

CONDOMS & ANTONYMS

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Last evening, our Cape Cod town of Falmouth's schoolboard decided to distribute condoms to 7th graders without counseling. Against the public & the schools' faculties, they found persuasive the argument that "This is a health matter, not a moral or religious matter." This insanely myopic thinking has, as you see, overwhelmed my weak reluctance to speak of things genital.

1 Today is the 50th anniversary of an event indicating my long opposition to chopping life into compartments like health, morals, & religion. To the Plebian Forum of Chicago ("composed of economic, political, & religious malcontents" [quoted material is from my diary]--"Henry George-its, atheists, and radicals of every color," including communists & Bundists [American Nazis]), I gave a one-hour "speech-sermon on the interrelatedness of the economic, the political, and the religious problem." After I closed with prayer, "they questioned me for about three hours & seemed surprised that a religionist could answer questions. (They apparently thought before that only economists could!)" "I told them that God & Christ could not be identified with any human structure, & that they therefore could become Christians without accepting the American majority's equation of the status quo with the will of God." Following the meeting I talked two hours in the apartment of the leader, a Bundist, who became so angry that he kicked his dog so hard that the poor critter landed against a wall. Next day he was seized by the FBI, & I never again heard anything of Mr. Gaul.

Think of the "alienist" sickness that has come upon the world from the fragmentation of mind into economic, political, & religious ("alienist" being an early term for a shrink, who was supposed to help folks who'd fallen apart into parts to get themselves together again)! Without this general social sickness, & the philosophical materialism underlying it, that schoolboard could not have narrowed its view of students down to rutting skinbags in danger of selfdestruct ("health").

2 "The message of Magic Johnson" has been a Rorschach these some days since he announced himself as HIV+. His own meaning of "Practice safe sex" is use condoms. But even if a condom is properly used, it may permit the passage of spermata, resulting in pregnancy. And the AIDS virus, being only 1/150th the size of a sperm, has 149 more changes of getting through the latex (which is somewhat more protection than animal skin)! So why has he not been more generally attacked for deception & fraud? Because, as millions are saying, "Condoms are all we've got, so don't knock 'em."

3 There's a better way, an honest way free of deception. It's to say that condom intercourse (vaginal, anal, oral) is "less dangerous" than noncondom intercourse, which is "dangerous." What's wrong with that? It's negative, stating a degree of danger. The Falmouth schoolboard would be in the actionable position of furthering a dangerous student activity, viz the use of condoms. (Any good lawyer could reduce "less" almost to invisibility.)

4 Biologically, the only form of safe sex is saved sex (sexus reservatus), abstinence till virginal marriage or at least virginal engagement to marry. Is there an honest argument against telling the children so? I can think of none. And if to biology the teller adds psychology, morality, & religion, the argument will for many children be persuasive. (Under "psychology" here I include all intra- & inter-personal considerations, supremely the fact that in all societies, cruising-wandering genitals are the most disruptive & impoverishing social force.)

5 On the side of creativity, crisis is opportunity. AIDS now provides opportunity for society to train itself to more responsible genital activity. We are in some danger that a magic bullet against AIDS will be discovered before this social improvement occurs. The social control of sex requires a complex of fears, & in our permissive society that complex has disintegrated, but is now being gradually restored by the AIDS horror (the only salutary effect of AIDS). We are, then, in necessary self-contradiction. We want AIDS to succeed as a fear & fail as a disease.

6 Where is **God** in the AIDS thing? Most Americans believe (1) in God & (2) that that's a nonquestion: religion is irrelevant to social conditions & moral decisions, being entirely a "private" matter of "the heart." Those of us with the burden & joy of finding God in everything are called "arrogant asses" if we suggest (1) that the loving God punishes, (2) that suffering should alert our minds to the possibility that punishing is going on, & therefore (3) that AIDS cannot automatically be exempted from the punishment category. The most frequent rejoinder I've heard is, "Is God punishing an AIDS baby?" Using the analogy of the Gulf War, I say that no AIDS baby is being punished by a divine smart bomb, but God uses also dumb bombs sometimes producing "collateral damage." Or if the thought of a divine dumb bomb whiffs for you of blasphemy, consider that even a smart bomb gets some "innocent civilians" who are too close to target....From another angle, I ask "Where do you see God punishing if not in AIDS?" Every time I've asked this question, the answer has been "I don't see God as a punishing God, but as a loving God." A nonsense answer, as that God as a loving God is not in question. Thus is revealed the fact that "AIDS is not a punishment from God" is a only a fragment of the complete idea of my opponent, which is that "God does not punish, so AIDS cannot be a punishment from God."

7 In light of all the above, how much clearer is the Falmouth schoolboard's nonsense in separating "health," morality, & religion! Of course AIDS is a health problem. But it is also a socio-moral & a religious & theological opportunity. We'd better be about these opportunities before medical research makes AIDS go poof.

8 It's an uphill fight against a culture of promiscuity. In basketball, Wilt Chamberlin's autobio says he's had 20,000 lays (that's laid women, not basketballs in hoops), & Magic Johnson in SPORTS ILLUSTRATED admits "I did my best to accomodate as many women as I could [L.A.TIMES, "thousands"], most...through unprotected sex." A government pamphlet on condoms say they "reduce the risk" (which, seen from the other end, means a risk of a disease that's 100% fatal!). And a RD (Aug/91) article says the infected "lie their heads off" to sex partners.