

# Culture, Morality, and Ethics: The Interplay Between Belief, Behavior and the Objective World

By Lawrence A. Howard (December 2017)



*The Night*, Max Beckmann, 1918-19

*There is interplay between belief and behavior such that people act in the world on their beliefs, and as a result, the world, consisting of multiple factors and layers of environment, gives feedback in context. Understanding this interplay can help us understand the nature of morality as a subjective construct, and ethics as an objective concept, and ultimately lead to evaluating ideas, separating the good from*

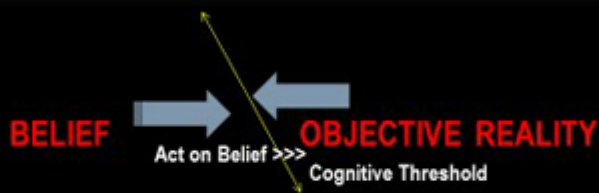
*the bad.*

The essence of culture is the way we do things. Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa using certain methods, based on certain assumptions, giving objective substance to those methods and assumptions. The painting that resulted is not culture but is rather an artifact of culture; no small distinction.

Cultural artifacts have both an objective and a subjective dimension. Objectively, the Mona Lisa exists and has mass, takes up space, etc. Subjectively, the Mona Lisa is accorded the renown that it has as one of Western Civilization's greatest works of art and that renown gives it a particular value and a consequent need for security. Take away the belief that the Mona Lisa is so valuable and the need for security is also removed.

There is interplay between belief and behavior such that people act in the world on their beliefs, and as a result, the world, consisting of multiple factors and layers of environment, gives feedback in context. The image below illustrates this interplay, which is our cultural heart throb.

# CULTURE IS INTERACTIVE



If the brain cannot filter objective reality to conform to belief, then cognitive dissonance occurs, and may result in anything from collapse to radically changed behavior. Most often, the changes are more moderate and subtle.

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Sometimes the feedback the world gives humans affirms their beliefs and other times it does not. At a deep level, the feedback may reinforce basic socialization. For example, a mother may tell her child, “don’t touch that pan, it is hot!” In his/her limited experience, the child has never been burned and fearlessly touches the hot pan, only to get burned. The child thereafter believes his mother and understands the concept of “don’t touch, it’s hot!”

The opposite happens when worldly feedback to human action is at odds with the belief(s) that motivated the action. For example, as a child in the Midwest, I gained an impression from adults, and television, particularly the news coverage of the Kitty Genovese case, that New York City dwellers were cold people who thought only of themselves. [\[1\]](#)

I kept that impression with me until, on my first business trip to New York, I witnessed a man impeccably dressed in business attire hold back traffic at a green light while a courier picked up boxes accidentally dropped during his failed attempt to cross an intersection. Thereafter I was singularly

more open to the idea that New Yorkers could act with compassion, and treated New Yorkers with more respect.

There are instances where socialization has so structured and strengthened an individual's beliefs about something that it takes a considerable amount of objective, worldly feedback to change those beliefs. The process of objective worldly feedback being at odds with the subjective beliefs of a person is cognitive dissonance, i.e. reality contradicts belief.

When an individual becomes aware of the extant contradictions involved in cognitive dissonance, objective facts have crossed an individual's cognitive threshold. When cognitive dissonance happens, a range of outcomes is possible, depending on the individual's context and psychology.

Context is singularly important. For example, at school a child may be told in no uncertain terms by another student that "Santa Claus is make believe!" Suppose the child is told this by another who is popular among his/her peers, and that other is also supported by most of the child's friends. The child's reasoning tells him that there must be something to the idea that Santa is fake and when he returns home that day, his first words to his mother are, "Mommy, you lied to me!"

The mother's reaction is important, because she is likely the center of the child's universe. Suppose the mother gently explains that Santa Claus is "good make believe," because it is based on the Christmas spirit and the true characters of the three Wise Men and Saint Nicholas. She takes the time to sit with the child, explain the concepts, and answer all of

his questions. The child is then led to an understanding in such terms that he continues to think well of his mother and "Santa Claus," and is less likely to adopt any negative formulations, whatever they might have been. Cognitive dissonance is resolved in a positive way that may forever be an internal, mental reference throughout the child's life.

The mother could have reacted in a way that negatively resolved the child's cognitive dissonance. What then for the developing child's mindset and behavior? One can envision the development of a child who doesn't trust adults, and perhaps later the ultimate result, i.e. a cynical adult.

An individual's psychology and mental strength is as important as context in resolving cognitive dissonance. A fragile mind can shatter when forced to admit that the world is not what the person believed it to be. A strong mind can also be a negative thing in that it can filter the real world such that objective reality is warped into perceived conformity with the strong mind's belief system. Zealots and others who have closed minds fall into this category.

There is thus a mental range along which we can plot individuals, a fragile mind at one extreme, a strong and warping mind at the other extreme; I think that most people are desirous of a society in which individuals generally possess a balanced, open mind, strong enough not to shatter when reality contradicts cherished beliefs, and strong enough to adapt belief to reality, rather than try to make reality conform to belief. Most people throughout history have been generally balanced, evidenced by the fact that the human race has survived several millennia of incredible change. But those of strong and warping mindsets have caused much chaos, death,

and destruction throughout those same millennia. To quote the Bronx-born longshore philosopher, Eric Hoffer:

It is the true believer's ability to "shut his eyes and stop his ears" to facts that do not deserve to be either seen or heard which is the source of his unequalled fortitude and constancy. He cannot be frightened by danger nor disheartened by obstacle nor baffled by contradictions because he denies their existence.[\[2\]](#)

In the aggregate across all individuals who collectively identify as "we," e.g. "we are Americans" or "we are Russians," their cultures are dynamic, powerful processes, fueled by interplay between belief and behavior that determines economics, politics, and social environment. In this way, culture creates some of its own environment, i.e. the mental, human part; the other part of the environment of culture is the natural, physical environment that exists independently of human beings. The tree exists in the forest whether or not humans know about it.

Culture is both affected by and creates its environment. Morality, for example, consists of the norms of behavior transmitted from generation to generation by socialization processes that include everything from engaging in the "good make believe" of Santa Claus, to distinguishing between first degree murder and negligent homicide. Morality is therefore subjective in substance; morality is only objective insofar as we can discern that a certain group of norms are adhered to. It is not historically unusual to find different human systems of morality almost completely at odds with each other. There are no universal moral concepts although there are some that are professed to be, and there are also many that are similar

to each other across different cultures. This situation makes the study of culture and its manifestations particularly difficult, as T.S. Eliot pointed out:

From the sociological point of view, the truth or falsity (of religious precepts or atheist beliefs) is irrelevant: we are concerned only with the comparative effects of different religious structures upon culture. Now, if students of the subject could be neatly divided into theologians, including atheists, and sociologists, the problem would be very different from what it is. But, for one thing, no religion can be wholly “understood” from the outside—even the sociologist’s purposes. For another, no one can wholly escape the religious point of view, because in the end, one either believes or disbelieves. Therefore, no one can be as detached and disinterested as the ideal sociologist should be. [\[3\]](#)

Nothing is harder to accomplish for a human being than stepping outside the box of his/her own culture, and objectively trying to understand an alien culture. This difficulty is summed up in a statement made to the author by a former US Marine: “I frankly don’t care what motivates a terrorist; just put him in front of my gunsight and I’ll take care of him.” While there is some immediate practicality to the Marine’s outlook, it is wanting on several levels.

This situation makes the results of different studies in anthropology, comparative politics, sociology and other social sciences extremely “hot” and controversial, depending upon the reviewer’s cultural box and therefore, the reviewer’s moral precepts. Two examples presented here demonstrate the objective truth of the foregoing.



Example one is of Nazi Germany. The very fact that Nazi Germany is used as an example lights the fuse of controversy. The fact is, the Nazis had a system of morality; of course, a morality fundamentally repugnant to most other extant human systems of morality, but nevertheless.

Delving into the example; it begins with an anecdote. As a student at the University of Washington I took a course, "Revolutionary Regimes," taught by Professor Charles W. Cassinelli.[\[4\]](#) Some students, enrolling in the course with the expectation of being given lectures admiring of Che Guevara and other leftist icons, were surprised to find that Adolph Hitler's Nazi regime was included in the course. When the professor came to the Nazi regime in his syllabus and began objectively describing it, one student with a contorted, angry face jumped up in class and shouted, "You're preaching fascism!" Cassinelli calmly replied, "I'll get to Mussolini and his Fascists, but right now I am explaining to you the nature of National Socialism. Do you want to learn, or do you want to leave the class?" The student responded by stalking out of the class. The student was so deeply immersed in his cultural box that he had become one of the people described by Eric Hoffer as a "true believer."

One of the norms of the Nazis' system of morality was the belief in the superiority of the German people and in wider scope, the superiority of the "Aryan Race;" the Nazis acted upon that belief. One example of action that conformed to this Nazi belief was to single out one group of *unttermenschen*, the Jews, and force them to wear the Star of David, prominently sewn on a subject individual's clothing. The rationale for this requirement was to clearly distinguish, in an



unflattering way, a Jew from an Aryan, because (objectively, of course) there was otherwise no natural, distinguishing features that denoted an Aryan German from a Jewish German. This use of the Star of David was one of the ways in which the Nazi true believers, using the power that was available to them, tried to make reality conform to their beliefs. The primary purpose of the Star of David patch was to affirm an Aryan German's sense of superiority every time the "Aryan" saw the patch on the Jew.

Most outside analyses would simply overlook the internal cultural logic of the Nazis and excoriate the use of the Star of David patch as reprehensible racism; in doing so such analysts would be following his/her own, subjective concept of truth but come nowhere close to understanding why the Nazis did what they did.

Dare we make a contemporary comparison of this Nazi action, and its purpose, with identity politics in the contemporary West? If the "differences" between people are continually highlighted, those groups can be more easily brought into confrontation with each other.[\[5\]](#) As a consequent objective fact, the members of the groups will never be unaware of their differences, and therefore racism, etcetera, will never end. The policies and programs ostensibly designed to end racism become perpetual motion political machines. Who benefits from that situation?

The second example demonstrating how hard it is for a human being to step outside his/her cultural box is the case of the Soviet biologist, Trofim Lysenko. Lysenko was favored by dictator Josef Stalin and made "Director" of Soviet biology because he had rejected the theories and research in genetics

of Gregor Mendel and Thomas Hunt as being constructs of bourgeois capitalist society. Whereas Mendel and Hunt's research led them to believe that animals and plants evolved and developed in an environment where individuals competed for the available resources and survived as a species by passing on their chromosomes and other genetic material, Lysenko claimed that successful organisms originated from cooperation, and proposed to change spring wheat into a hardier winter wheat using his theories. Unfortunately for Lysenko, and Soviet agriculture, he failed because his theories were at odds with reality and, unlike the Nazis in the case of the Star of David patch, Lysenko did not have the power to appear to bend genetics to his belief system.[\[6\]](#) Stalin executed and sent to the Gulag many "bourgeois" biologists and others who did not embrace Lysenko's theories, and set back Soviet genetics and agriculture by a generation.

Dare we make a contemporary comparison of this Soviet action with attempts in the contemporary West to show that first, "global warming," and now its successor reformulation, "climate change" is caused by human beings? President Obama announced that "the debate is settled" on climate change, despite the fact that it isn't,[\[7\]](#) much as Stalin decreed that Lysenko's theories were the truth, when they were not. The President followed through on his statement by enacting executive orders and directing executive agencies to engage in such policies as "the war on coal."[\[8\]](#) He entered into the Paris Climate Accords that, had the United States not later withdrawn from them, would have redistributed trillions of dollars of American wealth to dubious Third World regimes and international organizations while simultaneously not having a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. Likewise, Stalin had heavily invested in Lysenko's theories and bankrupted Soviet agriculture.

Morality is a subjective concept, rooted in a person's culture, conditioned by his/her upbringing and socialization.

Ethics, in contrast, are objective, based on verifiable fact. The cases of Copernicus and Galileo demonstrate this basic characteristic of ethics.

Most people in Europe believed the sun revolved around the earth until Nicolaus Copernicus, a sixteenth century Polish astronomer and mathematician, showed them otherwise—at great risk to him. It was Church dogma at the time Copernicus lived that the earth was the center of the universe; nowhere does the Bible state this notion, and even though the idea had originated in classical Greece with Aristotle, Christian theologians ironically inferred it from Genesis. That which the theologians inferred and made into dogma was given temporal enforcement by the Inquisition, and by the aristocratic authorities of the time. Publically stating and professing any other ideas was heresy, a crime punishable in some cases by torture and death. Copernicus understood his danger, and he may have delayed publication of his ideas until he was on his death bed in 1543 to escape persecution, ridicule, and worse.[\[9\]](#) What made Copernicus undertake his research and write his conclusions? People believed something that wasn't true; scientific inquiry and reasonable discussion was forbidden on painful penalty.

Copernicus generally is accorded the distinction of having initiated the Western concept of the scientific method. The essence of the scientific method is to try and falsify a hypothesis; if it can be falsified, as Copernicus did with the dogma of the earth being the center of the universe, then a new, "tentative truth" has been found. "Tentative;" because,

the new paradigm may also be falsified at some later point. Essentially the scientific method is a method of progress, i.e. yesterday we were ignorant, today we have learned a little, and tomorrow we can discover more. Physicists are still trying to falsify Einstein's Theory of Relativity; after all, we cannot do warp speed without exceeding the speed of light. To borrow a phrase from the Beatles, "it's getting better all the time."[\[10\]](#)

People living in the thrall of a false dogma suffer great harm, enjoined from progress and kept from improving their knowledge and understanding; finally, they are enjoined from improving the quality and meaning of their lives. How could we possibly get to relativity if we still believed and acted on the idea that all celestial bodies circled the earth? Copernicus initiated the release of an entire civilization from a critically harmful thralldom by establishing what became known as the scientific method and factually verifying that the dogma was wrong. This ethical action of verification resulted in objective fact, compared with the moral action of Lysenko that entailed an attempt to make reality conform to a subjective principle.

But everything happens in context. Copernicus's ideas, despite the efforts of the Church, permeated throughout Europe after his death. Galileo Galilei, the man who became Copernicus's greatest disciple, was born a generation after the death of Copernicus in 1564 in Pisa, Italy, during a time when the temporal power of the Roman Church was on the wane and faced the growing challenge of the Protestant Reformation; Galileo died 6 years short of the Treaty of Westphalia, the first major agreement between European autocrats that was not approved by the Pope. He died in the same year that the English Civil War began to rage. Maybe even more importantly,

he was better able to conduct astronomical observations than Copernicus because he had a powerful new instrument in the telescope.

After learning in 1609 about the invention of some Dutch lens makers, Galileo acquired the lenses and constructed his own telescope within a year. He trained his telescope on the heavens and discovered...that although many of his calculations needed to be refined, Copernicus was right. Galileo embellished Copernican theory by discovering that Jupiter had moons, and the sun had spots. All of his discoveries, when announced and professed, were still against dogma; in fact, in 1600 the Roman inquisition had first hung upside down naked in the public square, then burned to death the Dominican friar, Giordano Bruno, who, among other sins had supported the theories of Copernicus.[\[11\]](#) In 1616 the Church Inquisition convened a council under the auspices of Pope Paul V which condemned Copernican theory. As the years waxed on, Church personnel changed, some supportive of Galileo; but, finally Galileo was tried for heresy.

His many friends and personal connections stood him well, because he was given house arrest rather than the crueler penalties that were levied upon Giordano Bruno. He was also allowed to write and receive visitors, so his teachings and papers were disseminated throughout Europe. It wasn't until over 300 years later in 1992 that Pope John Paul II admitted the mistake of the Church in condemning Copernicus and convicting Galileo that the Church dogma was formally vanquished; but, in all practical reality, Galileo had struck the fatal blow to the false dogma by the time of his death in 1642.[\[12\]](#)

Galileo finished the ethical action begun by Copernicus that transformed a civilization from thralldom to the freedom of inquiry and innovation.

The question at the center of ethics is, "what actual harm is being caused by whom or what to who or what; and why?" Can the objective harm be justified according to objective criteria or conversely, can it be condemned? In contrast, the question at the center of any moral system is, "does it violate the belief?" In other words, the moral issue is whether an action can be justified because it "keeps the faith," or condemned because it is heresy, reactionary, counter-revolutionary, racist, fascist, etc.

Look no further than the case of the shooting of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer Darren Wilson on August 9, 2014 to distinguish between the ethical question and the moral question as they manifest themselves in everyday life. Officer Wilson encountered Michael Brown shortly after a Ferguson Police Department Dispatch went out about "stealing in progress;" Brown had stolen cigarillos from a nearby convenience store and physically accosted the store owner. Wilson was aware of the dispatch and called for backup when he saw Brown and a friend walking. Wilson then blocked the two from walking further by parking his SUV at an angle. Wilson then tried to get out of his vehicle; the door was blocked by Brown, who then reached into the window and grabbed Wilson. A struggle ensued in which Brown nearly gouged out Wilson's eye and Wilson shot Brown.

It took nearly 8 months for the United States Department of Justice, relying on all of the evidence that was available, including video, eyewitnesses, and forensic evidence, to

establish the actual events and to conclude that “Darren Wilson’s actions do not constitute prosecutable violations under the applicable federal criminal civil rights statute, 18 U.S.C. § 242, which prohibits uses of deadly force that are “objectively unreasonable,” as defined by the United States Supreme Court. The evidence, when viewed as a whole, does not support the conclusion that Wilson’s uses of deadly force were “objectively unreasonable” under the Supreme Court’s definition. Accordingly, under the governing federal law and relevant standards set forth in the USAM, it is not appropriate to present this matter to a federal grand jury for indictment, and it should therefore be closed without prosecution.” [\[13\]](#)

Before, during, and after the DOJ investigation into the killing of Michael Brown, there were riots, protests, punditry, media speculation and demagoguery all centering around the idea that when Officer Wilson shot Brown, the man was standing with his hands up and saying “don’t shoot!” It doesn’t stretch the truth to characterize the afore-mentioned collection of people, who claimed that they wanted “justice,” as a mob that fueled itself on subjective passion. To them it was obvious that Darren Wilson was a racist white cop who had killed an innocent black man. [\[14\]](#)

In the case of the killing of Michael Brown, the ethics of the issue are not ambiguous. Ironically, the moral principles embraced by the mob were also not ambiguous—to the mob!

Another, dramatic example of the difference between morality and ethics is the mandatory use of seatbelts. It is both moral and ethical to save lives, correct? But what if you are dealing in probabilities, and there is a statistical minority



of people whose death or injury will be caused or facilitated by the otherwise “life-saving” safety device?

In 49 states of the Union, state law requires driver and passenger to “buckle up.” In New Hampshire, all passengers under 18 must wear seat belts, but it is the choice of those over 18 to wear the restraint or not. An overview of all the studies that were done from the 1950s through today show that the methodologies and reporting of those studies focus on the reduction of fatalities and injuries in automobile accidents; no methodology has so far been employed in examining the question of whether, in the event of grave injury or fatality when seat belts were worn, whether the wearing of the seatbelt contributed to or was a cause of the injury or death.[\[15\]](#) No test or study has ever claimed 100% effectiveness for seatbelts – so what about that group of people who died or were severely injured while wearing them? What about the circumstances of the survivors who were not wearing seatbelts?

Here, of course, utilitarian philosophy, part of America’s dominate political culture, extends its influential umbrella, i.e. advocate and support the greatest good for the greatest number. But what about the minority? Utilitarianism doesn’t concern itself with the minority.

My brother is alive today because he was not wearing a seatbelt during an accident in a 1973 Gran Torino. He was traveling along a graveled, country road in northern Wisconsin, watching for deer out in the fields as he passed by, an activity that locals refer to as “road hunting.” His bow and arrows lay unstrung in the back seat; if he saw deer, his plan was to pull off alongside the road, get the weapon, and stalk his quarry. He was intent on this activity and had

let his speed gain momentum; he was also not paying attention to the road in front of him. He suddenly remembered the road, looked ahead, and saw a vehicle coming towards him. Surprised and traveling too fast for the gravel, he jerked the Gran Torino over to the right. The car wildly skidded, hit some boulders, rolled and bounced into a tree.

Things took a little longer in 1973 than they might today; no cell phones or 911 systems for one thing. By the time the ambulance and police arrived almost an hour had gone by. The Gran Torino was crushed against the tree and the area behind the steering wheel was tightly mashed to the dash and steering column. Looking at it, the responders anticipated a fatality. Finally, they were able to determine that nobody was in the car! They looked, and found my brother, lying in the field. He was unconscious, and remained so for several hours, but otherwise, was unscathed.

Had he been wearing his seatbelt the strong likelihood is that he would have been held in place by that safety restraint as the car collapsed against the steering column and dash. My brother had broken the law by not wearing his seat belt and in so doing he had saved his own life. Had the accident occurred in a different set of circumstance, yes, he might have been hurt or killed because he wasn't wearing the restraint; but is it ethical to require him or anyone else to wear the seatbelt knowing that the seatbelt can become an instrument of harm? Why not simply inform people, and let individuals decide? That would be the ethical way, as opposed to the moral, mandated way of "saving lives."

Morality is a subjective concept. Ethics is based on objective truth, i.e. verifiable evidence. When humans are moral, they

follow the learned precepts arising from their culture. When humans are ethical, they try to step outside the box of their culture and discover that which is actually extant.

Ethics is therefore the key to objectively analyzing the value of ideas, philosophies, and morality, and yes, cultures. If there was no possibility of objective analysis, those who claim that beliefs, and the values associated with them, are all relative, would be correct. No one set of beliefs would be better than another. Christianity, Islam, democracy, American or North Korean possession of nuclear weapons, it would all be the same. In such a world, good and evil are simply a matter of how you view things; all things and ideas are equal. Fortunately, such cultural relativists are wrong and it can be proven.

The grand irony is of course that even cultural relativists are hard put to describe Nazi morality as being “relative” and equal to other ideas, and the same for haters of capitalism and other haters. Such people demonstrate the problem of human subjectivity but do not understand how they are doing so.

Consideration of the role of women in society provides a good exercise for identifying some ideas as being better than others; the key to performing the analysis is to set up criteria against which the implementation of ideas is compared. For example, radical Islamists believe that women must be covered head to toe, and only their husbands may see their skin. Women who do not at least wear the hijab are disgraceful and there are many cases of women without that covering being publically accosted and insulted. “Whore” is a common epithet used by the attackers.[\[16\]](#)

In contrast, the general Western idea is that women are free to exercise their own judgement and dress as each thinks desirable and appropriate for an occasion. Western women are not often publically accosted and insulted because of their choice of clothing; but if they are it is generally those making the insults who are perceived to be in the wrong, not the women.

To evaluate which idea is better, the radical Islamist, or the general Western, we need only look at the actual facts of the implementation, i.e. the consequences of women not covering themselves head-to-toe in the real world.

First, we must factually consider the Islamists' insult: are women who are not covered head to toe in public "whores?" How best to factually answer this question? A survey? Observation? Admittedly an exhaustive empirical study is outside the range of this presentation; but, anecdote and testimony can suffice for the exercise. I have known Muslim women who do not cover themselves as desired by the radical Islamists, and of those I know, none are whores. I have also known Western women, none of whom covered them in such dress; again, none are whores. So, objectively there is evidence that failure to don a hijab, burqa or chador does not cause whorish behavior.

A larger issue looms in conjunction with whether the lack of a hijab, burqa or chador causes whorish behavior and that is the fact that the head-to-toe covering is mandated in places like Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, Pakistan and ISIS-controlled territory; women do not have the freedom of choice to dress as each thinks appropriate. By law women in those places are

prohibited from showing skin to a man not their husband. What are the consequences of the implementation of this mandated dress VS freedom of choice?

The consequences include:

- Lacking freedom of choice, women become chattel of men[\[17\]](#)
- Unable to show their skin to a man not their husband (or the eldest male in the family) women cannot easily consult physicians for even routine healthcare. Because women are not allowed to be professionals, all doctors are male.[\[18\]](#)
- Women face a health challenge in constantly wearing the prescribed clothes, including Vitamin D deficiencies. Given freedom of choice, most people would not engage in behavior that threatened their health.[\[19\]](#)
- Cruel and unusual punishment for breaking the mandated strictures[\[20\]](#)

In contrast to the implementation of the ideas of the radical Islamists, the general Western view of the role of women stand as polar opposites, as are the general consequences.

Women have freedom of choice. The consequence of the implementation of this idea is that women are legal persons, equal before the law in all contractual relationships sanctioned by the society, from marriage to buying and selling property, and of course, securing a license to drive a car. Women are not chattel.

Women in the west can secure healthcare, from a male or a

female doctor, when they need it.

Women are free to change their clothing as they individually think it to be appropriate.

Nobody can legally sanction a woman in the West, certainly not in any cruel and unusual fashion, for lawfully exercising her freedom of choice.

The analysis is complete, begging a conclusion. The conclusion is a statement of value, i.e. which idea was best, that of the radical Islamists, or that of the general approach in the west? Even if the analysis is objective, and the facts that are arrived at documented, how can a value statement be anything except subjective?

The answer is to ask the foremost question that ethics must answer: "what actual harm is being caused by whom or what to who or what; and why?" Can the objective harm be justified according to objective criteria or conversely, can it be condemned?

Because of the implementation of the radical Islamic ideas in places like ISIS-held territory, women as a class of human beings are being harmed. Their health, well-being, and natural freedom is put at severe risk. Nobody is harmed by the implementation of the Western ideas that encompass women as free to choose and be equal before the law, able to conduct their own affairs.

The radical Islamists are the ones causing the harm. Why? They are embedded in a moral system of behavior that makes them think they are in the right. The harm that their victims suffer is real; objectively who benefits? Nobody. Subjectively who benefits? The radical Islamists and their subjective belief system. This conclusion is not Islamophobic, but it is a statement of fact. In fact, the concept of Islamophobia originated as a subjective political tool in Iran during the Khomeini Revolution.<sup>[21]</sup> So, given that origin, the labeling of critics of the radical Islamists as “Islamophobes” is not a criticism of objective analysis that should be accorded any legitimacy.

The harm being done to women by the radical Islamists is unethical. The issue thus becomes whether those of us who can step outside our subjective boxes of culture to understand the nature of the harm can see the path to do something effective about putting a stop to it.

End Notes

<sup>[1]</sup> I saw it on the *CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite*. A recent article covers the event well: Nina Lassam. “The Brutal Murder that Started 9-1-1,” *The Lineup*, March 2, 2015. Accessed 8-26-2017 at <https://the-line-up.com/brutal-murder-started-911/>

<sup>[2]</sup> Eric Hoffer, *True Believer Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 76.

<sup>[3]</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (New



York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1949), 69.

[4] Cassinelli wrote a book that incorporated the material in his course: *Total Revolution* (Santa Barbara: Clio Books, 1976).

[5] Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. understood this when he made these remarks in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech given in Washington, DC on August 28, 1963: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” See <https://www.archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>

[6] For an incisive history of the Lysenko case, read Zhores A. Medvedev. *The Rise and Fall of T.D. Lysenko*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969)

[7] Paul H. Jossey. “The Science is Settled—Until It’s Not.” *The Hill*, May 17, 2017. Accessed August 28, 2017. <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/energy-environment/333908-the-science-is-settled-until-its-not> . See also a full compendium of emails that exposed how a group of elite climatologists manipulated data to influence the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): Steven Mosher and Thomas W. Fuller. *Climategate: The Crutape Letters*. (2010). Mark Morano, ‘Talking Points’ Report—A-Z Debunking of Climate Claims, (Washington, DC: CFact, 2017), accessed October 5, 2017, <http://www.cfact.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Climate-Talking-Points.pdf>. President Obama made his “settled” comments in

his January 2014 State of the Union Address: Robbie Gonzalez. "Obama: "The debate [over climate change] is settled." *Io9 We Come from the Future*. January 29, 2014. Accessed August 28, 2017.

<http://io9.gizmodo.com/obama-the-debate-over-climate-change-is-settled-1511451300>

[8] Grunwald, Michael. "New Carbon Rules the Next Step in Obama's War on Coal." *Time*, June 1, 2014. Accessed August 28, 2017. <http://time.com/2806697/obama-epa-coal-carbon/>.

[9] Fear of being branded a heretic is the common belief about Copernicus's motivation; but research recently published indicates that Copernicus may have been primarily concerned with whether he had made correct calculations. There ensued collaboration with a young Lutheran mathematician, Georg Rheticus, that resulted in the publication of Copernicus's work. See Jack Repcheck, *Copernicus's Secret: How the Scientific Revolution Began* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007)

[10] John Lennon, Paul McCartney. "It's Getting Better All the Time." *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. (1967 Beatles record album)

[11] Wikipedia, s.v. "Giordano Bruno," in (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 2017), accessed October 17, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giordano\\_Bruno](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giordano_Bruno)

[12] J. L. Heilbron, *Galileo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

2010). See especially pp. 358-365 of the chapter “End Games” in which the author recounts Galileo’s victory.

[13] U.S. Department of Justice. Department of Justice Report Regarding the Criminal Investigation into the Shooting Death of Michael Brown by Ferguson, Missouri Police Officer, Darren Wilson. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2015. Accessed August 29, 2017. [https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/doj\\_report\\_on\\_shooting\\_of\\_michael\\_brown\\_1.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/doj_report_on_shooting_of_michael_brown_1.pdf), p. 5

[14] Michelle Ye Hee Lee. “Fact Checker: ‘Hands up, don’t shoot’ did not happen in Ferguson.” Washington Post, March 19, 2015. Accessed August 31, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/03/19/hands-up-dont-shoot-did-not-happen-in-ferguson/?utm\\_term=.346ce61eb667](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/03/19/hands-up-dont-shoot-did-not-happen-in-ferguson/?utm_term=.346ce61eb667).

[15] See for example, Road Safety Observatory, “Seat Belts—How Effective?” Road Safety Observatory, last modified January 30, 2017. Accessed September 6, 2017. <http://www.roadsafetyobservatory.com/HowEffective/vehicles/seat-belts>

[16] See, for example, Raheem Kassam. *No Go Zones*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2017, p.94. See also Ayan Hirsi Ali. *Infidel*. New York: Free Press, 2007, pp. 109-110.

[17] See Ali, p. 127, where she recounts her brother’s

admonishment of her for rejecting a marriage proposal: "Certain decisions, he informed me, were better made by the men of the family." See also Economic and Social Council, *Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan*, (Commission on the Status of Women Forty-fourth session 28 February-2 March 2000: United Nations, 2000), <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/l4.htm>

[18] See, for example, Physicians for Human Rights. *The Taliban's War on Women: A Health and Human Rights Crisis in Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: Physicians for Human Rights, 1998. Accessed September 7, 2017. <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/rossrights/docs/reports/taliban.pdf> p. 8.

[19] Physicians for Human Rights, p. 9.

[20] Samuel Osborne, "5 Ways ISIS Terrorizes Women," *Independent*, February 25, 2016, xx, Accessed September 7, 2017. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/5-ways-isis-terrorises-women-a6895581.html>

[21] Pascal Bruckner, "The Invention of Islamophobia," *signandsight.com*, March 2011, xx, accessed September 7, 2017, <http://www.signandsight.com/features/2123.html>

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