

Editorial: Dictionary of Received Ideas

Age of Criminal Responsibility: should be raised to fourteen; it is uncivilized to prosecute and punish children who have not reached years of discretion.

Age of Sexual Consent: should be lowered to fourteen; young people are maturing much earlier, and are capable of taking responsibility for their own lives.

Celibacy: an undesirable and unhealthy mode of life, contrary to nature.

Children's Literature: must be cleansed of material that has any tendency to deprave or corrupt readers by inducing racist, sexist or xenophobic attitudes.

Civil Service and Foreign Service: recruit too many graduates of the ancient universities, who are no abler than the graduates of other universities.

Colonialism, Imperialism: crimes of my ancestors for which it is my duty to make amends.

Homosexuality: to stigmatize it as 'unnatural' is to clothe a prejudice in a myth; there is no such thing as 'human nature'.

Humanity: good by nature, corrupted only by society.

Morality: a matter of private choice; philosophers must not presume to lay down the law about human conduct.

National Pride: irrational, since it involves claiming credit for the achievements of our ancestors.

Obligations: binding only on those who voluntarily incur them.

Oxford and Cambridge: distort the higher education system by creaming off the most able applicants for admission to universities.

Paternalism: unethical, especially when practised by fathers upon their children.

Philosophers: are failing in their duty to serve as guides to life.

Planning: the only means of achieving and maintaining a rational and just society, capable of responding appropriately to social change.

Pornography: there is no evidence that books have any effect on the thoughts or actions of readers, still less that they have any tendency to deprave or corrupt.

The Press: it is unfair to other political parties that such a powerful medium should be dominated by Conservative editors and proprietors.

Public Schools: their special advantages should be made more widely available.

Don Locke

Social Change: now so rapid and unpredictable that we must constantly readjust to radically unexpected developments.

State Education: just as good as private education.

The Welfare State: makes proper provision for the care of the community, as a good father cares for his children.

Western Values: not to be urged upon Third World countries, who have their own independent cultures and philosophies.

Wisdom of the East: should be studied by Western scholars and thinkers, who are excessively parochial and ethnocentric.

(With acknowledgements to Flaubert's *Dictionnaire des Idées Reçues*)