



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 11, 2013

The Acceptance Con

"It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are 20 gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." This thought, articulated by Thomas Jefferson 200 years ago, aligns well with sentiments espoused today. "I don't care what adults do in their private lives," says the libertarian. "But listen, buddy," adds the don't-tread-on-me conservative, "just don't shove it in my face." But does this characteristic attitude of American modernity damn us to spawn a very un-American posterity? Does a misguided tolerance ensure an intolerable future?



Continual tolerance of a thing generally leads to its acceptance. For instance, while we may find ice-age temperatures unpleasant, a civilization experiencing them long enough becomes like the Eskimos in the Arctic and accepts its eternal winter as the new normal. But what of the abnormal? Should it be tolerated?

To answer this question, we must first address moderns' flawed conception of tolerance. G.K. Chesterton once said, "Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions"; it should be added that it is also his vice. For tolerance is a virtue only when exercised as is necessary, since it implies a perceived negative. For example, you would have to tolerate an itchy rash or stubborn cold, but you wouldn't tolerate a fine car or a delectable meal — you relish those things. And while we may admire a man who tolerates suffering with a stiff upper lip, this may turn to contempt if he invites it upon himself with a tolerance for being a doormat; it then seems like weakness of character at best, masochism at worst.

The reality is that being tolerant is only noble in two situations. One is when the thing you are "putting up with" isn't objectively bad, but you nonetheless dislike it. An example is putting up with broccoli even though you find it distasteful.

The second is when you tolerate something that is actually bad (e.g., foul weather or the flu) because there is nothing you can do to improve the situation.

As for those bad things that can be changed, the virtue lies only in making them history.

There is no better example of what happens when this is forgotten than that of homosexuality. When confronted with homosexual activism, many people will reflexively use the "I don't care ... just don't shove" line. They will say that homosexuality should be kept, if not in the closet, at least behind closed doors; consume it if you must — just don't market it. And don't tell me I'm a bigot for opposing it.

How Tolerance Works

But this isn't how things work in the real world. To accept something is to allow it out in the open, and marketing usually follows. The Democrat platform is marketed in America because it is accepted, but Nazism isn't marketed in any visible way because it isn't accepted. Note here that Hunter Madsen and



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Marshall Kirk, authors of *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90's*, called for a desensitization of Americans to homosexuality via a "continuous flood of gay-related advertising," a "conversion of the average American's emotions, mind, and will, through a planned psychological attack, in the form of propaganda fed to the nation via the media." (Emphasis added.) Madsen, by the way, was a marketing man by trade.

And what happens when marketing is effective enough? Remember that, as someone once said, stigmas are the corollaries of values; if something is considered a positive, that which condemns it will be considered a negative. For example, with the acceptance of mixed-race marriages, wouldn't it be ridiculous to wonder why they're out in the open? And just imagine if you said, "Look, I know there are going to be black people, just don't call me a bigot for not liking it." How far would this appeal get you? This doesn't mean I equate sexual inclination with race — but the fact is that a certain segment of society is doing just that. And if it comes to be viewed and accepted in just the same way, that which opposes it *will be stigmatized just as bona fide bigotry has been*. Hunter and Madsen recognized this, mind you, writing that in the future those who "still feel compelled" to oppose homosexuality will be "cow[ed] and silence[d] ... as far as possible"; the homosexual activists also said that if they can "produce a major realignment solidly in favour of gay rights, the intransigents (like the racists of twenty years ago) will eventually be effectively silenced by both law and polite society." And 20 years later, hate-speech laws are a reality in the Western world.

Another good example of the acceptance trap involves Islam, sharia law, and Third World immigration. Many conservatives will say, "Come to America if you want, just abide by our rules when you come to America." And radical libertarians go further, opposing all immigration law and averring that an influx of poor immigrants wouldn't be a problem if we simply didn't have a welfare state. But this betrays a cultural/ideological provincialism that precludes the understanding that alien cultures involve alien thought — and alien desires.

What these conservatives and libertarians are saying — in a promotion of liberty, ironically — is "Do things our way and everything will be okay." But other people want to do things their way, and their ways can be very different. Just as a fish wants a watery world and a polar bear an icy one, people naturally work to establish the cultural norms to which they're accustomed. The devout Muslim is at least as sure that sharia should hold sway as the libertarian is that libertarianism should, and he is likely even surer since he believes he is obeying divine injunction. What is more, he hasn't fallen victim to the acceptance con, that seductive social-steward sloth Chesterton warned of when writing, "All conservatism is based upon the idea that if you leave things alone you leave them as they are. But you do not. If you leave a thing alone you leave it to a torrent of change." The activist will be that torrent of change, and you will learn the hard way that if you do not control the culture, the culture ends up controlling you.

Controlling or Losing a Culture

And if you don't control your nation's philosophical/theological foundation, the culture is as good as lost. This brings us to Thomas Jefferson's belief that his neighbor's choice of faith neither picks his pocket nor breaks his leg. While this seems a quintessentially American sentiment, it was far from consensus at America's founding. For instance, it is contradicted by John Adams' 1798 assertion, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other," and George Washington's 1796 farewell address statement, "Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion." "Religious" here not only disqualifies



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those believing in “no god,” but also, it’s safe to say, polytheists. After all, Washington and Adams were not pagans but men whose conception of “religious” was that of Judeo-Christian monotheism. In other words, if our first and second presidents were right, we cannot be moral nor be governed by our Constitution if we collectively depart from Judeo-Christian theism.

So what can we say about Jefferson here? For one thing, he was a very sophisticated man who often expressed much wisdom. For another, on this matter he was simply very, very wrong. This should not be taken as a slight by his many fans; we all stumble at times. And if Jefferson had the benefit of being able to look back on a century of atheistic communism in action — with its gulags, killing fields, ravaged economies, and 100 million dead bodies — he might have had a different perspective. He might have realized that while “Live and let live” sounds good, when enough people start living the wrong way, their philosophy can become “Live and let die” (hat tip: James Bond). For there is a reason why the ancient Greeks understood that philosophy (and, by extension, theology) lies at the heart of all things; there is a reason we call them “First Things.” Let us now delve more deeply.

The truth is not just that morality and religion are linked, as Washington said. It’s that they are linked so inextricably. To understand why, consider how belief in God or lack thereof influences conception of right and wrong. If God exists and has a will — what is often called His “law” or Truth — then we can say that morality is something *real*, existing apart from and being above man. Yet if God doesn’t exist and man is, as Protagoras said, “the measure of all things,” then humans are the source of what we only may call morality. And the operative word is “call” because we are then confronted with a striking proposition: Morality doesn’t really exist. After all, imagine we learned that 90 percent of the world loved vanilla but hated chocolate. Would this make chocolate “bad” or “wrong”? It would just be a matter of whatever flavor works for you. But then how does it make any more sense to say that murder is “bad” or “wrong” *if the only reason we do so* is that the vast majority of the world prefers that we not kill other humans in a manner the vast majority considers “unjust”? If consensus preference is all it is, it then falls into the same category as flavors: taste. This explains why it’s no surprise that “whatever works for you” is now often applied to behavior as well.

To analogize the matter, it’s as with the fact that the zebra exists and thus is a Physical Truth while a unicorn is a function of imagination. No amount of believing in unicorns will make them real nor will even the most ardent denial of zebras’ reality make them imaginary; moreover, adults generally don’t deny that zebras exist nor insist that unicorns do — such is the power of recognized reality. Likewise, when people believe in God and His will — that Moral Truth exists — they tend to take morality seriously. And when they believe it’s just a “social construct”? They’re then more likely to see it as occupying the realm of unicorns.

And if they think the matter through more thoroughly, they may say, to quote a man I once knew, “Murder isn’t wrong; it’s just that society says it is.”

So what is the source of that characteristic mistake of moderns, moral relativism, with its familiar refrains “That’s *your* truth; someone else’s may be different” and “Everything is a matter of perspective”? It’s clear it is atheism, which absolutely has the corollary that there is no morality. (Note: This isn’t to say, as atheists usually assume, that only the faithful can be moral; the godless cannot. The point is that if divine will isn’t real, *no one* can be “moral” because you cannot conform to a non-existent standard. “Moral” is as incomprehensible a term in a universe without Truth as “physical” is in one without matter.) And this is why George Washington was right. Just as people wouldn’t abide by the “laws” of physics if they didn’t believe they existed (the idea jumping off a building and flying sounds



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like fun) and there weren't obvious and immediate consequences for their violation (splat!), they won't be likely to abide by morality if they believe its laws don't exist; this is especially true since the personal consequences — the spiritual and emotional harm you may suffer — aren't as obvious.

A similar problem can arise when enough neighbors believe in 20 gods. Pagan gods were not only ascribed human frailties and fierce wrath and thus set poor examples, but, more to the point, what is man to make of their inter-theistic squabbles? If they disagree on even one minor point, it follows that they cannot all be infallible and truly godly, as then one, many, or all must be wrong. And then how can we trust what they may say about morality? At best, we may then pick whatever god's standard is convenient, or, quite likely, we will view morality as some nebulous thing and paint our own shade of gray. Of course, they could all be on the same page soup to nuts, but then they start to seem more like constituent parts of one corporate mind, much like the Holy Trinity. Or you could draw Aristotle's conclusion that there must be an "Immovable Mover" that is above all, but then your gods seem more like gray angels than deities. Either way, you're ultimately brought back to monotheism.

The point is that what your neighbors believe about philosophy and theology certainly can pick your pocket or break your leg. For belief grown sufficiently strong translates into words and action. And if right and wrong is just a matter of taste, why not confiscate others' wealth if it serves your ends, as atheistic Western statisticians do? Why not break a few eggs and crack even more skulls to make your omelet, as the atheistic Khmer Rouge did? And why not sacrifice thousands of people a year on bloody altars as was the pagan Aztecs' wont (especially when your gods specifically demand it)? The only rule in a relativistic universe is that expressed by occultist Aleister Crowley: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."

This brings us to what good citizens must understand with respect to law. It is one thing to say that not all moral imperatives are the domain of government. Yet certainly true is that *all* moral imperatives are absolutely the domain of society and its "laws," which are known as social codes, conventions, and traditions. Consider manners, for instance. I don't know anyone who would want the state to punish citizens for not saying thank you or holding doors, but who among us doesn't believe that a profoundly rude man deserves whatever scorn comes his way? And how important are manners? English philosopher Edmund Burke explained, "Manners are of more importance than laws. The law can touch us here and there, now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation like that of the air we breathe in."

And because conservatives have been remiss and allowed that great torrent of change, we have ceded control over our culture's manners to the Left and now breathe the polluted air known as political correctness. It is administered mainly by society (yes, the media and academia are part of society), which is why its social pressure is so effective at controlling behavior — it touches us all the time. It is the sum total of the judgments of the nonjudgmental, the morality of the moral skeptics, and the limitations of the lovers of license; political correctness comprises the social "laws" of the Left. And these corrupt laws now dominate not because their creators are numerous, but because passion trumps passivity. It's as with government. Imagine that you said about it, "I don't care what you do, just don't shove it in my face." Imagine that, in keeping with this, you disengaged from the political process, refusing to campaign or be involved in lawmaking at all. Would it be surprising if your opponents were then able to enact a whole regime of laws that served their ends and did shove an agenda in your face? You never even showed up on the battlefield to fight.



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The point here is that you may be able to have libertarianism in government to some degree, but you can never, ever have it in the social sphere. People will always have consensus preferences and dislikes, and they will quite naturally apply social pressure in accordance with them. Like it or not, this is what people do. And when the dislike for something reaches a certain threshold, there is no tolerance for it — like it or not. Ergo, the hate-speech laws outlawing criticism of those two socially vigilant groups: Muslims and homosexuals.

So what can we say about the acceptance con? Well, to paraphrase a metaphor in philosopher C.S. Lewis' book *Mere Christianity*, it's as if man were a fleet of ships. Moderns will say that they don't care how the ships operate as long as they don't collide with one another. If they don't operate properly, however, they may not be able to help but collide with one another. And we now collide with each other constantly. We saw this in the federal contraception mandate foisted on Christians, in the IRS's targeting of conservative groups, in Newtown, in little schoolboys punished for pointing their fingers like guns, in a 42-percent out-of-wedlock birthrate, in confiscatory taxation, in an economy ravaged through irresponsibility, and in the general exaltation of evil. America is a nation adrift because we have thrown the moral compass overboard and traded Truth for a twisted tolerance. We have forgotten that nature abhors a vacuum — and that where God's virtues are purged, the Devil's values are sure to slither their way in.

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