

On Women

by [Jeffrey Burghauer](#) (May 2025)



Katherine (Milton Glaser, 1981)

I once believed that the Ohio Revised Code restricted itself to minutely practical concerns, such as the State inspection protocol for commercial apiaries, or how to obtain a permit to open a graveyard for pets. It turns out, however, that the Code contains items of a more philosophical and speculative nature. Among them is something called the “Bill of Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities.” Some of its rights-assertions are reasonable enough: “You have the right to be treated with respect”; “...to talk to other people”; “...to be treated fairly”; “...to live without bullying or abuse”; “...to vote and to learn about laws.”

So far, so good.

But other demands are downright ridiculous: “You have the right to get [State] services in a way that makes you feel comfortable.” And some demands impose burdens on taxpayers that are at once colossal and hazy, like: “[Y]ou have the right to a place to be alone” and “[Y]ou have the right to get mental health services if you want to talk about your feelings.”

The weirdest demands involve those “rights” which (I’d always assumed) liberals considered universal, rather than group-specific: “You have the right to a clean, safe place to live”; “...to go to a doctor or dentist when you need to”; “...to get other healthcare services, like speech therapy or physical therapy if you want to”; “...to earn money and pay your bills”; “...to save your money and to spend your money”; “...to choose someone to help you with your money.” And my personal favorite: “You have the right to do things you enjoy.” Although my government seems unable to fill a pothole, supplying “enjoyment” to the feebleminded is, it seems, soundly within the State’s purview.

You’d be reasonable to wonder why a busy chap like me would think it worthwhile to study the Ohio Revised Code in the first place. Be assured that I *never* thought it worthwhile.

However, I once worked for schools receiving State money; at some point, the decision was made by our government's bureaucratic Sanhedrin (a sullen gaggle of diversity hires) to require teachers to know the "Bill of Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities." To this end, an online "course" was hatched, the centerpiece of which is a slickly produced video in which the document's verses are recited by a carousel of feebleminded Ohioans.

The video is at least as pointless, boring, and manipulative as anything I've ever seen. And I've spent decades variously working under the auspices of the Department of Education: an enterprise whose heraldic crest could plausibly sport the motto: "Pointless. Boring. Manipulative." Its pace is downright glacial, as each participant struggles through his lines, sometimes in so desperately garbled a manner as to require subtitles. Since you must register, the System knows if you've watched it.

Now, I'm no stranger to exercises in bureaucratic box-checking. I've been forced to watch many such online videos. Typically, however, it's the work of a moment to minimize the window, or to open a new browser tab—to mute the sound, and then to get on with more important business while the PowerPoint, say, on bloodborne pathogens, chatters away, obliviously self-satisfied and unheard. Try that with the presentation on the "Bill of Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities," and you'll quickly discover that you're up against something inhabiting an altogether higher order of coercion: the video-player is programmed to pause whenever it senses your indifference.

I shall here deliver myself of a hypothesis. Some might find it wrongheaded, even diabolical. But bear with me. Here we go:

Everything about the "Bill of Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities" (the drafting of it, the requirement to study it, the development of the online video,

the choice of platform via which it may be accessed, and the accountability provisions hemming the whole thing about) is made by women—either by women directly, or by men who are terrified by women ... those postmodern eunuchs.

We're all willing (indeed, eager) to concede that the masculine impulse is corruptible. I've never met a man who fails to regard [Andrew Tate](#) as a sinister clown. Tom Cruise's [character in Magnolia](#) (a proto-pickup artist and motivational speaker) is so hilarious because we all know *exactly* what's being satirized. No sane male feels personally attacked by the old "Hans and Franz" skits on *Saturday Night Live*.

When we propose, however, that femaleness is equally corruptible, we brace ourselves for the maelstrom of banshee-rage that ends up (paradoxically) confirming our point. It's like those [Muhammedans](#) who protest their popular image as homicidal lunatics by behaving like homicidal lunatics.

But how else are we to understand the "Bill of Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities"? How else are we to understand the silliness surrounding it, the tenor of which is so vindictive, shrill, hectoring, relentless, ill-reasoned, coercive, omniscient, mirthless, manipulative, bloated with a Sense of Purpose—all of it attired as if it were the fruit of selfless love and zealous concern for the welfare of others? Although the "paternal state" can be frustrating, it's a positive treat when compared to the horrors of the *maternal* state.

It wouldn't do to raise one's head above the crenelations with an emphatic "I prefer not to," "The emperor has no clothes," or "Here I stand; I can do no other, so help me God." Anyone so deranged as to find profundity in the "Bill of Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities" is likely unamenable to a reasoned exchange about this (or, indeed, any) topic. "Sleep, angry beauty," sings [Thomas Campion](#) (1567 – 1620), "sleep, and fear not me, / For who a sleeping lion dares

provoke? / It shall suffice me here to sit and see / Those lips shut up that never kindly spoke.” For those who spend their lives underneath the authority of the fairer sex, female rage is an absolute fact that must be accommodated, as if it were a mountain dominating the area through which a civil engineer is planning a road. The male reaction to female rage isn’t arbitrary; the angry woman radiates a vague nimbus of apocalypse. Female rage is world-ending. It carries the unnerving fore-whiff of a wholesale epistemological meltdown.

Reason is adumbrated by language. The Old Testament’s (presumably) male writers weren’t unfamiliar with the frustrations attendant on having to engage with Eve’s more chaotic sisters. Take, for instance, the Bible’s guidance on how to deal with an adulteress; it sounds like a surreal joke. The Bible demands that a woman be force-fed words—literally. “Then the priest shall write these curses in a book,” says Numbers 5:23-24, “and he shall scrape them off into the bitter water. And he shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her to become bitter.”

The next step proposed by the Bible involves trial-by-ordeal: “When [the priest] has made her drink the water, then it shall be, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, that the water that brings a curse will enter her and become bitter, and her belly will swell, her thigh will rot, and the woman will become a curse among her people. But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children.”

The relationship between force-feeding someone words and testing them in a trial-by-ordeal might, at first, seem obscure. Perhaps their kinship comes from this: both procedures are geared toward making a person’s insides match their outsides. When our relationship with language is perverted to the point that words fail to convey accurately our inner lives, we find ourselves (almost by definition) in

what the [Zohar](#) calls an “*alma d’shikra*”—a world of lies. And when we keep our betrayal of someone a naughty little secret, we’re similarly compromised. “You know I hate, detest, and can’t bear a lie,” says Joseph Conrad’s narrator in [Heart of Darkness](#), “not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appalls me. There is a taint of death, a flavor of mortality in lies—which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world—what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do.”

Our successful orientation in the world requires trust. And that trust is harrowingly fragile. “If a child were to begin by doubting everything its parents said to it,” says W.H. Auden in [Secondary Worlds](#) (1968), “it would never learn to talk. To lie, even with the best of intentions, is a deadly sin, for every time we tell someone a lie, even with the best intentions, we not only forfeit forever the right to his faith in us; we undermine his faith in all men and all speech. It is with good reason that the devil is called the Father of Lies.”

In other words, radical dishonesty robs us (and those around us) of that particularly divine element that separates us from beasts, clouds, and stones. It robs us of any confidence in the durability (indeed, in the very *existence*) of an inhabitable reality. The Gospel of Luke is giving us more than a facile warning when we’re admonished that “nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.” It’s an earth-shaking announcement that, at some unspecified (though much-longed-for) point, reality will become *realer*—that we’ll be able, finally, to trust our senses. “Speaking means to make reality recognizable and to communicate it,” writes Josef Pieper in *Death and Immortality*. “And truth is nothing but reality’s being known.”

But this kind of salvation seems remote. Today, we must face those vexations of the spirit that make us yearn for salvation in the first place. We must face the “Bill of Rights for

People with Developmental Disabilities.”

In *Decadence and Catholicism* (1997), Ellis Hanson observes that, for Oscar Wilde, “[f]aith in the improbable becomes a form of martyrdom.” Christians liken martyrdom to a crown; the martyrdom involving anyone convinced that the “Bill of Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities” is anything other than a finely-engineered hostage situation...well, it isn’t quite a *crown*. It’s more like a trucker cap bearing the motto: “I Pee in Pools.” Presuming the accuracy of Hanson’s reading of Wilde, is there any martyrdom less inspiring than this?

The competition is certainly fierce. There’s no shortage of improbabilities in which to believe: the absolute and inherent good of diversity, the civic-minded purity of Hamas, the implicit racism of schoolboy math, the dogma that possession of a horseshoe mustache and testicles doesn’t disqualify you from womanhood ... the list goes on. And on.

And on.

The conviction that Woman is responsible for the “Bill of Rights for People with Developmental Disabilities,” however, involves no martyrdom at all, which is fine by me. Martyrdom is highly overrated.

[Table of Contents](#)

Jeffrey Burghauer is a teacher in Columbus, Ohio. He was educated at SUNY-Buffalo and the University of Leeds. He currently studies the five-string banjo with a focus on pre-WWII picking styles. A former artist-in-residence at the Arad Arts Project (Israel), his poems have appeared (or are forthcoming) in *Appalachian Journal*, *Fearsome Critters*, *Iceview*, *Lehrhaus*, and *New English Review*. Jeffrey’s book-

length collections are available on [Amazon](#), and his website is www.jeffreyburghauser.com.

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