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Tekstboekje

# Weight Loss and Taxes

To the Editor:

“Health and Money Issues Arise Over Who Pays for Weight Loss” (front page, Sept. 30) makes me want to scream. Instead of using my taxes to pay for corrective surgery, why not pay at the front end? Medicare and other insurers should pay for gym memberships, exercise classes and nutritional counselling for all people. Maybe then good health habits could become the norm and “permanent diets” the prescription for the truly ill.

I know that as soon as Medicare starts paying for the surgery, my private health insurance premiums will rise as well. I will have fewer dollars to pay for my own “good health” program.

Nancy J. Smeltzer  
Columbus, Ohio

*The New York Times*

### Cruelty of the chase

Sir: Much of what has been written recently about the fox-hunting ban, even by its advocates, seems distracted by peripheral issues such as class distinctions and factory-farming. Yes, chicken and pig factories are bigger problems than fox-hunting in terms of the numbers suffering, but the presence of industrial-scale cruelty has never been a reason to turn a blind eye to the cruelties dealt by minority groups.

I take issue with inferences that fox-hunting is only mildly cruel. Sure, sometimes the fox is taken early and dies quickly, but often it is chased for long periods. In natural situations, larger predators typically pursue foxes only over short distances because the possible gains from a catch are weighed against the probability of losing the fox and energy wasted in the chase. Consequently, the physiology of foxes is not adapted for the stresses of long chases that only pleasure hunting allows. Incidents of subsequent death due to internal bleeding and kidney failure among foxes that escape provide some indication of the torture of the hunt.

Some say that the world is a cruel place, accept it. Certainly, from alleopathic trees that poison their own saplings to avoid competition, to invading male lions that kill the pride's cubs, nature is selfish and often hideous. It can co-opt us into the most base of deeds against our own and other species. But the luxury of abundant resources in combination with empathy allows us to rise above the cruelty.

So when landmarks in humanity are reached, such as the emancipation of slaves or the abolition of killing for pleasure, we should not get bogged down in issues of class, but celebrate the victory of compassion over cruelty.

Dr MATT PHILLIPS  
Department of Zoology

*The Independent*

*De volgende tekst is het begin van The Black Book, een misdaadroman van Ian Rankin*

### Prologue

There were two of them in the van that early morning, lights on to combat the haar which blew in from the North Sea. It was thick and white like smoke. They drove carefully, being under strict instructions.

'Why does it have to be us?' said the driver, stifling a yawn. 'What's wrong with the other two?'

The passenger was much larger than his companion. Though in his forties, he kept his hair long, cut in the shape of a German military helmet. He kept pulling at the hair on the left side of his head, straightening it out. At the moment, however, he was gripping the sides of his seat. He didn't like the way the driver screwed shut his eyes for the duration of each too-frequent yawn. The passenger was not a conversationalist, but maybe talk would keep the driver awake.

'It's just temporary,' he said. 'Besides, it's not as if it's a daily chore.'

'Thank God for that.' The driver shut his eyes again and yawned. The van glided in towards the grass verge.

'Do you want me to drive?' asked the passenger. Then he smiled. 'You could always kip in the back.'

'Very funny. That's another thing, Jimmy, the *stink!*'

'Meat always smells after a while.'

'Got an answer for everything, eh?'

'Yes.'

'Are we nearly there?'

'I thought you knew the way.'

'On the main roads I do. But with this mist.'

'If we're hugging the coast it can't be far.' The passenger was also thinking: if we're hugging the coast, then two wheels past the verge and we're over a cliff face. It wasn't just this that made him nervous. They'd never used the east coast before, but there was too much attention on the west coast now. So it was an untried run, and *that* made him nervous.

'Here's a road sign.' They braked to peer through the haar. 'Next right.' The driver jolted forwards again. He signalled and pulled in through a low iron gate which was padlocked open. 'What if it had been locked?' he offered.

'I've got cutters in the back.'

'A bloody answer for everything.'

They drove into a small gravelled car park. Though they could not see them, there were wooden tables and benches to one side, where Sunday families could picnic and do battle with the midges. The spot was popular for its view, an uninterrupted spread of sea and sky. When they opened their doors, they could smell and hear the sea. Gulls were already shrieking overhead.

'Must be later than we thought if the birds are up.' They readied themselves for opening the back of the van, then did so. The smell really was foul. Even the stoical passenger wrinkled his nose and tried hard not to breathe.

'Quicker the better,' he said in a rush. The body had been placed in two thick plastic fertiliser sacks, one pulled over the feet and one over the head, so that they overlapped in the middle. Tape and string had been used to join them. Inside the bags were also a number of breeze blocks, making for a heavy and awkward load. They carried the grotesque parcel low, brushing the wet grass. Their shoes were squelching by the time they passed the sign warning about the cliff face ahead. Even more difficult was the climb over the fence, though it was rickety enough to start with.

'Wouldn't stop a bloody kid,' the driver commented. He was pecking, the saliva like glue in his mouth.

'Ca' canny,' said the passenger. They shuffled forwards two inches at a time, until they could all too clearly make out the edge. There was no more land after that, just a vertical fall to the agitated sea. 'Right,' he said. Without ceremony, they heaved the thing out into space, glad immediately to be rid of it. 'Let's go.'

'Man, but that air smells good.' The driver reached into his pocket for a quarter-bottle of whisky. They were halfway back to the van when they heard a car on the road, and the crunch of tyres on gravel.

'Aw, hell's bells.'

The headlights caught them as they reached the van.

'The fuckin' polis!' choked the driver.

'Keep the heid,' warned the passenger. His voice was quiet, but his eyes burned ahead of him. They heard a handbrake being engaged, and the car door opened. A uniformed officer appeared. He was carrying a torch. The headlights and engine had been left on. There was no one else in the car.

The passenger knew the score. This wasn't a set-up. Probably the copper came here towards the end of his night shift. There'd be a flask or a blanket in the car. Coffee or a snooze before signing off for the day.

'Morning,' the uniform said. He wasn't young, and he wasn't used to trouble. A Saturday night punch-up maybe, or disputes between neighbouring farmers. It had been another long boring night for him, another night nearer his pension.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Violent video games

1 Sir: I was disappointed to see the Analysis on violent video games (8 January) trotting out the same old myths about media violence.

2 American researchers into media violence persistently present correlations as evidence of causality (which is a basic misunderstanding in social science methodology); they consistently claim long-term effects from studies examining only short-term immediate responses; and make utterly meaningless comments about the responses of known violent individuals to media violence. They do this because American effects research is highly influenced by the socio-political environment, in which the media are branded as scapegoat in order that other causes of violent crime in the US, such as the easy access to guns, are not addressed.

3 What such researchers consistently fail to even address is why millions of people exposed to exactly the same media products fail to respond in aggressive and violent ways.

4 Video games are becoming more graphically sophisticated but not, as the article claims, more violent; Space Invaders involved the wiping out of entire waves of alien invaders, the same basic principle as Doom. Attacks

on games for presumed effects of their violent content is merely another stage in the history of media criticism.

Exactly the same comments were made when the novel, newspaper, music hall, cinema, television, comic books and videos began to reach a mass audience.

5 People need to realise that media content does not determine individuals' behaviour, and if more people were aware of the range of effects research over the last 70 years that clearly shows this, we might finally see the end of the influence of moral conservatives determined to censor the media.

Dr VINCENT CAMPBELL

*Senior Lecturer in Media Studies*

6 Sir: As a teenager who loves video games, I think the problem you report on refers only to the weak-minded who are not smart enough to realise that games are games, not "reality". I own Grand Theft Auto Vice City and I just see it as a game in which I have missions to undertake - not a shoot-'em-up.

CHARLES ROBINSON

*(Aged 13)*

*The Independent*

## A dog's life

1 NATURAL selection is blind to the future. So it is possible, in theory, for a species to evolve itself merrily to extinction by adopting a strategy that works in the short term, but not in the long. That has never been observed in practice. But a study published in this week's *Science*, by Blaire Van Valkenburgh, of the University of California, Los Angeles, and her colleagues, suggests it is true. Dr Van Valkenburgh has studied the fossil history of one group of mammals, and found a repeated pattern of evolution that seems to lead to extinction.

2 The mammals concerned are the dog family, a group of carnivores known to zoologists as the Canidae. This family is divided into three. Living dogs, wolves, jackals and foxes, together with their ancestors, are dubbed the Caninae. And there are also two extinct groups, the Hesperocyoninae and the Borophaginae. The past 50m years have seen a repeated pattern of particular carnivore lines proliferating, diversifying and then declining to extinction for no very apparent reason. Dr Van Valkenburgh's hypothesis was that there was indeed a reason, common to all of these cases, and that it was connected with an old idea called Cope's rule.

3 The rule in question is that small animals evolve into large ones, but not vice versa. This makes sense. Size brings security from predation, success in competition for mates (at least if you are male) and a lower surface area to volume ratio (which reduces heat loss). The downside is that big animals have to eat more than small ones.

4 Dr Van Valkenburgh took this line of reasoning a stage further. If you are a carnivore, the easiest way to eat more is to specialise in large prey. And that, in turn, gives you a further reason to grow big. But the problem with this is that large prey are rarer than small ones, so specialising in them leaves you vulnerable to relatively small ecological changes. If your preferred food supply vanishes you may not, as a smaller species would, have any suitable alternatives. Extinction thus beckons.

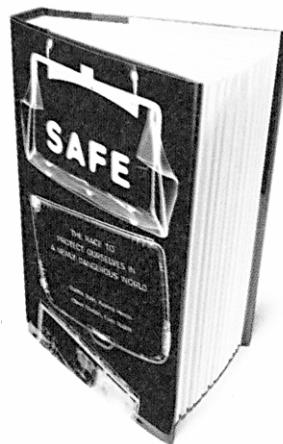
5 To test this idea, the researchers turned to the fossil record – in particular to the animals' teeth, which often survive when bone disintegrates. They were able to work out the likely average sizes of a range of fossil species from the well-established relationship between tooth size and body size in living canids. Then, by examining the anatomy of the teeth themselves, and of fossil jaws, when available, they were able to get a good idea of the type of prey the animals were eating.

6 The same trend was apparent in both the Hesperocyoninae and the Borophaginae. The number of large species with adaptations suggesting specialisation on large prey increased with time. Small omnivores became rarer (their place being taken by members of the newly evolved Caninae). And, crucially, the large beasts did not hang around as long as the small. The average lifetime of such "hypercarnivorous" species was 6m years. Smaller, less specialised species averaged 11m years. It thus appears that evolution really can lead to extinction.

*The Economist*

# How Safe Are We?

1 **T**HE UNINTENDED – and sometimes violent – consequences of scientific advances and technology are well documented. Since the 1950s antibiotics have saved millions of lives, but the emergence of more deadly antibiotic-resistant viruses and bacteria has been nature's growing, not-so-subtle response. When the 9/11 hijackers turned passenger planes into missiles in 2001, the dual nature of modern technology was brought into sharp relief. "SAFE: The Race to Protect Ourselves in a Newly Dangerous World", a new book by a cadre of former Wired magazine writers and editors, finds several more frightening chinks in the armor of our everyday technologies and science, and explains how terrorists could easily disrupt communications networks, industrial chemical supplies and public water systems.



2 The most pressing concerns lie in the burgeoning field of bio-engineering. Teenage students cut and splice genes at a scientific level only

Nobel Prize winners could achieve back in 1980, and scientists are now able to remake biological systems into anything from glow-in-the-dark fish to superstrong mice. Alongside the promise of miracle health benefits comes the possibility of rogue scientists' usurping the past 20 years of research and using it to "weaponize" a natural pathogen that could kill millions. The authors argue that by practicing a limited "open-source" type of bio-engineering – in which many groups share information and resources – a more resilient, robust system will emerge. The pharmaceutical industry is currently too controlling of its intellectual property, making an information-sharing system that could help get vaccines onto the market faster a near impossibility.

3 "SAFE" is an ambitious book. Not only does it identify many of the major vulnerabilities that pulse through modern society, it also attempts to present practical, technologically informed solutions. The authors say they wrote the book because people "naturally reacted to the 9/11 attacks by questioning whether their faith in technology was simply and entirely misplaced." Reading "SAFE" should help balance our fears – even while exploring them. **- AARON CLARK**

*Newsweek*





## The Madonna of the Pinks

Andreas Whittam Smith

I am not particularly nationalistic so far as works of art are concerned. If, as expected, Tessa Jowell, the Secretary of State for Culture, announces later this week that the Government is to defer the export of the lovely Raphael, Madonna of the Pinks, so that funds can be assembled to match the bid by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, I won't myself be rattling the collecting tin.

The picture was painted in Florence in about 1507-8 just before Raphael left to start work at the papal court in Rome, when the Eternal City was again, briefly, the centre of the world in terms of artistic endeavour. But the Madonna of the Pinks was not a papal possession and when it turned up in a sale in Rome in 1853 as part of a collection of 74 paintings, the fourth Duke of Northumberland bought the lot and the Raphael has remained to this day 19.

Of course, Britain at the time was immensely wealthy, and probably only British dukes, as opposed to the Continental variety, could afford such a bold purchase. I don't know whether the Victorian duke was an owner of prosperous coal mines situated under his Northumberland acres, but it seems 20. Substitute oil for coal and one can see that the Getty Museum, financed by the J. Paul Getty oil fortune, founded in Oklahoma, is in a way quite similar as an art buyer to the fourth Duke of Northumberland exactly 150 years ago. Faced with the inevitability of this slow movement of great works of art around the world, reflecting the pull of power and wealth, are there special reasons why we should 21 this picture in this country?



It was originally displayed at Alnwick Castle in Northumberland as a true Raphael, but the scholars of the time had their doubts and it was relegated to being hung in a corridor. Neglected for more than a century, the picture was finally recognised for what it was in 1991 by a curator from the National Gallery. It was lent to the National Gallery in London and has hung there ever since.

22 the museum feels that it has a moral right to hold on to the picture, and recalls that, at the time of its rediscovery, it was promised that, if the painting were ever sold, it would be offered first refusal. But if it wants to keep the picture, it will have to raise £29m to match the Getty.

Unquestionably, the Madonna of the Pinks is a masterpiece. The National Gallery says that it is acknowledged as one of the greatest paintings in the world and that it has become one of the best-loved among its visitors. But if one then goes on to say that the National Gallery is 23 Raphaels, with nine examples hanging on its walls, the response is that context is all.

For, at the same time as the fourth Duke of Northumberland was buying his pictures

in Rome, the government of the day – the enlightened government of the day – considered that Raphael stood at the pinnacle of Western art and that the National Gallery should make 24 a priority. Hence today's unrivalled collection. And hence the claim that “no more appropriate context could be imagined for this jewel-like masterpiece which so beautifully encapsulates a moment of maternal delight.”

Indeed context can enhance the pleasure of viewing great works of art. Anybody who saw the Picasso and Matisse exhibition at the Tate Modern gallery in London last summer will have been struck by how the pairing of the works of the two masters added considerably to the experience.

But then I turn to the Getty Museum and see that it possesses only a Female Figure attributed to Raphael, a Young Man in Red designated as circle of Raphael, a Holy Family after Raphael, together with a study and two drawings which are undoubtedly by the master. This makes me think that, frankly, the value of The Madonna of the Pinks is much greater to the Getty than it is to the National Gallery. If it is to move, the Los Angeles museum is 25.

Is this a hopelessly unpatriotic and

careless attitude towards the nation's artistic heritage? Not quite. As Britain's museums have scarcely any resources of their own with which to finance acquisitions, they must use the utmost care in deciding when to appeal for funds on a large scale for a particular purchase. At the same time, they would almost certainly have to turn to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which is cautious in advancing large amounts which would end up in the hands of a private vendor.

I think the National Gallery should overcome its disappointment, accept that it cannot keep The Madonna of the Pinks and wait for another masterpiece to become available which would 26 an evident gap in the British national collection.

Goya, for instance, is woefully under-represented in Britain. The National Gallery has the terrific Duke of Wellington painted in Spain during the Napoleonic Wars, and bought in 1961 with help both from the government and from the Wolfson Foundation. It also possesses three other paintings acquired in 1896 and a sketch, but no more. No doubt I shall be told that, nowadays, great Goyas never come up for sale. I would certainly bang the drum for 27.

*The Independent*

## Tekst 8 An obsession with prescribing perfection

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### **Better Than Well: American Medicine Meets The American Dream**

by Carl Elliott

Norton 357 pp \$26.95

**Reviewed by Shannon Brownlee**

- 1 In the late 1960s, the pharmaceutical company Sandoz introduced Serentil, a new tranquilizer. Serentil, according to the ad, could ease the “anxiety that comes from not fitting in,” a feeling that practically every person on the planet has undoubtedly experienced. But Sandoz was prevented from tapping this potentially enormous market by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which forced the company to withdraw the drug and issue a statement to the effect that Serentil was not intended for use in everyday, anxiety-provoking situations.
- 2 Thirty years after Serentil flopped, GlaxoSmithKline launched its own ad campaign for Paxil, an antidepressant that could also be used to treat “social phobia.” The company sent out press releases describing the disease, provided reporters with lists of sufferers willing to speak about their condition, and papered bus shelters with posters and the slogan “Imagine Being Allergic to People.” The promotional campaign hardly mentioned the drug, let alone the manufacturer, notes author Carl Elliott, because pharmaceutical companies have learned the lesson of Serentil: if they want to sell a drug that will “take the edge off some sharply uncomfortable aspect of American social life,” as Elliott puts it, they first need to persuade Americans that their discomfort is due to a bona fide medical problem. “SmithKline does not need to sell Paxil,” he writes. “What they need to sell is social phobia.”
- 3 That, in a nutshell, is the pattern of America’s obsession with enhancement technology: drugs and procedures that are supposed to make us more contented, calmer, sexier. In a word, better. “Doctors begin using a new drug or surgical procedure that looks as much like cosmetic intervention ... as a proper medical treatment,” Elliott writes. The technology triggers a heated debate. But in the end, the technology is accepted as a part of ordinary American life.
- 4 The acceptance of enhancement has been aided, says Elliot, by the American devotion to the self. “We tend to see ourselves as the managers of life projects,” writes Elliott, managers who must search for ways to make our lives better, richer, more psychologically healthy. But this notion of life as a project leads to a degree of moral uncertainty, and to the belief that we are solely responsible for the outcome of our endeavors. To that end, we have drafted medicine and technology into the service of having good lives rather than being good people.
- 5 *Better Than Well* is a superbly crafted book. Lucidly written, often funny, it offers a penetrating look at our self-obsessed, over-medicalized, enhancement-addicted society. But Elliott goes further than this. *Better Than Well* also prepares the ground for thinking about the difficult and contentious issues surrounding gene therapy and genetic engineering.
- 6 Bioethicists draw a line between so-called therapeutic technologies, which are deemed moral, and enhancement technologies, which are not. Thus genetic therapy that can cure a disease such as cystic fibrosis is good, but genetic engineering to give a child

greater intelligence is bad. The problem with this construction, as Elliott makes clear, is that the distinction between treatment and enhancement gets a little blurry in a society that has become adept at turning many aspects of ordinary life into medical problems. Is it enhancement to give growth hormone to increase the stature of boys who will achieve below-average height? Or therapy to protect their egos? And once biotechnologists find the genes for stature, will we want to ensure that all our sons are above average and all our daughters do not grow too tall?

- 7 The ability to alter the genes in embryos is coming soon to a culture that sees self-expression and identity as commodities that can be purchased. The implication of this eloquent, disturbing book is that it will be very difficult to stop genetic enhancement, or even slow it down.

*The Washington Post*

FIRST NIGHT

# A teen movie for adults only

thirteen

★★★☆☆

Wendy Ide

- 1 TEEN movies have never been more popular, and the teen dollar has never had such an influence on mainstream cinema. But the gap between the glossy, perky Hollywood take on adolescence and the realities of life for the kids in the audience is thrown sharply into perspective by *thirteen* director Catherine Hardwicke's uncomfortable debut feature.
- 2 The irony is that the certificate awarded to the film in both the US and Britain will keep out the very teenagers whose lives are apparently laid bare in the picture.
- 3 There's a story behind the story. This is not the rose-tinted reminiscence of a middle-aged studio hack. This is a report from the front line. Hardwicke's co-writer, Nikki Reed, the daughter of a friend, was 13 when they collaborated on the screenplay, the battle scars still fresh from her own turbulent entrance into adolescence.



- 4 Hardwicke went away for several months and was astonished at the change in Reed when she saw her again. She had spun out of control. Hardwicke suggested that Reed write the screenplay as a form of therapy. The protagonist's abuse of alcohol and drugs, her self-harm and body



Evan Rachel Wood (Tracy) and Nikki Reed (Evie) in *thirteen*

- piercing, promiscuity and petty crime, are based on this episode in Reed's life.
- 5 Although Reed also stars in the film, the autobiographical role is taken by Evan Rachel Wood. She plays Tracy, a conscientious student and good girl, who is hit hard by what, in more innocent times, would have been called a schoolgirl crush. The object of her infatuation is Evie (Reed), the school siren and the undisputed queen of the in-crowd. The friendship between the two rapidly blossoms, with arch-manipulator Evie moving into Tracy's family home and sparking a drastic deterioration in her friend's relationship with her recovering alcoholic mother (played by Holly Hunter).
- 6 A former production designer, Hardwicke creates a handsome look for the film on a tight budget. Kinetic camerawork evokes Tracy's increasingly unpredictable behaviour, and the colour gradually leaches out of the film as the vulnerable teenager plunges into an ever-darker state of mind.

7        However, little analysis is offered on what might prompt a teenager to self-destruct and it's difficult to decide whether this really is the candid portrait of adolescence it purports to be or whether the presence of Reed as a living, breathing testimonial from the dark side has persuaded us to suspend

disbelief. Still, there is plenty to concern an adult audience, not least the precocious sexuality on display.

8        The film brings with it a sickly realisation that the children we are so keen to protect from exploitation may well be busy doing it themselves.

*The Times*

## Tekst 10

### Too many agents waiting in the six-yard box

*Big fleas have little fleas  
Upon their backs to bite 'em.  
Little fleas have lesser fleas  
And so on, ad infinitum.*

- 5 JONATHAN Swift was writing about the invention of the microscope, but the agents crawling about Old Trafford<sup>1)</sup>, trapped under the glass yesterday, were not a pretty sight.

Agents occupy soccer's twilight world. There are 240 licensed by Fifa in England and 39 in Scotland, giving these isles more middlemen than France and  
10 Germany combined. It's another baleful competition where we are world champions.

For years, agents have operated behind the scenes. Now, Manchester United has done the football world a service by detailing the £8.5m of agency payments it made and promised last season.

- 15 United may have been dragged into the move by its major Irish shareholders, but it still deserves a little credit for shedding light on this previously invisible world. If the agents made £8.5m from United last season, how much did they get from Chelsea?

Some of the problem is due to football's regulators. Fifa's rules restrict clubs  
20 from approaching players other than through licensed agents. This guarantees work for the agents and, with clubs footing their bills, creates the perfect conditions for fee inflation almost without limit.

Football is an industry where the money pouring in at the top drops straight into the pockets of the players and out again via fast women and faster cars.

- 25 Agents want some of the spoils and they are getting it. There are even agents for the agents.

United chief executive David Gill wants to do away with these surplus midfielders, but will not attack the system, arguing that players would simply demand more money if their agents' fees were not borne by the club. Maybe. But  
30 at least there may then be some restraint. After all, he who pays the piper...

*The Daily Telegraph*

noot 1 Old Trafford: football stadium, home of Manchester United