

Editorial

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Jeff Korbek, Editor, 472-1766
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Quips and quotes Raising limit a good idea

Imagine driving 65 mph on the interstate — if you don't already.

Unheard of over the years, Congress now is pondering the idea of raising the 55 mph speed limit on rural interstate highways. And after last Tuesday, that idea has been pushed farther along. The Omaha World Herald reported that the nation's governors have called on Congress to raise the limit. Nebraska Gov. Kay Orr voted with the majority.

"This would enable Nebraska to concentrate on enforcing a 55 mph speed limit in metropolitan areas and on primary highways in rural areas," she said.

Raising the speed limit is really not a bad idea, especially in Nebraska, where the interstate spans across the state more than 400 miles. Safety is the major concern. Increasing the speed limit might increase fatalities. Understandable, but hard to grasp. Look at interstate traffic now and you can see that 55 mph is not the common speed. Cars travel much faster.

● Last week the Daily Nebraskan reported that Nebraska's first beer-serving laundry may open March 30 in Lincoln. Duds and Suds, to be located at

940 N. 26th St., is applying for a beer only liquor license and is finding opposition from the City Council.

Doyle Dillow, the Lincoln franchise owner, said beer sales are but a small part of the business's income. Alcohol is only a novelty, he said. He's right. If the City Council can give liquor licenses to health clubs (which really doesn't mix . . . beer and exercise, c'mon) then the laundromat is entitled to one.

● Smoking cigarettes, cigars and pipes has become quite an issue within the confines of the DN offices. Of course, where isn't smoking an issue? Time magazine reported that the U.S. government has lurched into the era of the no-smoking sign. The General Services Administration now restricts all smoking by the 890,000 federal employees in 6,800 federal buildings.

The GSA joined what has become a nationwide crusade against smoking, particularly smoking in public. Not since Prohibition has the U.S. seen such a widespread attempt to change people's personal habits by regulation, the magazine said. Smokers, watch out . . . first the government, then the populace.

Envy coughs up apologist

Acclaimed philosopher's vision is abstracted from all reality

"I cannot stand forward, and give praise or blame to any thing which relates to human actions, and to human concerns, on a simple view of the object, as it stands stripped of every relation, in all the naked of metaphysical abstraction. Circumstances (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour, and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind."

—Edmund Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France."

John Rawls' frightful task, no less, is spurred by this vision: "The arbitrariness of the world must be corrected. . . ." In isolation, such an utterance might be expected to have proceeded from, say, a madman singularly convinced that only his beneficent control of the world could correct the "evils" wreaked upon mankind by God or nature. That the vision belongs to a professional philosopher employed at a major university is surprising; that Rawls' work "A Theory of Justice," published in 1971, has received widespread acclaim in the academy (especially in the social sciences and law) is quite lamentable. Rawls' work is bad philosophy and embraces bad policy.

The reception accorded to Rawls' work isn't hard to understand. In contrast to the traditionally understood mission of the political philosopher — to pursue the truth about justice — Rawls sees his mission as one of merely accounting for intuitions already held. Thus, political theorist David Lewis Schaefer argues cogently in his critique of Rawls' work, that "A Theory of Justice" represents "the culmination of a decay in political philosophy that has been going on for more than a century. The essence of this decay is the severance of the study of morality from

that of nature and ultimately, therefore, from politics."

Since Rawls is a product of the mid-20th century social climate, he does not set out to challenge the opinions that are quite chic in the rarefied air of the "intellegentsia"; rather, he merely sets out to account for his belief that the liberal welfare state is just.

His intuitions lead him to posit two principles (by a much more circuitous route than simply saying, "Here are my intuitions") of "justice": first, "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all." Second, "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged. . . to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged."

Jim
Rogers



I'm certainly not arguing that one or both of these principles are obviously obnoxious. How Rawls understands them is nonetheless obnoxious.

Simply reflecting upon the two principles by themselves raises questions. Given the priority of the first principle, and that "liberty can be restricted only for the sake of liberty," the second "principle" would seem to be obviously and utterly voided by the libertarian first principle. And it would, in fact, be voided if Rawls did not suck all commonly understood meaning out of the first principle by his bizarre understanding of the nature of justice and injustice.

In Rawls' system, simply "being better off" is an unspeakable evil: Those blessed by God or nature are declared positively guilty of injustice and those individuals not so well-off can rightfully see to the "leveling" of the more

well-off (even if the "lucky" are in no way responsible for the condition of the not so "lucky").

Envy, that loathsome destroyer of soul and society, has coughed up its own apologist, and his name is John Rawls.

Rawls' reasoning is pursued wholly abstract from the conditions of human life: his rhetorical device is to set meta-legislators (my phrase) behind a "veil of ignorance" so that they will not know their lives' conditions, beliefs, or their own personal composition. Ostensibly this body of (literal) know-nothings would choose Rawls' vision every society.

Yet, because of its abstraction from all reality, it is precisely at this point that Rawls' vision strikes its toe against a profound irony: while kowtowing to the envy within the human heart, Rawls' system of equality would only throw gas onto fire.

Alexis de Tocqueville rightly observed: "One must not blind himself to the fact that democratic institutions develop to a very high degree the sentiment of envy in the human heart . . ."

Democratic institutions awaken and flatter the passion for equality without ever being able to satisfy it entirely.

"When everything is more or less level, the slightest variation is noticed. Hence the more equal men are, the more insatiable will be their longing for equality. . . That is the reason for the strange melancholy often haunting inhabitants of democracies in the midst of abundance, and of that disgust with life sometimes gripping them in the midst of an easy and tranquil existence."

That Rawls should call any attempt to politically satiate this lust an act of justice is perverse; that his proposals would resultingly fan this deadly flame in to a conflagration, all in the name of "justice," is a positive disservice to the political community.

Rogers is an economics graduate, a law student and Daily Nebraskan editorial page editor.

Letters

Superpowers should quit pointing fingers

David Lynn Phillips (letters, DN, Feb. 24) examines a mere 50 years of history in concluding that the Soviet Union should not be trusted. Had Phillips studied the history of Russia, he would understand that repeated invasions of their homeland have left the Russian people paranoid. Therefore, the Soviets have enhanced their security by establishing a buffer zone.

We so eagerly condemn these actions while forgetting that the United States risked a nuclear confrontation when our security was threatened by Soviet missiles in Cuba.

Although correct on some points, Phillips incorrectly stated that the Soviets did little to defeat Hitler. Soviet casualties in World War II exceeded the combined casualties of the remaining allies. A vast majority of the German forces were confronting the Russians when the allies landed at Normandy.

Challenge issued for academic funds

Everyone has been saying that this campus needs a recreation center, and now there is no doubt in my mind. The Gillette Dairy Company that great social conscience, has taken to the cartons to spread the message of our greatest need. Or have they?

Read their message carefully. It says, "Nebraska needs an indoor practice field complex," not a student recreation center/indoor practice field. The message is clear. The Gillette Dairy knows that the athletic department comes first, on and off campus.

What about rape by AIDS carrier?

"I'm not gay; AIDS is not my problem. I don't use IV drugs; I'm not promiscuous; I'm not at risk." Sound familiar? James Sennett says that "everyone who might possibly have sexual contact with one who has been exposed is at risk." Don't be so quick to assume that you do not fall in this category. In a

Perhaps Phillips puts too much trust in the U.S. government and the American version of World War II. It was American imperialism that gave us Manifest Destiny, wars with Mexico and Spain, the conquest of the Philippines, and the construction of the Panama Canal. However, our history books told it in a more positive, American, light. These same books forget to mention that the United States conducted counter-revolutionary operations in Bolshevik Russia. When the entire issue is examined, it is clear that mistrust of the superpowers works both ways. It's time for the educated people of the two nations to quit pointing fingers and realize that true peace comes from trust and compromise, not fear of war.

Bruce Steinke
graduate student
math and physics

I dare any company to publicly raise funds for any academic program — library expansion, renovating Morrill Hall, a visiting-professor program — anything academic. If companies like Valentino's and Gillette Dairy feel so strongly about supporting the athletes, they can raise the funds for maintenance expenses as well. I don't want to see my money going out to support something that really isn't mine.

Ivar Tillotson
junior
teachers college

society where rape affects one of every three women, I don't think anyone can afford to be complacent. AIDS is everyone's problem.

Dawn Bradshaw
graduate student
pre-vet

Enough money might not prevent temptation to go on wanting more

When it became known on The Street that Martin Siegel had pleaded guilty to selling insider information, one of his bewildered friends said to a reporter, "He didn't need the money." It was, by all normal accounting systems, a classic understatement.

In 1985, Siegel legitimately earned \$1.7 million. In the past few months, he was able to scrounge up \$9 million as part of his deal with government prosecutors. At 38 years old, he had a Connecticut estate, a million-dollar condominium in Manhattan, a family and a reputation as the best and the brightest of the new breed.

Yet on a number of occasions, this articulate, educated "secretary of defense" in the takeover world stood in a public place in New York City waiting for a courier like an ordinary drug dealer. He gave the password and got the cash. Eventually, before his anxiety or his conscience got a grip on him, Siegel had taken more than \$700,000 in cash from the godfather of this story, Ivan Boesky.

Why did he do it? This is what intrigues people about the latest star of the Wall Street scandal. Why does anyone who is already rich risk it all for a bit more? Even those who can't spell "arbitrageur," those who can't explain the inner workings of a takeover, reach for an explanation of the inner workings of the psyche.

The question will be asked again before this story is over. The public curiosity about the lives of the rich pales beside our curiosity about the crimes of the rich. The profiles of Boesky pointed to an insatiable ego-maniac. But the stories about Siegel are much more ambiguous. Words like handsome, self-confident, creative, are attached to his name. So are words like

compulsive and insecure.

In the retrospective psychoanalysis we favor, it is said that the midlife bankruptcy of the father left this son with a permanent, unquenchable fear about his own financial future. He dipped into his suitcase of cash for spending money to avoid dipping into his capital. He apparently rationalized it by calling the payoff his "consulting fee."

Ellen
Goodman



If you prefer group analysis, then we are told that Siegel lived in the rarefied and immunized world of Wall Street deal-makers. Vast amounts of money rode on the sort of knowledge Siegel specialized in. Stocks rose and fell on news of a takeover. Information was the admission card to play the game with the big boys. It was too seductive finally for him, and for the others, to hold the admission card and not play.

But the analysis of parents or peers doesn't respond fully to his bewildered friend's comment: "He didn't need the money." The suggestion in this querulous remark is that money, enough money, protects people from temptation. In the bewilderment at the crimes of the rich, there lurks the belief that money should provide a buffer against the desire for money.

It doesn't always work that way. For some people, the sense of need always stays ahead of their balance sheet. There is no "enough," especially in a business where money is the product.

There are people we all know who start out wanting "enough" to pay their bills and having gained that, enough to pay for college and then a second house, a vacation. Having acquired all that, they want enough money to live the same way without working and then enough for their children to live that way.

People who begin comparing themselves to the Joneses may end up comparing themselves to the Trumps. They go on wanting money. It is said that Siegel, whose own home was described as a Gatsby estate, was awed in turn by the Boesky estate. What is a few million dollars compared to \$33 million?

The new breed of deal-makers, a friend tells me, operates with the morals of the limo crowd. Siegel went one better. He commuted by helicopter, above the crowd. He must have also assumed he could hover above the law.

This is not, mind you, some Greek tragedy. Although we are intrigued by the distance of the fall, Wall Street is hardly the turf of the gods. If the rich are different from the rest of us, it's because they commit crimes with more digits.

Why did he do it? Why does someone who is rich risk everything for a little more? They do it for the money. In following these Wall Street stories, I am reminded of what Emerson wrote: "There are three wants which can never be satisfied; that of the rich wanting more, that of the sick wanting something different, and that of the traveler who says, 'Anywhere but here.'"

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Goodman is a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist with the Boston Globe.