

- government must put the nation above the person or the nation will be damaged severely, and the individual will usually be even worse off.
- (2) The world community must speak out against ongoing injustice in some countries, since silence condemns more innocent children and adults to "disappearance," torture and death. We must make it clear to every government that human rights abuses cannot, and will not, be tolerated.
- (3) A lot of countries want the United States to claim a moral duty to intervene in the interest of humanity around the world. But why assign this role to the United States when the United Nations, which has been in existence for 50 years, was formed for just that purpose? If all the nations in the world realistically supported the UN - with funding and support for its ideals - the question would not need to arise. And the United Nations would finally become a moral force to be reckoned with.

ISSUE 42

POPULATION WARS

Hairs were split in six languages at the Cairo population conference last week as delegates parsed their way to a compromise on abortion. Consensus rules at United Nations conclaves, so a Vatican-led handful of countries held the meeting hostage.

But in the real world, it is bigness that counts. What will determine the shape and distribution of the global population after Cairo depends, above all, on what happens in a few big countries in the next few years.

If China had grown at the same rate as India over the past decade, the world would have 70 million more people today. India is due to add 500 million people and overtake China as the world's most populous country by 2040. But another half-billion lives hang in the balance. These are the extra Indians who will be born, the World Bank estimates, if India delays 15 years in reaching the two-child family that eventually brings zero growth.

Five other countries that hold the key to population stabilization are Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Brazil. Pakistan and Nigeria have been notable failures so far. Both are set to double in size over the next 30 years and could treble unless urgent action is taken. The other three are family planning success stories that were seized on at the conference not only for inspiration but for mutual aid. Ten developing countries from three continents have formed a South-South partnership to provide family planning advice to faster-growing neighbors, with seed money from the World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation. What could make this initiative work is the power of example plus some healthy competition. If Bangladesh can do it, why not Pakistan?

What Does It Mean?

- (1) Hairs were split.

- (2) A Vatican-led handful of countries held the meeting hostage.
- (3) Another half-billion lives hang in the balance.
- (4) seed money

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) Name five countries that will determine the stabilization of the world's population in the near future.
- (2) What is the South-South partnership for?
- (3) What will allow the South-South partnership to attain the intended results?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think government has a right to limit the right to have children?
- (2) What do you think about giving social and financial advantages to one- or two-child families?
- (3) Do you think other countries, especially developed ones, should financially help countries with too many people reduce their populations?
- (4) Do you think governments should provide free medical care for abortions?
- (5) What do you think about a law forcing the mentally handicapped not to bear children?
- (6) Korean people generally favor boys over girls, leading to female abortions. Do you have any ideas to end this trend or do you support the practice?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Reducing birth rates is clearly an urgent priority. Achieving a balance between food and mouths to feed depends more on family planners than on farmers, because further major increases in food production may not be possible. Even if an increase in food production continues, worldwide yields depend not on the ecological carrying capacity of Spaceship Earth, but on something more prosaic: money to fund continuing development of new technologies, and **credit**⁴⁴ and technical assistance to farmers in the developing world so they can apply the technologies that already exist. It would be impossible today to feed the world's current population with the technology of 30 years ago without a devastating impact on the environment.
- (2) Abortion is far cheaper, in the short run and especially for the long term, than births. If abortions are permitted by law, people should have the same access to financial subsidies as they do to any other medical service. If abortions are illegal, people should not have any "special right" to have the government pay for criminal activity.
- (3) The Nazi ideas about eugenics have been thoroughly discredited. None of us are perfect; we all need help in having children and raising them. There is a very fine gradation between "most-fit" and "least-fit," so any arbitrary line between "fit" and "unfit" is

⁴⁴ A sum of money due to a person

nonsensical. The mentally handicapped often exhibit superior capacities for love and caring, and any other difficulties they face as parents can be supplemented with appropriate help from others.

ISSUE 43

STOPPING WORK AT 60

Just 25 years ago in the industrialized nations, four out of five men between 60 and 65 would have had jobs. Today half the men in this age group are no longer counted as workers. In some European countries - Austria, Finland, France, the Netherlands - only about 20 percent of this group are still employed. In Britain, the United States and Sweden, barely one man in three between 60 and 65 has a full-time paying job. In Germany it is 1 in 5.

Why have so many older men been cut from the work force? One reason is that many countries encouraged early retirement: France went so far as to lower its mandatory retirement age to 60. The theory was that early retirements would free up more jobs for the young, thus reducing the level of unemployment, which has soared particularly in Europe. But this has turned out to be largely a myth: most of the jobs opened up by early retirement are simply lost. "Restructuring is the order of the day in the industrialized world: work forces are being cut back both on the factory floor and in the company office. Older male workers are often the first to be let go. They are seen as expensive because of their age and having old skills that are difficult to renew.

Those assumptions should be rethought in the light of the newest labor research, many economists now argue. As the ILO said last week, "The early retirement trend has gone too far and it will have serious long-term consequences if it is not reversed in the near future." Populations are already aging faster than they are growing in industrialized economies. With more retirees having to be supported by fewer workers, governments will have to spend more on pensions, social security and health care. In Europe, social-welfare systems are already at breaking point and in the process of being cut.

Industrialized countries seem to have little choice but to find ways to stretch out working life. Generating more jobs is the simplest solution. The United States is the best among developed countries at doing that, but even it

cannot produce enough new jobs. The ILO suggests that firms stop automatically putting the oldest workers out the door first, and countries must establish a phased transition between work and retirement.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) mandatory retirement age
- (2) Early retirements would free up more jobs for the young.
- (3) long-term consequences

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) Why have the old people's payrolls shrunk in Europe?
- (2) Why is it *in vogue*⁴⁵ to restructure by eliminating the jobs of old employees?
- (3) What are some side-effects of early retirement?
- (4) To reduce the side-effects of early retirement, what did the ILO suggest?

What Do You Think?

- (1) What do you think is the ideal retirement age?
- (2) Talk about the good things and bad things in lowering the retirement age.
- (3) Would you retire early if you made a lot of money?

⁴⁵ Popular

Or would you continue to work regardless of your financial status?

- (4) What would you do if you were forced by your company to retire early?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Lowering the retirement age allows people, after a lifetime of hard work, to enjoy some time of relaxation, travel, the fulfillment of dreams, before the infirmity of very old age makes this impossible. It also opens up the workplace to younger people who otherwise would become a burden on society. On the other hand, if forces society to support an unproductive group for longer periods of time as life expectancy grows. Society already supports the unproductive young for twenty years or so; are we going to provide for the unproductive elderly for another twenty or more?
- (2) If I had a lot of money I would not need to retire since my job would already give me both the opportunity and means to do most of the things I wanted. It is only the wage slaves who struggle to work hard just to keep their nose above water and benefit from being paid not to work.

It's hard to figure
what she would have found attractive about men
if she had lived before money was invented.

ISSUE 44

DO TV AND MOVIES CAUSE "COPYCAT" CRIMES?

Nobody believes that media by themselves cause aggression. But Leonardo Eron and Rowell Huesmann of the University of Michigan found in a 22-year study following kids from third grade through adulthood that the single best predictor of later aggression - better than poverty, grades, a single-parent home or exposure to real violence - is a **heavy childhood diet of TV carnage**. "Of course not every youngster is affected," says Eron. "Not everyone who gets lung cancer smoked cigarettes. And not everyone who smokes cigarettes gets lung cancer. But nobody outside the tobacco industry denies that smoking causes lung cancer."

Much of the most effective research has been done on children because they are considered most susceptible. As Centerwall puts it, **"Later variations in exposure, in adolescence and adulthood, do not exert any additional effect."** In the early '60s, Albert Bandura at Stanford was the first to show that kids learned behavior from TV, not just from their parents. Psychologists have used four theories of learning to describe how TV violence may influence kids: they learn to imitate what they see on TV, especially when the behavior is rewarded; from the frequency of violence on TV they learn that violence is normal; they become desensitized to real people's suffering; and they become aroused by images on television, triggering violent responses. Early researchers, following Aristotle, thought media violence might be ***cathartic***,⁴⁶ purging violent urges, but experiments have not borne this out.

In a classic series of lab experiments in the early 1960s, researchers first frustrated a group of preschool kids, then showed them TV ***footage***⁴⁷ of a man hitting a clown doll. Afterward, the kids who saw the violence were

⁴⁶ Of producing catharsis (a way of dealing with bad or strong feelings and emotions, by expressing or experiencing them through writing, talking, etc.)

⁴⁷ Film

more likely to mimic it on a similar doll. Further studies showed that these kids would also spontaneously act out against a man dressed as a clown, indicating that TV violence might spill easily into the real world. In another twist, a group of kids saw a similar footage of a man hitting a doll, but then being spanked for his actions. These children were much less likely to attack the doll themselves.

These last results imply that what matters most is the type or treatment of violence: that screen mayhem that is rewarded will encourage aggression, but that which is punished will inhibit it. By this logic, a heroic John Wayne movie might well be more damaging than a senseless slasher movie, especially if the villain is punished.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) heavy childhood diet of TV carnage
- (2) Later variations in exposure, in adolescence and adulthood, do not exert any additional effect.
- (3) Screen mayhem that is rewarded will encourage aggression, but that which is punished will inhibit it.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) How much influence on violent behavior does adult viewing of movies on TV have?
- (2) How long have psychologists known that TV teaches behavior?
- (3) Why does it seem paradoxical that watching more violence may actually reduce violent activity?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you believe kids imitate what they see on TV and in the movies?
- (2) Do you think it would be right to keep all violent movies from kids even if the "copycat theory" is true?
- (3) What do you think about making it a law to include a V-chip - a computer chip that would enable parents to block objectionable programming - in all TV sets?
- (4) Do you want an external group to decide what is appropriate viewing at what age?
- (5) Do you think limiting violent programs on TV endangers the freedom of speech?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Movie/TV producers should feel a sense of responsibility about the influence of entertainment. Many people consider TV and movie violence a problem, saying that it contributes to the level of crime that plagues society.
- (2) Producers have moral responsibility for dealing with the problem. But it's ridiculous to argue that they are all responsible for all the violence in society. They are singled out for blame more than others. Violent crimes are caused by a mixture of complicated factors such as poverty, class, education, childhood experience, personality profiles, availability of guns, and others so forth, and have no simple panacea.
- (3) No responsible parent would let a 5-year-old child

watch violent programs. If parents took more responsibility for raising their children, there would be no need for the government to consider laws restricting violent programs.

- (4) Why should society and the entertainment industry pay the price for the few people who can't seem to teach their children right from wrong? The real culprits are the parents who are not interested in what their own kids watch on TV. Where are the role models? Who is teaching children the proper values?

ISSUE 45

RISKY BUSINESS

The poet William Blake wrote in the early 19th century: "Great things are done when men and mountains meet." Great things indeed were done on Mount Everest in the past two weeks. Also poignant things, foolish things, deadly things. Hundreds of climbers from 11 different expeditions were on the mountain - 31 near the summit - when a freakish and fierce storm blew in. Eight climbers perished, the highest one-day death toll since the first expedition tried to reach the top of the world's tallest peak in 1921.

Adventurers have always sought challenges: deeper jungles, wider oceans, newer worlds. But mountains have been special. Perhaps it's their size, their power, their resistance to conquest. Climbers search not just for summits but also for themselves. They reach up to reach within.

That helps explain why Everest has been enveloped by "Mountain Madness," the name of a Seattle company that offers guided tours of the peak for about \$65,000 (plus airfare to Nepal). New technology and equipment have also helped: lighter gear, warmer clothing, better radios and televisions.

But the community of high-mountain explorers now is gripped by soul-searching and second-guessing. Everest, after all, is not a theme park. Some of the dead were experienced guides who lost their lives trying to save less agile amateurs.

Is it right that an average person can order an ascent of Everest out of a catalog? An Australian mountaineer, Tim McCartney-Snape, told the Associated Press: "Some things should remain sacred, and Everest is one of them. Even the strongest and toughest have found it can be extremely difficult just existing at that altitude, without other people depending on you."

On Everest, dependency can lead to heroism and to tragedy. One frostbitten amateur, Seaborne Weathers of Dallas, was plucked from a rocky ledge at 22,000 feet by a Nepalese army helicopter - an act of incredible bravery. And Rob Hall, a guide who had climbed Everest several times, stayed on its slope with a dying customer. After learning they were

hopelessly trapped, Hall managed to place a satellite telephone call to his pregnant wife, Jan, in New Zealand. "Hey, look," he told her, "don't worry about me." Rob Hall died before rescuers could reach him. He knew the mountain was still a mountain. Still a goal. Still a dream. Still a killer.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) But the community of high-mountain explorers now is gripped by soul-searching and second-guessing.
- (2) On Everest, dependency can lead to heroism and to tragedy.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) Why are death tolls on Mt. Everest rising?
- (2) What service does Mountain Madness perform?
- (3) Is Tim McCartney-Snape for or against tourists climbing Mt. Everest?
- (4) What did William Blake think about mountains?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Why do some people perform dangerous activities?
Is the challenge worth the risk to people's lives?
- (2) Do you think amateur mountain climbers should be prohibited from challenging high mountains?
- (3) Many kinds of risks are taken in the name of sport.
What do you think about boxing, especially women's boxing, bull fighting, and auto-racing? Do you think they should be allowed or prohibited?

- (4) What makes people take dangerous jobs such as being policemen, firefighters, miners, etc.?
- (5) Nothing can be more dangerous than being a soldier in a war. What makes someone accept that job and risk his life in battle?
- (6) In wars or high-mountain climbing, sometimes one must retreat. Do you think people should rescue their wounded or injured fellows no matter what? Do we have a right to condemn anyone who gave up a rescue?

Opinion Samples

- (1) People try to get to the top of the world for fame and money without paying due attention to the mountain's hazards. Why only Everest? There are lots of virgin mountains. It's because mountain climbers want to scale the highest point, not because they have a real love for adventure. Doing something like this for commercial purposes is dangerous because the guide is under a contract obligation to push people, irrespective of their ability and understanding, to climb the mountain. The death of those people are a waste of human life and talent. It's time to stop mountain climbing on a commercial basis because alpinism in high altitudes is very different from trekking or hiking. One should not take chances with very large mountains - they are mightier than man.

- (2) Interesting thing, this civilization of ours. We do not allow people to duel to the death like gladiators in the Roman Empire used to do. That is supposed to be barbaric. People are not permitted to play Russian roulette because some of them are certain to die. Yet when some foolhardy people die while climbing Mount Everest, we call it a tragedy. We know full well that many of them will not make it back down the mountain. We even have the nerve to call those who survive "heroes."
- (3) I was shocked after learning what had happened to all those climbers. One question came to my mind: was it worth it? Risking your life like that to reach the top of the world? My answer may sound stupid, but it came faster than I could imagine: yes. The real trophy, when you try to do something as hard as climbing the highest mountain on earth, comes from reaching the top. You don't get prize money when you get there. But you win. You win the satisfaction of just reaching it. And sometimes that's all you need.
- (4) Money can't buy respect for the mountain, nor can it buy achievement. The true accomplishment is to climb, whether making it to the top or not, using one's own efforts. I climb for the thrill of being alone with nature, working with it and not against it. I disapprove of the masses of people who think money can buy achievement. It cannot. Somebody who climbs an unglamorous mountain, using his or her own effort, achieves morally much more than the person who buys a Mount Everest trek or some

similar high-altitude happening. There are just some things money can't buy.

- (5) It is sad to see that climbing Everest has become more and more a commercialized adventure through the years. I hope the tragic deaths will make mountaineers wake up. I wonder why people always underestimate the difficulty of climbing to the top. It seems that the thrill of reaching the summit dominates over good judgment and self-assessment.
- (6) The reasons mountaineers want to risk their lives so recklessly are a testament to absurdity.
- (7) It matters little whether dangerous or barbaric or immoral activities are sanctioned by government or not. Some people will always be driven to seek an emotional thrill by living life to the limits. Many, of course, will pay a terrible price for their foolhardiness, but the allure of danger, not the illusion of safety, is what motivates these people. Rather than outlawing foolish, self-destructive behavior, perhaps government would be better advised to try to implement safeguards and standards that will help minimize the bad effects.

He's grateful to be living in a free country where a man can do as his wife pleases.

ISSUE 46

LIFE, DEATH AND THE POPE

An important papal pronouncement addresses some of the most incendiary moral issues of the moment: abortion, euthanasia, use of human embryos for medical research, and capital punishment. All are, for the pope, signs of an encroaching "culture of death" that threatens human dignity and freedom.

His message is concerned with human rights. Where before he warned against political tyranny in the East, the pope now focuses on what he calls "a new culture climate" in the affluent West that supports abortion on demand and tolerates the elimination of the aged through mercy killing. "Broad sectors of public opinion," he complains, "justify certain crimes against life in the name of individual freedom, and on this basis they claim not only exemption from punishment but even authorization by the states." He writes, "The fact that legislation in many countries, perhaps even departing from basic principles of their constitutions, has determined not to punish these practices against life, and even to make them altogether legal, is both a disturbing symptom and a significant cause of grave moral decline." The pope also denounces a veritable "structure of sin" that includes international institutions, foundations and associations which systematically campaign for the legalization and spread of abortion in the world.

For the pope, abortion is a form of "murder," a violation of the Biblical commandment against killing. Opponents, he urges, must resist with nonviolent and conscientious objection. He also condemns medical experiments on human embryos, like those approved last year by the National Institute of Health, especially when the embryos are created as "simple biological material to be disposed of." "Whoever attacks human life," the pope declares, "in some way attacks God himself." And to those who argue that an embryo is not yet human life, the pope replies: "It would never be made human if it were not human already." At the same time, he warns that anyone - father, family, friend, physician, hospital administrator, politician or publicist - who promotes choice in abortion shares in the sin of destroying human life.

Pope John Paul is equally adamant in his opposition to assisted suicide and euthanasia. Both practices are "intolerable and too burdensome." But here he makes distinctions. Life in the terminally ill need not be prolonged by aggressive medical procedures. And drugs that reduce suffering are acceptable even if they shorten life.

On capital punishment the pope declares that the justification for the death penalty is "very rare" if not "practically non-existent." On birth control, the church remains opposed to artificial *contraception*.⁴⁸ **Catholic couples who use church-approved natural family planning may, for sound moral reasons, postpone pregnancy "indefinitely."** And while abortion is never justified, the pope writes, the woman who has one to protect "her own health or a decent standard of living" for other family members should be treated with compassion.

The ethical challenge to legislators is obvious. Politicians, the pope insists, "cannot separate the realm of private conscience from that of public conduct." In countries where abortion and euthanasia are permitted, they may support legislation that restricts but does not outlaw these acts. But laws that permit these "crimes" are inherently unjust, the pope claims, and promote the "freedom of the strong against the weak." Respect for individual conscience is not the issue, he insists. "Society has the right and duty to protect itself against the abuses which can occur in the name of conscience and under the *pretext*⁴⁹ of freedom."

What Does It Mean?

- (1) mercy killing
- (2) Catholic couples who use church-approved natural family planning may, for sound moral reasons,

⁴⁸ The prevention of conception or impregnation

⁴⁹ A false reason put forward to conceal the true one

postpone pregnancy “indefinitely.”

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What is the “culture of death” that the pope warns against?
- (2) What is the proper way to protect against legal abortion?
- (3) Which crimes, according to the pope, should be punished by death?
- (4) What is the counter-argument against claiming that embryo are not human beings?

What Do You Think?

- (1) What do you think about the pope’s view that abortion is a form of murder?
- (2) What do you think about medical experiments on human embryos?
- (3) Many people are afraid that people are “forcing” the terminally ill to go ahead with euthanasia when legally permitted. Do you think so? What should we do to prevent any bad side-effects?
- (4) Where should we put the priority if a politician’s and the pope’s views clash?
- (5) What do you think about the pope’s opposition to artificial contraception?
- (6) The pope recommends regulating contraception by using the menstrual cycle. Do you think this is realistic for ordinary people?

Opinion Samples

- (1) The pope has condemned millions of families to poverty, disease and limited futures because of his anti-birth control and anti-family planning policies. A person who believes in family values supports policies that aim to sustain them in a world with limited resources. He shows the conservative political correctness of using the overused term "family values" as a justification for policies that are already destroying families and will probably continue to do so.
- (2) His views on contraception make thousands of people suffer. Overpopulation is the biggest problem the planet faces and is not under control. AIDS and starvation in the Third World are caused to a large extent by the policies of the Roman Catholic Church.
- (3) A reasonable man adapts himself to the world. An unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, in my opinion, very little progress will come from Pope John Paul II's attitude.
- (4) The pope is the only one not obsessed with his personal popularity. Simply put, the pope knows his message is more important than he is. He should be respected for his consistent moral leadership in an age of spineless political correctness.

ISSUE 47

"DRESS DOWN" DAYS

Spielberg, being Spielberg, can dress as he pleases. But that's the point: Americans used to *want* to dress up. Wearing a suit was a privilege of adulthood; Spielberg's outfit looks like something his mother might have dressed him in in fourth grade.

"Dress down" days, a phrase that first appeared in print barely five years ago, now affect, by some estimates, more than half of all U.S. office workers. Major banks, law firms and major companies lift the burden of neckties and nylons on employees in honor of the impending weekend; so does the Central Intelligence Agency.

As for worship, Americans, who long ago gave up wearing ties to church services, are starting to treat socks as optional. "We have lost the ideal of adult self-respect, and we're dressing like rebellious children," remarks the fashion historian Anne Hollander. "When you go to church, or to the opera, you now have the idea that you do not need to express respect in your costume - that if you do, you somehow feel like one of the oppressed." Morticians are seeing more street clothes at funerals. Boston funeral director Arthur Hasiotis says families sometimes request casual burial wear for decedents who never put a tie around their necks while they were alive.

Comfort is the one unanswerable argument in favor of casual dressing. No one bothers putting on a suit or high heels to work at home, certainly. The other advantage of casual dress is that it is cheaper than suits. "Not having to wear nylons," an IBM worker in Atlanta told her boss, "is like getting a raise." Except, of course, for workers who may already have a closet full of suits, and find they now have to buy a bunch of sweaters as well.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) Major banks, law firms and major companies lift the burden of neckties and nylons on employees in honor

of the impending weekend.

- (2) Comfort is the one unanswerable argument in favor of casual dressing.
- (3) "Not having to wear nylons," an IBM worker in Atlanta told her boss, "is like getting a raise."

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What are "dress down" days?
- (2) What is the connection between respect and costume?
- (3) How does this essay relate to the proverb, "Clothes make the man"?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you have the courage to dress as you please? Or are you afraid of what people think of your dress?
- (2) Do you think the dress-down phenomenon is desirable?
- (3) Do you think clothes are just vanities, or do they express something essential about how we view ourselves and society?
- (4) When do you dress up?
- (5) When do you dress down?
- (6) How do you dress yourself when you go to work?
- (7) Do you think dressing down contributes to lifting productivity?
- (8) If you were a boss, would you allow your employees to dress down?

- (9) What do you think about wearing the so-called navel T-shirt?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Many companies are dropping the old dress code. Employees no longer have to wear a suit and tie to work. Most employees are grateful. But companies should offer some guidelines lest their employees should show up in short pants or sweat clothes, because casual doesn't mean sloppy.
- (2) Dressing down has some interesting possibilities. Right now, for the sake of cost and comfort, people are moving from neckties to blue jeans. The next step will be to beachwear like shorts and sandals. From there they will go to relaxing-at-home gear such as pajamas and nighties, and then just underwear. Can total nudity be far behind?
- (3) Clothing is an essential way of expressing not only our individuality but also our class and even our aspirations. Dress codes are imposed on us by others and reveal their attitudes about our "proper" status. So, while clothes may indeed be "vanities," they also show the essential nature of whatever entity decides how we dress.
- (4) Dressing down in and of itself is probably not the determining factor. If studies do show an increase in productivity, perhaps it is due to the novelty, the change of routine, that is responsible for a changed perception of role and self-worth. As dressing down

becomes institutionalized, it too will become part of the routine and productivity will return to normal.

ISSUE 48

ARE WE ALONE?

The discovery of life beyond earth would transform not only our science but also our religions, our belief systems and our entire world view. For, in a sense, the search for extraterrestrial life is really a search for ourselves - who we are and what our place is in the grand sweep of the cosmos.

Contrary to popular belief, speculation that we are not alone in the universe is as old as philosophy itself. The essential step in the reasoning was based on the atomic theory of the ancient Greek philosopher Democritus. First, the laws of nature are universal. Second, there is nothing special or privileged about Earth. Finally, if something is possible, nature tends to make it happen.

Philosophy is one thing, filling in the physical details another. Although astronomers increasingly suspect that **bio-friendly planets** may be abundant in the universe, the chemical steps leading to life remain largely mysterious.

Traditionally, biologists believed that **life is a freak** - the result of a zillion-to-one accidental concatenation of molecules. It follows that the likelihood of its happening again elsewhere in the cosmos is infinitesimal. This viewpoint derives from the second law of **thermodynamics**,⁵⁰ which predicts that the universe is dying - slowly and inexorably degenerating toward a state of total chaos.

According to the orthodox view, Darwinian selection is utterly blind. **Any impression that the transition from microbes to man represents progress is pure chauvinism on our part.** The path of evolution is merely a random walk through the realm of possibilities.

There is, however, a contrary view - one that is gaining strength and directly challenges orthodox biology. It is that complexity can emerge spontaneously

⁵⁰ The science concerned with the relations between heat and mechanical energy or work.

through a process of self-organization. If matter and energy have an inbuilt tendency to amplify and channel organized complexity, the odds against the formation of life and the subsequent evolution of intelligence could be drastically shortened.

The relevance of self-organization to biology remains hotly debated. It suggests, however, that although the universe as a whole may be dying, an opposite, progressive trend may also exist as a fundamental property of nature. The emergence of extraterrestrial life, particularly intelligent life, is a key test for these rival paradigms.

These issues cut right across traditional religious dogma. Many people cling to the belief that the origin of life required a unique divine act. But if life on Earth is not unique, the case for a miraculous origin would be undermined. The discovery of even a humble bacterium on Mars, if it could be shown to have arisen independently from Earth life, would support the view that life emerges naturally.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) bio-friendly planets
- (2) life is a freak
- (3) Any impression that the transition from microbes to man represents progress is pure chauvinism on our part.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What does Democritus have to do with extraterrestrial life?
- (2) Why, according to the article, do religious people tend to reject the idea that life may exist on other planets?

- (3) Is evolution necessarily progressive?
- (4) How does the concept of self-organization affect traditional scientific and religious views of life?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Why are human beings fascinated by alien life?
- (2) Do you believe in ETs(extra-terrestrials)? Why? Why not?
- (3) Do you think ETs are more intelligent and have more advanced civilization than we?
- (4) Do you think they visit the Earth in UFOs? What purpose would their visits serve?
- (5) What do you think are the reasons we're looking for ETs and exploring other planets?
- (6) Do you think the space race deserves an astronomical budget? What do you think about stopping all space research and using all that money in developing technology and improving our welfare system?
- (7) What do you think about the Earth's future? Do you think we will be able to reverse the effect of on-going pollution or will we have to move to other planets?

Opinion Samples

- (1) It is definitely wrong to assume that the planet we inhabit is the only one with intelligent life on it. Among the many billions of heavenly bodies, there have to be a large number on which life exists, and they may have evolved beyond our level. That's why

UFOs keep coming. There is too much evidence of UFOs to ignore, so we should genuinely make efforts to communicate with ETs in order to understand who WE are and where WE came from.

- (2) The prospect of discovering extraterrestrial life is truly tantalizing. However, we have barely begun to discover life on our own planet, and time is running out. Not even half the plants and animals that inhabit Earth have been discovered and cataloged. Should we be spending billions of dollars trying to find life where we are not sure it even exists when our own planet's life-forms are disappearing before our eyes?
- (3) If we accept the remote assumption that a civilization parallel to ours, with the same technology, currently exists and is a mere 1,000 light-years from us, then our signals will reach it around A.D. 3000. Will there be anyone left here to receive the reply?
- (4) We don't know for sure, and we may never know, whether ETs exist on other planets. What we do know is that billions of creatures, both human and animal, exist here on Earth, and millions, if not billions, suffer needlessly from the effects of starvation, disease, pollution, war and other disasters. I wince with shame to think of the money that has been poured into the black hole of space exploration instead of being used to benefit life right here on this planet.
- (5) Life occurs when there is enough water and light and

the right temperatures. Even if we are now alone in our universe, that does not mean life could not have existed previously. Life seems to be a regular possibility in the cosmos.

- (6) We spend billions of dollars on missions to planets. If we do discover life in space, what then? Do we invite the ETs to visit the Earth? Call me **a wet blanket**⁵¹ if you wish, but I'm not impressed.
- (7) Science today is offering an elaborately conditioned answer about where extraterrestrial life might possibly be. Scientists have found a planet or two outside our solar system whereon conditions exist (liquid water the temperature of hot tea, for example) that may be hospitable to life.
- (8) That there could be life elsewhere in the universe is certainly looking more likely than a few years ago. Life could begin and evolve and civilization could arise on other planets. But that distant civilizations could send emissaries to other worlds is another matter. What UFO believers fail to take into account is the distances involved and the time it takes to cover them. The nearest star to us, Proxima Centauri, is about four light years away. A spacecraft traveling at 25,000 miles an hour would take 110,000 years to reach it. Even if it were possible to develop a spacecraft capable of traveling at or near the speed of light (and nothing in current science suggests that this will ever be possible), the

⁵¹ A person who dampens and smothers all enthusiasm.

distances are simply too vast to allow rational human beings to believe in the possibility of interstellar travel.

- (9) The possibility that life exists elsewhere is of course a blow to the incorrigible human sense of self-importance. People accustomed to thinking of themselves as significant - masters of the universe to whom God made all else in creation subsidiary - might be demoted to distant cousins tenant-farming on their speck of dust.

ISSUE 49

STOP THE CLOCK

I'm a member of a generation that is very concerned with saving time but often unaware of why we're doing it. Like many, I'm nervous and jittery without a wrist watch and a daily planner. I am one of a growing number of students who are completing college in three years instead of four - cramming credits in the summer. We're living life on fast-forward without a pause button.

In my freshman year, my roommates and I survived on Chinese takeout, express pizzas and taco take-home dinners. We ate lunch while walking to class. Every day seemed an endless picnic as we ate with plastic utensils and paper plates. It was fast and easy - no washing up. My girlfriends and I talked about our mothers and grandmothers, models of domesticity, and pitied them. We didn't see the benefits of staying at home, ironing clothes and making spaghetti sauce when canned ones were almost as good and cleaning services were so convenient. A nearby store even sold throwaway underwear. "Save time," the package read. "No laundry."

We baked brownies in 10 minutes in the microwave and ate the frosting from the can because we were too impatient to wait for the brownies to cool. For a while we thought about chipping in and buying a funky contraption that makes toast, coffee and eggs. All you had to do was put in the raw ingredients the night before and wake up to the smell of sizzling eggs, crispy toast and rich coffee.

It seems that all the kids I know are time-saving addicts. Everyone on campus prefers E-mail to snail mail. The art of letter writing is long gone. More of us are listening to books instead of reading them. My roommates last year jogged while plugged in.

My near-sighted friends opt for throwaway contacts and think the usual lenses are tedious. A roommate prefers a sleeping bag so she doesn't have to make her bed. Instead of going to the library to do research we cruise the Internet and log on to the Library of Congress.

It isn't as if we're using the time we save for worthwhile pursuits like volunteering at a soup kitchen. Most of my friends spend the extra minutes watching TV, listening to stereo, shopping, hanging out, chatting on the phone or snoozing.

When I visited my aunt last summer, I saw how happy she was after baking bread or a cake, how proud she seemed whenever she made a salad with her homegrown tomatoes and cucumbers. Why bother, when there are ready-made salads, ready-peeled and -cut fruit and five-minute frosting?

Once, when I went shopping with her, she bought ingredients to make a birthday cake for her daughter. I pointed to a lavish-looking cake covered with pink roses. "Why don't you just buy one?" I asked. **"A cake is more than a cake,"** she replied. "It's the giving of energy, the thought behind it. You'll grow to understand."

Slowly, I'm beginning to appreciate why my aunt takes pleasure in cooking for her family, why the old man next door spends so much time tending his garden. He offered me a bag of his fresh-grown tomatoes. "They're good," he said. "Not like the ones at the supermarkets." He was right.

My generation has all the technological advances at our fingertips. We're computer-savvy, and we have more time. But what are we really saving it for? In the end, we may lose more than we've gained by forgetting the important things in life.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) throwaway underwear.
- (2) A cake is more than a cake.
- (3) My generation has all the technological advances at our fingertips.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) How have lifestyles changed in recent decades?
- (2) What are the benefits of having modern time-saving technology at our disposal?
- (3) What seem to be the disadvantages?
- (4) Give a job description of the article's writer.
- (5) List at least five examples of questionable time-and-energy-saving habits from the essay.

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think it's a waste of time to wash the dishes, garden, and do other domestic chores?
- (2) Do you often eat instant food when you're busy?
- (3) Do you think it's OK to let your children eat instant food?
- (4) Would you hire a maid for household chores if you could afford it financially? Or would you do them by yourself?
- (5) When do you write letters?
- (6) What's the difference between writing letters, using E-mail, and making phone calls?

Opinion Samples

- (1) I eat instant food even when I'm not busy. It is not only easy to prepare, it is also consistently good tasting and carefully engineered to be healthful.
- (2) Even more than adults, children need to have their diets carefully controlled. It is essential that parents make sure their kids get three balanced meals every day, that they avoid too many sweets and junk food.

And certainly instant food qualifies as “junk”!

- (3) I would always do the household chores myself that I am especially finicky about, such as food preparation. No one else can ever meet my high expectations in these matters. However, it seems to me that anyone can clean the toilet and wash the floors, anyone can put away the trash and dust the furniture, so why not hire someone else to do these unpleasant tasks?

ISSUE 50

WHEN DUTY AND CONSCIENCE CLASH

The U.S. Army went on trial in Fort Drum, N.Y., last week - even though Capt. Lawrence P. Rockwood was the one sitting in the dock. The verdict should make every American shudder. Finding Rockwood guilty on four **counts**,⁵² the military court unjustly punished a courageous man. The trial juxtaposed two principles - a man's obligation to his conscience and blind obedience to military orders. Essentially, Rockwood was convicted of leaving his post - which he did in order to document subhuman conditions at a Haitian prison. No one put it better than Rockwood, who told the court, "I placed my loyalty to the constitution above my loyalty to the careers of my immediate superiors."

In my view, **the case cuts to the heart of what kind of institution we want today's military to be.** Every American soldier, from the time he or she laces up that first pair of boots, is taught that discipline is the essence of military effectiveness. But our warriors are also drilled to disregard illegal orders. During the Korean war, my company skipper ordered me to kill four Chinese prisoners our platoon had taken on a patrol near Kumhwa. The CO reasoned it would take eight hours to walk the prisoners back to the battalion; he didn't want to take my soldiers away from the front for that long. I refused to carry out the order, citing the Geneva Convention. That was the end of it. Rockwood, a fourth-generation soldier with 15 years in the army, wasn't so lucky.

Rockwood was safeguarding U.S. interests in Haiti last fall. During Operation Uphold Democracy, Rockwood, a counter-intelligence specialist, decided to carry out President Clinton's explicit mandate "to stop brutal atrocities" - the main reason we sent in troops. Rockwood, 36, tried to investigate human-rights abuses in Port-au-Prince's National Penitentiary, a

⁵² Distinct charges in an indictment

notorious hellhole where up to 500 undernourished prisoners, standing ankle-deep in excrement, were forced to share a single cell. The captain reported his concerns to at least eight officers on the staff of Maj. Gen. David C. Mead, then commander of the multinational force in Haiti. Rebuffed by everyone from his immediate superior to the division chaplain, Rockwood filed an inspector-general complaint, which was ignored. Concluding that his superiors were guilty of "criminal negligence," Rockwood grabbed his M-16 and went to inspect the jail on his own. He made it only as far as the infirmary and a few cells before a military attache picked him up and charged him with, among other things, conduct unbecoming an officer.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) The case cuts to the heart of what kind of institution we want today's military to be.
- (2) conduct unbecoming an officer

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What was the main charge against Captain Rockwood?
- (2) What action did he take to warrant the charges against him?
- (3) Describe the alleged conditions he sought to investigate.

What Do You Think?

- (1) Discipline is the top priority for the men in uniform. And military men are trained to disregard illegal orders. What would you do if given "legal" but

inhumane orders like Rockwood? Would you blindly follow the orders or reject them?

- (2) If you were arrested and tortured, and asked to reveal military secrets which endangered your fellow soldiers, what would you do? What if the enemy wanted you to publicly denounce policies or attitudes you were morally opposed to?
- (3) Suppose a soldier revealed confidential information to save his life. Should we condemn him?
- (4) Do you think military law must be stricter than civilian law? Why?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Rockwood clearly was not within his rights as a military officer. He went through the chain of command, to no avail, and a military tribunal, after being apprised of all the facts in the case, agreed that the President's general mandate "to stop atrocities" was not a specific order. Rockwood may have acted correctly by his own moral standards, but philosophers who have advocated individual responsibility rather than social or institutional standards have also indicated that individuals must be ready to suffer the consequences of their actions. Rockwood is now suffering those consequences, which he clearly foresaw.
- (2) Although it is entirely fitting and proper that we should honor those who live up to the highest standards of conduct under adverse conditions, we should also realize that not everyone can be Superman. Some will fail, inevitably. If it were not

for the failures, the successes would not be worthy of honor; they would be merely *run-of-the-mill*.⁵³

⁵³ not special; ordinary

ISSUE 51

ON THE SIDE OF THE CHILD

It is an almost universal truth that children who have been sick most of their lives possess a wisdom and maturity beyond their years. Benito Agrelo, 15, possesses both - and **plenty of spunk to boot.** When social workers arrived with five police cars and two ambulances at his Coral Springs, Florida, home, they planned to force the boy, who is dying of liver failure, to go to the hospital. But Benny, who has already undergone two liver transplants, told them he wanted to be left alone to live out whatever remained of his life in peace. The 1.57 m teenager, who weighs just 36 kg, kicked and screamed and even managed to knock out a windowpane with his elbow before being tied to a stretcher and loaded into an ambulance. At the hospital he refused to have a ***biopsy***⁵⁴ or blood tests and spurned the antirejection drugs he was offered. Finally, after four days, a judge ruled that Benny could go home, where he can sleep late if he wants to, play Nintendo with some of the neighborhood children or read a good book.

At first glance, Benny's story seems to be yet another case of a patient asserting his right to die when medicine can only prolong suffering. **The twist is that** Benny is still a child who can't make such weighty decisions on his own. If he were in his 70s, the decision would seem like a victory. Benny, however, seems not only too young to die but also too young to want to.

The boy's mother has made her peace with his decision, and the Florida judge also deemed him suitably mature to make the decision. But Benny's doctors would like to buy him some more time. Perhaps, they argue, they could figure a way to vary the amount of the antirejection drugs he is taking so the side effects are not quite so miserable. There is also the possibility of yet another transplant. The chances he could survive a year after a third operation, however, are generally considered to be less than 50%.

⁵⁴ The excision for diagnostic study of a piece of tissue from a living body

"We proposed trying to rescue his liver," says Dr. Andreas Tzakis, head of liver transplantation at the University of Miami. "He refused." One thing is sure: as Benny loses weight, and his skin turns ever deeper shades of yellow, his chances dim with each passing day.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) plenty of spunk to boot
- (2) the twist is that...
- (3) The boy's mother has made her peace with his decision.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What is Benny Agrelo's attitude toward his own life?
- (2) What are the doctor's attitudes toward Benito's life?
- (3) Why does his age seem relevant?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think adults or parents have a right to force children to do everything we want them to do?
- (2) Do you think children have a right to do what they want?
- (3) What would you do if you were Benny's parents?
- (4) Is it morally OK to let Benny die slowly, without medical treatment?
- (5) What would you do if your child told you he or she wants to become a monk, or a stripper, or a panhandler? Would you respect your child's opinion? Or would you dissuade your child from

pursuing career goals you disapprove of?

Opinion Samples

- (1) We have no right to force children to do whatever we want them to do. We have an obligation to feed, clothe, and protect them and to teach them how to live in the world, both morally and materially. As they mature, our earlier success in teaching and providing for them will make them increasingly independent of us and they will do whatever they want; we will have failed as parents if they continue to do what we want.
- (2) We are crazy, putting a kid that age in charge of his own fate. The grownup is the one who says no. Understood? It's not enough for a child to want something. The parents are supposed to decide whether it's a good idea - especially, above all, when it affects health and safety.
- (3) Why blame his mother, who let her young child decide to enjoy the rest of his life? That is the last and utmost love parents could give under this circumstance. No one other than the boy himself could realize the pain and horrible stress in the hospital. Age means little when it comes to deciding one's fate.

They always compromise.

He admits he's wrong and she forgives him.

ISSUE 52

A RESISTANCE TO REASON

From the time Americans began worrying about *AIDS*⁵⁵ a decade ago, researchers have been troubled by the obdurate ignorance surrounding the subject. Despite a massive public-education campaign, many people remain confused about how the disease is transmitted. Again and again, medical workers have emphasized that infections come largely through direct contact with the blood, semen or saliva of *HIV*⁵⁶ carriers. Yet even some doctors seem uneasy about casual contact with them. Psychologists suspect **there's something more at work than a simple fear of infection.**

The fear seems to override logic. In a recent study, researchers at Arizona State University asked several hundred business and science majors how they would feel about dining with silverware used by AIDS patients on the previous day (and then washed), the previous week and as much as a year ago. Although they were well informed factually about HIV infection, the majority admitted they would feel some lingering unease even after a year. "People don't want to touch people with AIDS or share their dishes" even when they know they're being irrational, says clinical psychologist Carol Nemeroff, who headed the study.

Nemeroff and her colleagues think a key factor in the bias is "sympathetic magic" - the belief, commonly found in traditional cultures, that when two objects meet, the characteristics of one can be transmitted to the other. In magical thinking, Nemeroff says, there's no distinction between moral and physical properties. Evil is considered just as transmissible as hepatitis. In an experiment that perfectly encapsulated that finding, subjects were asked how would they feel about eating ice cream already begun by somebody else.

⁵⁵ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

⁵⁶ A kind of virus that enters the body through blood or sexual activity, and can cause AIDS

"Most of them didn't even want it from a spouse," says Nemeroff. "But it was fine if it came from Albert Schweitzer." Why was that? she asked. One woman replied, "I can't believe he'd have any germs - or, no, they'd be good germs," then added, "I can't believe I said that."

By such reckonings, AIDS is a "bad" disease carried by bad people. Psychologists, of course, recognize that **much of the concern about AIDS is legitimate**. An attitude study by psychologists Gregory Herek and Eric Glunt found that many Americans are unconvinced by assurances from public-health officials that there is little likelihood of contracting the disease casually. Instead, they seize on the fact that the possibility exists. As one participant in a focus group put it: "If the odds are a thousand to one, who wants to be the one?"

What Does It Mean?

- (1) There's something more at work than a simple fear of infection.
- (2) The fear seems to override logic.
- (3) Much of the concern about AIDS is legitimate.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) How do people acquire AIDS?
- (2) What does sympathetic magic mean?
- (3) Why would people prefer the germs of Albert Schweitzer to those of their own spouse?
- (4) Describe the Nemeroff experiment.

What Do You Think?

- (1) Could you shake hands with AIDS patients without being afraid of being infected?
- (2) When we are given a "routine compliment" such as "you look beautiful," we feel happy even though we know it's customary politeness. Why?
- (3) Should you feel the same if you meet cancer patients and AIDS patients?
- (4) What are the reasons we are attracted by physical beauty (which never reveals inner character)?
- (5) O. J. Simpson was proved not guilty. But many people still believe he is not innocent. Why?
- (6) Would you seek divorce if your spouse proved HIV-positive?
- (7) Do you think the government should pass a law that makes AIDS testing mandatory? Or would it just be an unwarranted violation of privacy?
- (8) We don't feel strange when we kill cattle and hogs for food, but we do when we kill dogs, whales, monkeys. Why?

Opinion Samples

- (1) We all like to be thought of as beautiful, intelligent, honest, and capable, rather than the opposite. But we all know how far short of perfection we fall. So any positive reinforcement, no matter how casual or insincere, is seized upon as necessary evidence of our "okayness."

- (2) "Beauty is skin deep" perhaps, but the superficial is all that is readily apparent. We can immediately see what a person looks like, but it takes more time to learn a soul. Some beautiful people turn out to have beauty through and through, others prove to be ugly people with a pretty facade, and yet others have inner beauty but a foreboding exterior. We are attracted by what we "know." Our senses let us "know" immediate aspects, but only experience can let us "know" the substantial aspects.
- (3) A few societies have put cattle or hogs on the taboo list of foods. Others have added dogs, whales, monkeys, earthworms, and many other varieties to the list of acceptable goodies. The fact remains that the human organism is omnivorous and can usefully eat almost all plants and animals, but the vagaries of human culture sometimes place certain food groups beyond the pale.

ISSUE 53

CHILD LABOR

Michael Jordan reportedly earns \$20 million a year endorsing Nike sneakers. And that is more than the total annual payroll for the thousands of Indonesians who help make them. Nike shot back that those shoes are actually made in Taiwan by workers earning an average of \$800 a month each. Does Nike exploit workers? "I'm not really aware of that," said Jordan. "My job with Nike is to endorse the product. Their job is to be up on that."

The *flaying*⁵⁷ of *celebrities*⁵⁸ like Jordan made it easy for Americans to miss the point. For years children have been sold as slaves, blinded or maimed for crying or rebelling or trying to return home, ill-fed, bone-weary, short-lived. They file scissors blades, mix gunpowder for firecrackers, knot carpets, stitch soccer balls with needles longer than their fingers. Human-rights groups guess there may be 200 million children around the world, from China to South America, working full time - no pay, no school, no chance. All of which raises the question, once the news lands on the front page: How much are Americans willing to sacrifice the children of other countries to give their own children what they want?

What Does It Mean?

- (1) endorsing Nike sneakers.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What is the thesis of this essay?

⁵⁷ Criticizing with scathing severity

⁵⁸ Famous persons, especially in the entertainment business

- (2) What is Michael Jordan's attitude toward social responsibility?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think governments should embargo all goods made by child labor?
- (2) Would you buy any goods made by child labor? What if they were much less expensive?
- (3) Some people argue that if we don't buy any goods made by child labor, the children would be jobless and they could never improve their living standard. What do you think about their theory?
- (4) Do you think employers who hire children are justified if they follow local laws and customs?
- (5) How can we solve this problem?

Opinion Samples

- (1) It is deplorable that countless Third World children are being exploited in order to offer consumers quality goods at bargain prices. We have to ask ourselves. Can we willingly sacrifice these children so we may benefit? Can we let ourselves be seduced by department store sales signs, knowing that an inexpensive shirt, soccer ball, handbag or rug is making some children elsewhere pay a huge price? It's high time both companies and consumers realize their double standard and start to change their attitude toward the Third World.

- (2) Child labor not only ruins the future of working children, but also damages the global economy, where companies manufacture wherever wages are the lowest. Now we need global unions to help establish and enforce minimum wages and all other benefits workers should enjoy. Asian child labor and European unemployment are aspects of the same problem. Neither situation will be solved by politicians and unions who still think only of national interests, or by consumers indifferent to the health and future of all children.
- (3) Rarely has anyone remarked that working children are not all slaves; many of them work voluntarily and are a principal means of support for an often large family. Without the additional income, it is unlikely the family would survive, let alone send the working child to school and educate him. A major cause of poverty in countries where children need to work is overpopulation. Low-cost labor is a principal competitive advantage for Third World countries attempting to improve their standard of living. Focusing on working children alone, without addressing the issue of lost family income or lost national competitive advantage, creates the impression that this is one more nontariff trade barrier.
- (4) If child labor and safety laws were truly enforced, trade experts say, whole industries in many countries would collapse, at great cost to both developing and developed economies.

- (5) Consumer pressure is vitally important. But the problem is that people search for bargains with enduring passion. Consumers should feel a moral responsibility and refuse to buy any products made by child labor. Governments should monitor sweatshops at home and overseas regularly, and all relevant information should be made open to the public.
- (6) We should try to promote trade and act in an ethical way - and we live in a global economy. An international firm like Nike, with long-term partnerships overseas, should use its economic might to fight abuses.
- (7) Companies like Nike can't escape moral responsibility. They're the ones placing the orders. So they're the principal employers of those children.
- (8) No child should be robbed of childhood because of lax law enforcement. We should totally prohibit imports of goods made by children under substandard conditions.
- (9) Moral, political and economic pressure might bring about some expected results, which would cost many world-famous companies millions. But the never-ending irony is that it would also mean an even greater loss for the people who only make pennies an hour.

ISSUE 54

THE NEXT CHERNOBYL

We are inside the belly of the beast, the Soviet-built nuclear power plant in Metsamor, Armenia, which environmentalist say is an excellent candidate for "the next Chernobyl."

Ten years after the Chernobyl power station in Ukraine exploded, on April 26, 1986, the former Soviet Union is tired of Western badgering to shut down its most dangerous reactors. It is also fed up with technical advice from the West. Increasingly, it is seeking just one thing: money. Meanwhile, the Ukraine government promises to close the two remaining reactors at Chernobyl by the year 2000 - but only if the Group of Seven leading industrial nations delivers \$3.1 billion in aid.

How much will the West pay to help clean up the Soviet nuclear mess? The United States already has committed \$250 million to tighten security around Russia's stockpiles of plutonium and uranium; \$408 million to dismantle former Soviet nuclear weapons; and \$180 million to improve some Soviet-built reactors.

Shutting down the worst reactors could cost billions more. Yet no price is too high if it prevents another Chernobyl, which spewed 200 times more *radioactivity*⁵⁹ than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. A decade later, Ukraine and Belarus are still spending more than 10 percent of their national budgets dealing with the consequences.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) an excellent candidate for "the next Chernobyl"
- (2) It is also fed up with technical advice from the West.

⁵⁹ A quality that certain substances have which makes them send out radiation

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) How much money has the U.S. pledged to this problem?
- (2) What do Russia and other former Soviet Republics claim they need the most to deal with dangerous nuclear facilities?
- (3) How much money does Ukraine need to close Chernobyl?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think G-7 countries should financially help countries close dangerous nuclear power plants?
- (2) Do you think poor nations are justified to ask Western countries for more aid?
- (3) Do you think our country should continue building nuclear power plants in spite of the potential danger of radioactivity leakage?
- (4) Would you say "yes" to building a nuclear power plant in your neighborhood?
- (5) What do you think about the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)? Do you think it's fair?
- (6) China and France continued testing nuclear bombs until recently. And India is opposed to the proposed CTBT in spite of Western pressure. What do you think about these countries' attitude?
- (7) What's the justification for the Big Five to continue to hold their nuclear capability while asking all others to sacrifice their security?
- (8) What do you think about our country building a nuclear bomb?

Opinion Samples

- (1) The international *legitimacy*⁶⁰ of nuclear weapons has evaporated. The threat of nuclear proliferation and the fear of environmental pollution have also gained widespread public attention. We must correct the imbalance of obligations between nuclear and nonnuclear nations in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. If it becomes the reality that all nuclear nations pledge the nonuse of nuclear weapons against nonnuclear nations, and stipulate procedures for scrapping them, the international framework for sharing the costs will be established.
- (2) India's opposition to the proposed nuclear test-ban treaty was a perfect example of American ignorance and strange sense of superiority. Basically, the Big Five nuclear powers (the U.S., Russia, Britain, France and China) want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to keep their nuclear arsenals, while the rest of the world can go to hell. I'm glad that at least India has the sense to realize that an injustice is being done and is standing firm in demanding a plan for global nuclear disarmament. America acts outraged whenever other nations talk of nuclear weapons. Yet, it's a simple fact that the only country ever to use a nuclear weapon is - guess who?
- (3) If the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty must be endorsed by all nuclear powers, including the

⁶⁰ Correctness according to the law

“threshold”⁶¹ nations of India, Pakistan and Israel, as a step toward world peace, why should the Big Five superpowers (the U.S., Russia, Britain, France and China) retain their destructive nuclear capabilities at all?

⁶¹ The level at which something starts to happen or have an effect

ISSUE 55

THE BIOLOGY OF BEAUTY

Looking good is a universal human obsession. How do we perceive physical beauty, and why do we place so much stock in it?

When it comes to choosing a mate, a female penguin knows better than to fall for the first creep who pulls up and honks. She holds out for the fittest suitor available - which in Antarctica means one chubby enough to spend several weeks sitting on newly hatched eggs without starving to death.

Is our corner of the animal world different? That looks count⁶² in human affairs is beyond dispute. Studies have shown that people considered attractive fare better with parents and teachers, make more friends and more money, and have better sex with more (and more beautiful) partners. Every year, 400,000 Americans, including 48,000 men, flock to cosmetic surgeons. In other lands, people *bedeck*⁶³ themselves with scars, lip plugs or bright feathers. "Every culture is a 'beauty culture'," says Nancy Etcoff, a neuroscientist who is studying human attraction at the MIT Media Lab and writing a book on the subject. "I defy anyone to point to a society, any time in history or any place in the world, that wasn't preoccupied with beauty."

It's widely assumed that ideals of beauty vary from era to era and from culture to culture. But a harvest of new research is confounding that idea. Studies have established that people everywhere - regardless of race, class or age - share a sense of what's attractive. And though no one knows just how our minds translate the sight of a face or a body into rapture, new studies suggest that we judge each other by rules we're not aware of.

This isn't to say that our preferences are purely innate - or that beauty is all that matters in life. Most of us manage to find jobs, attract mates and bear offspring despite our physical imperfections.

⁶² Have merit or value

⁶³ Decorate

The new beauty research does have troubling implications, though. First, it suggests that we're designed to care about looks, even though looks aren't earned and reveal nothing about character. Second, women are designed to favor dominant males over meek ones, and men are designed to value women for youthful qualities that time quickly steals.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) Looking good is a universal human obsession.
- (2) That looks count in human affairs is beyond dispute.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) In what ways have studies shown that appearance matters?
- (2) What society is known as the exception to the "beauty culture" rule?
- (3) Is physical beauty a determinant of species survival?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think beauty is just superficial, or it is a personal asset people admire?
- (2) Would you go ahead with cosmetic surgery to become more beautiful?
- (3) If your child were ugly and wanted to have cosmetic surgery, what would you do?
- (4) Would you seek a beautiful partner in marriage or chose some other criterion?
- (5) Do you think we can judge someone's character by looks? Do looks reveal anything about character?

- (6) Do you think looks affect social success for both men and women?

Opinion Samples

- (1) For years, moralists and puritans have criticized beauty as superficial and snubbed beautiful people as **bimbos**⁶⁴ and **airheads**.⁶⁵ They even try to deny this simple truth: that beauty is a God-blessed asset that sells! We can fully understand that good-looking people are usually popular, welcomed, perceived as intelligent, and easily forgiven. They earn higher salaries, receive better service, strike better deals and drive swankier cars. It's so reaffirming to hear that Mother Nature has made us appreciate beauty and to feel that being beautiful is not a mortal sin.
- (2) From the earliest times, humankind has unfairly associated beauty with kindness and evil with ugliness. Angels were cute, and Satan was horrible. All forms of art have always provided the same interpretation. In modern times, movies have shown us for years that the handsome fellow had to be the hero, while the perverse villain had to be physically unattractive. This is probably the oldest and cruelest form of discrimination, since it attacks all ages, sexes, colors, religions and nationalities.

⁶⁴ Unintelligent young women

⁶⁵ Stupid persons

- (3) Physical beauty is lost with age. Then what are we left with, if we lack a beautiful soul? Religion exalts human dignity and personality regardless of looks or gender and teaches that a radiantly beautiful soul makes the body attractive, too. As far as fashion magazines are concerned, this “glorious art” is merely a profit-minded commercial exploitation akin to slave dealing.
- (4) Our weakness for biological quality is the cause of endless pain and injustice. The qualities we find alluring say nothing about people’s moral worth.

ISSUE 56

FAMILY LIFE TURNS NASTY

Two mysteries haunt the relationship of men and women. First, there has been an inexorable change in their productive and *reproductive*⁶⁶ roles. In both areas, men's place is declining; their share of income and wealth falls as women's rise, and an increasing number of men are less involved with their mates and offspring.

The second mystery is why the number of single mothers and abortions has risen at the same time there are more and better contraceptives than ever in history. These two phenomena are linked, and the linkage helps explain the tension between the sexes.

The introduction of widespread contraception use in the 1960s caused this revolutionary break between men and women. It put biological disputes at the center of our national life - women's rights, abortion, *out-of-wedlock*⁶⁷ births. The "pill" emancipated women and placed into question existing moral and religious systems that focused on controlling sexual behavior. It allowed women to keep men in the dark as to whether sex could lead to pregnancy, and it reduced men's confidence that the children attributed to them were their own - the idea that biologists call "**paternity certainty**." After the pill, women could be sexually liberated and still remain in control while at the same time men had less and less control of the impact of their own sexuality.

The pill should have made abortion less necessary. But many women continued to have uncontracepted sex and got pregnant, and the men in their lives fled from them, contrary to the past, when shotgun weddings sometimes resulted in half the marriages in some communities. Women had the children but didn't marry the fathers, and the result was an explosion of out-of-wedlock births, which now account for between a quarter and two thirds

⁶⁶ Connected with the process of producing young animals or plants

⁶⁷ The state of being not married

of babies in industrial countries except Japan. Daughters are being raised to be able to take care of themselves. The divorce rate and the number of people living alone make this a necessity. But the result of dual male and female economic autonomy is that interdependence is less necessary.

Anyway, it's not that easy being a guy these days. In the 1950s, family life reflected the reality that a man and woman would marry, have children and the man would support them for the rest of his days. (Of course, many women also worked in the economy and their work at home was invaluable.) In this era, family life is under siege: Young men face a real uncertainty about being able to earn a living to support themselves, let alone their families, and lots of women want to have their children alone. There are no real fathers for those kids. And the relationship between men and women who brought them into the world is going very poorly.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) paternity certainty
- (2) shotgun weddings

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What are the major changes in male reproductive roles?
- (2) How has the "pill" affected families?
- (3) Why are daughters being raised to take care of themselves?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Why do people think an affair is wrong?
- (2) Do you think monogamy is always better than

polygamy?

- (3) Why are many women giving up their role in marriage and seeking divorce?
- (4) Do you think the law should make divorces harder to get when children are involved?

Opinion Samples

- (1) A growing number of married women are seeking divorce. Thanks to their greater financial independence, women are running to their attorneys instead of home to their mothers.
- (2) What is the penalty for bigamy? Having two wives! Successful marriage to one person is difficult enough. Polygamy is fine for those who choose it, but I think they must **have a hole in their heads**.⁶⁸
- (3) Children are caught in the middle, no matter what. Parents who fight all the time fail to provide their kids with good role models. Parents who carefully try to hide familial problems end up teaching deceit and pretense to their offspring. Families that split up leave children feeling helpless and unwanted. Other than trying to guarantee material support, government can do very little in resolving serious problems within a family.

⁶⁸ Be very stupid; be insane

This is his second marriage.
He's been unlucky in both -
his first wife left him and this one won't.

ISSUE 57

DO ASIANS NEED DEMOCRACY?

For more than two decades, the challenge from East Asia to the United States has come with all the subtlety of a jackhammer. The region's rise to economic power has wreaked havoc in industry after industry and generated an endless series of acrimonious trade disputes. The friction, inevitably, will continue - even escalate - if the Asian countries' extraordinary economic transformation stays on track through the 1990s.

The next round of East-West tension will be a fight over principles: whether "democracy" promotes social stability or erodes it; whether free speech is worth the cultural trash it produces in the West; whether the health of the extended group matters more than the unfettered freedom of the individual. And, finally, whether the West can remain friendly with the East, even if Asians don't become "good Westerners."

The new "neo-Confucianists" make no secret of their disdain for Western assumptions about what makes "the good society." The prize they seek is the hearts and minds of 1.7 billion East Asian citizens who have been on a three-decade economic roll and are now groping to define their place in the world.

An ideological struggle? This is the last thing the West expected. The average American (not to mention the average policymaker in Washington) thought these issues were settled when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. Most Americans reflexively believe that individual freedom and democratic political systems are prerequisites to economic success. It is time, the Asians are saying, to think again. Many Asians have come to reject the American view that "out of contention, out of the clash of ideas and ideals, you get good government" and a healthy economy. East Asia now brims with self-confidence. In places like Japan, Singapore and South Korea, literacy rates exceed 90 percent. Families stay together. There is virtually no violent crime. In their eyes, the United States is in danger of decadence.

The East Asian neo-Cons believe that unfettered individualism and

democracy have caused America's economic and social problems. The growing perception in East Asia is that Western-style individual freedom has degenerated into an anything-goes mentality that has resulted in massive social decay - soaring rates of crime, divorce, teenage pregnancy and single-parent families.

East Asia is by contrast a rock of stability, thanks mainly to its "neo-Confucian values." These are defined variously as unshakable commitment to education, hard work and traditional family structures (even if that means women don't work). The state's role is mainly to promote industrial development and economic growth and to educate its children. Period.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) whether free speech is worth the cultural trash it produces in the West
- (2) whether the health of the extended group matters more than the unfettered freedom of the individual

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What are the economic problems East Asia is coping with?
- (2) What is the West's view of democratic government?
- (3) Why do Asians often reject this Western view?
- (4) What is the role of government, according to neo-Confucianists?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think Asian countries should follow U.S.-style democracy?

- (2) Do you think democracy in our country should be different from that of the U.S.?
- (3) Why do Asians think that democracy and freedom inevitably entail social chaos?
- (4) After suffering under army dictatorships for decades, Korea has elected its first civilian president, Kim Young-sam. Do you see any progress in terms of political and economic well-being?
- (5) What do you think about U.S. trade pressure on Korea?
- (6) What do you think about the U.S. military presence in Korea? Do you think it helps maintain peace on the peninsula? When do you think the foreign soldiers should go back home?

Opinion Samples

- (1) There are already many kinds of democracy. Basic individual freedom vary from country to country. Many democratic expectations are culturally determined and change over time. So, of course, Asian countries will develop their own varieties of democracy. But it is still up to the citizens to hold their government accountable.
- (2) Just visit my American city, read any Western newspaper, talk to any Occidental foreigners, and it will become patently apparent that the so-called "Modern" World is in a state of moral and societal collapse. Individual freedom without familial and social responsibility leads only to personal aggrandizement. Just as Marx predicted the "proletarianization" of unsuccessful capitalists,

unrestrained ego-gratification leads to the loss of any collective soul.

ISSUE 58

ON PORNOGRAPHY

I'm sick and tired of hearing *feminist*⁶⁹ outcries against pornography. They claim it victimizes women and cheapens them. Well, I'll tell you something. If anyone is responsible for pornography, it's WOMEN. Let me explain.

Men have a real need to believe that women have the same strong physical desire for sex that men have, but it is just not the case. A recent survey showed that 72 percent of women who responded said they would rather cuddle than have sex. I'm sure any guy who has ever been married will say that the 72 percent figure is low. The truth is that only 72 percent were willing to ADMIT it.

I'm convinced that most women put up with sex the same way they put up with changing diapers. It's not something they particularly enjoy, but it needs to be done, so they do it. Others put up with sex because they want something in return.

Women encourage the myth of strong female sexuality because they fear men will be turned off if they know how disinterested (and even bored) women are with the whole process. Pornography fills the void for me.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) I'm convinced that most women put up with sex the same way they put up with changing diapers.
- (2) Others put up with sex because they want something in return.

⁶⁹ Pertaining to the idea that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What do feminists think about pornography?
- (2) What did a recent survey show?
- (3) Of what is the writer convinced in terms of woman's sexual desire?
- (4) Why do women emphasize strong female sexuality?
- (5) Why does the writer enjoy pornography?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you agree with the feminist claim that pornography victimizes women and children, and cheapens them?
- (2) Do you think pornography should be protected by the rights to free speech and privacy?
- (3) We see massage parlors, call girls, topless bars and prostitution. Do you think they help reduce the number of sex-related crimes such as rape?
- (4) Do you think we should legalize pornography and prostitution, and tax them?
- (5) Do you think it's OK to punish the men - and women - who visit sex houses? What do you think about having the customers' names be published?
- (6) Do you think the government should block any pornographic information coming through the Internet, or is a laissez-faire policy the best option?

Opinion Samples

- (1) If the writer gets his jollies out of pornography, it's OK with me. But he shouldn't try to justify his attraction to pornography by saying women are not

as interested in sex as men. That generalization is simply not true.

- (2) It's ironic that whenever somebody or some institution reminds us about the moral wrongs of pornography, the warning is always answered by human-rights activists saying pornography is protected by the rights of free speech and privacy. If someone wants to start selling ivory or fur on the open market, however, there is a public outcry because animals are slaughtered for no other reason than their teeth or skin. The same is true about pornography (especially child pornography). How often do the women and children shown naked in these magazines appear with their consent? And all this exploitation is protected by the freedom of expression! This argument doesn't hold when it comes to the ban on ivory, so why is it valid when innocent children and women are forced to prostitute themselves just so selfish sex maniacs can "exercise their rights," not to mention their greed?
- (3) Hasn't pornography always been popular and lucrative, whatever the format?
- (4) If we lose our kids to **cyberporn**,⁷⁰ free speech won't matter.
- (5) We will always have sexual predators among us. Although mechanisms to block online porn are certainly worthwhile, the secret to protecting children

⁷⁰ Pornography on computer networks

is to educate them. All youngsters are less vulnerable to danger if they are taught to recognize it and are given strategies to deal with it. This technology will be with us for the rest of our lives, and there are many ways we can teach children to avoid the pitfalls and make the experience an exciting and safe one.

- (6) Why is everyone so concerned about what children see on the Internet? Parents allow their youngsters to be bombarded daily with the garbage they see on television. Fact facts. It's up to parents to take care of their children, not the government. Leave the Internet alone. It's the last bastion of complete freedom.

ISSUE 59

MAKING ENGLISH AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

The sun set on the British Empire long ago, but the shadow of the English language lingers. In many a newly independent country, that heritage ran into resistance; having command of English was seen as being under the sway of foreign influences. Now, though, the bane has turned into a gain, giving an edge to those able to use the language of global communication in computers, finance and tourism as well as academe.

In plain English, knowing English can be the key to top jobs and big money, not to mention foreign investment. Among educators and officials in some parts of the world, that renews a dilemma. Promoting English in schools, sometimes at the expense of local languages, confronts a host of cultural values.

Despite that, as one of the efforts to globalize this country, Korean officials recently decided to teach English in elementary school. People seem to think English training in elementary school is more effective. That might be true. But our children study English 3 to 10 years already. So an additional two or three years of English study wouldn't make any difference. Our lagging behind in English comes from systematic problems. For example, our English curriculum focuses on grammar and reading comprehension. Many teachers are not qualified in English teaching. It is wiser to upgrade the current English teaching system by pouring more money into it. For example, we should develop more effective way of teaching, better textbooks, and more scientific instruments. Ten years of English learning should be enough if children are taught scientifically.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) The sun set on the British Empire long ago, but the shadow of the English language lingers.
- (2) Promoting English in schools, sometimes at the

expense of local languages, confronts a host of cultural values.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What happened to English of the newly independent countries?
- (2) Why are some educators and officials in a dilemma?

What Do You Think?

- (1) Do you think English is one of the key factors in our country's development?
- (2) What do you think are the reasons we Koreans are still lagging in English education?
- (3) What do you think about making English an official language in our country?
- (4) Ordinary Korean people are weak in both spoken and written English. Do you think it's a good idea to make these subjects compulsory in college entrance exams?
- (5) Do you agree with the government's plan to teach English in elementary school? Do you think it will bring the intended results or that it will backfire?

Opinion Samples

- (1) English is very important means of communication in international trade. According to the people engaged in the trade field, English skill is directly related to job performance. For example, they can sell more products to buyers by pitching in English

skills and diminish the number of claims. Some people argue that English communication skill comes before product quality in determining success.

- (2) Korean English education, on the formal level, is too theoretical and not practical enough. It is based too much on grammatical construction rather than actual communication. It also attempts to force kids with little or no aptitude or interest to master a difficult skill, at the expense of those who are strongly motivated to learn. So the voluntary, elective nature of English studies should begin to take precedence over the arbitrary, mandatory requirements of some bureaucrat.
- (3) Ironically enough, what with the TV and radio access brought with the GIs, and with the periodicals very readily available, Koreans should have a unique opportunity to acquire English. Somehow, all these resources are not being adequately exploited.

A man consulted a psychiatrist because he was worried about his wife.

"She's got this terrible fear of having her clothes stolen," he told the doctor.

"How can you tell?"

"Only the other day I got home early and found she had hired a man to stand in the closet to guard them."

ISSUE 60

MEGACITIES

Everyone knows what a megacity looks like. Rio. Mexico City. Calcutta. The pictures are all too familiar: row upon row of cardboard and corrugated metal shacks propped in the shadow of gleaming skyscrapers. Bony children playing half-naked in the mud beneath a haze of smog. Laundry fluttering overhead like faded flags. In the city center, a mere quarter mile away, business people close deals over four-course lunches and make tennis dates on their cellular phones. *Well-heeled*⁷¹ shoppers browsing in pricey boutiques sidestep beggars with outstretched hands. Limos with tinted windows vie with rickshaws for position on teeming streets. This is the scene that urban planners and environmentalists, often speaking in apocalyptic overtones, have warned for decades would overtake us.

Well, that future is coming to pass, at long last. And the surprising news is that it may not be so bad after all. So says a growing body of urban experts and officials. The world megacities (places that are home to more than 10 million people) are expected to more than double in number in the next few years, from 12 to 25 by the turn of the century. This will mark the first time in history that a clear majority of the earth's inhabitants will live in urban areas. (Although, by some expert reckonings, 55 percent of the globe already does so). More important, the quality of life in such megalopolises is proving better than was once predicted. Life expectancy is generally longer in the big cities than in smaller ones or in the countryside. Urban dwellers are far more likely to have good sewage disposal and running water than are their rural compatriots. And cities tend to offer superior medical care, greater educational opportunities and more jobs.

That has led to a dramatic reversal in the way policy makers are addressing the problems of rapid urbanization. It used to be that

⁷¹ Rich and usually of a high social class

they sought to limit mass migration by merely urging folks to stay on the farm. (Authoritarian regimes like Cuba's and China's tried evicting millions from the cities, while others, like Indonesia's, simply outlawed new arrivals from the countryside.) Now policy makers will concentrate on making those cities better places to live rather than focus their efforts on stemming the tide of rural poor to the cities.

The new philosophy holds that big cities are a natural consequence of modern development, and that it's inevitable for people to want to live in them. People move to cities for rational reasons, and it's completely crazy to erect barriers to stop them from going there.

What Does It Mean?

- (1) speaking in apocalyptic overtones
- (2) By some expert reckonings
- (3) That has led to a dramatic reversal in the way policy makers are addressing the problems of rapid urbanization.

Comprehension Check-up

- (1) What is the popular view of how megacities look?
- (2) How many megacities will exist by 2000?
- (3) Who enjoys a better quality of life, urbanites or bucolics?
- (4) What has caused policy makers to change their principles concerning megacities?
- (5) Is it OK to block people from coming into the cities?

What Do You Think?

- (1) What do you think are the reasons cities continue to expand?
- (2) What are the criteria that determine quality of life?
- (3) Do Koreans have better living conditions in the city or in the country?
- (4) Would you like to live in a city or in the country? Why?
- (5) Talk about how to solve megacity problems such as traffic and environmental pollution.
- (6) What do you think about moving our capital somewhere else to slow the expansion of Seoul?

Opinion Samples

- (1) Most people are coming to the cities because no matter how grim life there may be, it is generally better than the rural one they are leaving behind. Cities are able to provide better services to people, alleviate poverty, improve life expectancy and more wisely manage our planet's massive population growth.
- (2) The people who migrated to the cities are there to give their children a better life than they had. They are dedicated to working hard, getting the kids through school, improving their lives.
- (3) As megacities explode, the notion of building sister cities is becoming an increasingly popular idea as a way to combat overcrowding. Korea built a couple of satellite cities during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It was partly successful in scattering people to places other than Seoul. But people living there complain about the lack of facilities such as hospitals, schools, shopping centers and cultural organizations. More important, the satellite cities need more job opportunities because most of the people still work in Seoul.

- (4) Environmentally concentrating the population in such urban areas is actually preferable. Already there are so many people on the planet that if every household in the world had a tract house and a small plot of earth, there would be no land left for farming - let alone for parks. Cities have always been seen as environmentally damaging, but now there's a sense that people have to live somewhere, and better density than endless sprawl. Sprawl is a much less efficient way to use the planet's resources - and it ultimately worsens urban problems because so much energy is required to move people around.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?(2)

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지 은 이 : 리스 코리아 편집부 &

DUANE VORHEES

퍼 낸 곳 : 리스 코리아

퍼 낸 이 : 최 승 신

등 록 : 경기 남양주 제 17호

전 화 : (0502) 423-7947

팩 스 : (0502) 423-7948

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