

the increase in teen oral sex, then it is odd that it took nine years to materialise. Moreover, from the mid 1990s, treatments such as protease inhibitors dramatically slowed the progression of HIV to AIDS. If Harford's hypothesis is right, this should have caused a drop in the oral sex rate. But from 1994 to 2004, the reported rate almost doubled. You do not have to search for long to find alternative explanations for the increase, but Harford is reluctant to include one, presumably because it would sit awkwardly with the idea that hidden economics explains everything.

None of this review should be taken as a rejection of economic analysis, mechanistic reasoning, modelling, or quantitative research. Moreover, the confirmation bias to which Harford is prone could be attributed to space limitations or the need for a coherent narrative and marketing strategy. In any case the book is far less ideological, more aware of its own fallibility, much funnier, and much better written than anything by, say, Clive Hamilton.

There are also some very interesting chapters in the book. In an excellent discussion of incentive traps in education, Harford uncovers a vicious circle where students expecting to be discriminated against rationally underinvest in education, reinforcing the rational discrimination towards such underinvestors. And his conclusion on the economics of speed dating is brutal and entertaining: preferences for romantic partners are almost entirely dependent on 'market conditions' (who happens to be sitting opposite you) rather than supposedly inherent tastes. And you thought you weren't interested in a twice-divorced alcoholic?

Reviewed by Hugh Morley

Love & Money: The Family and the Free Market
Quarterly Essay 29

by Anne Manne

Black Inc.

Melbourne, 2008

\$15.95, 90pp

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This latest Quarterly Essay, *Love & Money*, could not have been published at a better time. Debate over the future of the Baby Bonus, whether universal paid maternity leave should be introduced, the increase of the child care tax rebate, and the prime minister's expansive proposal for 'parent and child centres' has consumed countless newspaper column inches over recent months.

It is in this context that Anne Manne situates her essay. She contends that paid work is now seen as the only valued form of work for women, and that this has led to an undervaluing of unpaid care work, especially caring for children.

Love & Money points to the work of controversial feminist academic Linda Hirshman, who argued that, to be worthwhile, women had to get out of the house and become engaged in paid work. To Hirshman, unpaid care work performed by stay-at-home mothers is worthless. Manne argues that this type of thinking led to the decline of 'maternalism.' Government policy shifted from endorsing women staying at home to be mothers to privilege women's engagement in public, paid work. She argues that this strand of feminism ultimately defeated maternalist ones because it corresponded with the capitalist ideal of maximum labour-force participation.

The result has been the emergence of an ethos where women only gain their identity from paid work. Stay-at-home mothers now dread being

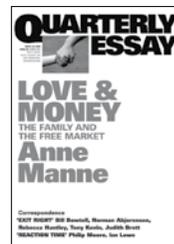
asked the inevitable question, 'What do you do?'

Manne argues that despite this pervasive belief, very few families in Australia actually conform to the 'norm' of having two parents working full-time. She points to the work of sociologist Catherine Hakim, who argues that most women are 'adaptive,' and engage in a constantly shifting balancing act between work and children, rather than being devoted solely to one or the other. Most mothers engage in some form of paid work, but prioritise caregiving. Manne points to evidence that while many families use long daycare facilities, comparatively few use them on a full-time basis. Most children are only in daycare for a few hours at a time, or perhaps one day a week.

Manne outlines the arguments that favour parental care over institutionalised care because of its effect on children's health and well-being. She argues that evidence claiming institutionalised childcare is beneficial for children is over-stated, and children instead develop intellectually and emotionally by developing secure attachments to a primary carer, usually a parent.

She argues that commodifying care by taking it outside the home has many shortcomings, and that we should place more value on the unpaid care work parents (usually mothers) perform. She suggests that the economic value of this unpaid work underpins much of the economic and social success of countries like Australia. We need women to continue engaging in unpaid care work, she writes, or we will face catastrophic problems.

Manne's conclusion is that we should aspire to a similar model to that of the social democratic Scandinavian countries, which can



be achieved by increasing parental leave periods, making high-quality childcare universally available, and reorganising work practices to give parents more flexibility.

Manne's argument that the 'get to work' strand of feminism has captured family policy is convincing. The federal government has expanded the subsidies available to parents for child care, while at the same time restricting payments made to stay-at-home parents. The Productivity Commission is investigating the possibility of paid maternity leave. Family policy appears increasingly designed to lure mothers back into the workforce.

Likewise, Manne is right to doubt the real benefits of child care, as evidence indicates that institutionalised child care only has significant developmental benefits for children from very disadvantaged backgrounds.

But her sensible recommendation that we should 'adopt active neutrality as the guiding principle of family policy' is weakened by her obvious bias towards parental care. A truly neutral policy should not assume institutional care is best for children, but nor should it assume that parental care is best. This should be something for individual parents to decide.

Manne's recommendations are essentially a wish list for more government spending on family policy, and more cultural change in the workplace. Extending parental leave, paying child care workers more, and introducing flexible work practices such as gradual re-entry into the workforce will result in the Scandinavian-style system that Manne espouses.

But this model does not adequately correspond with the goal of adopting 'active neutrality as the guiding principle of family policy.' While parental leave and child care is extensive and universal

in the Scandinavian countries, it has been designed to support full employment among fathers *and* mothers. Rather than giving parents choice, the Scandinavian model prescribes an 'ideal' pattern where one parent stays home until parental leave expires and then both parents work full-time, putting the child in institutional care.

OECD statistics show that in Denmark and Sweden, more than 70% of mothers with children under three are in paid work. In Australia, the figure is 45%. In Australia, 66% of working women with a child under six work part-time. In Sweden the figure is 41.2%, and in Denmark it is only 5.1%. In the Scandinavian countries, more women with young children are in the workforce, and the majority of these work full-time. It seems that emulating these countries will result in more children in institutional childcare, not less.

Manne's interpretation of the social conditions that have led to the current debate on work-family balance is insightful. However, her prescriptions for what is to be done about it are ultimately unconvincing.

Reviewed by Jessica Brown

The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West

by Mark Lilla

Knopf

New York, 2007

\$44.95, 334pp

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Mark Lilla's *The Stillborn God* explores the retreat and partial revival of political theology in Western civilisation. As one would expect from the author of *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*

(2003), it is a deeply perceptive and informed exploration of the history of ideas.

Lilla starts by noting the contemporary return of the sixteenth-century arguments about politics and religion, 'over revelation and reason, dogmatic purity and toleration, inspiration and consent, divine duty and common decency,' which was not supposed to happen. He then takes us through how unusual Western civilisation became by separating political arguments from their grounding in God or other religious authorities. This is what he calls the 'Great Separation': the supplanting of political theology.

With considerable subtlety, the first chapter sets out the broad outlines of Christian political theology. It notes unusual features—'in Christianity, versions of every species of political theology can be found, all at war with one another ... In Christian thought all the possibilities of political theology are exposed to view, as are its attendant difficulties'—and the crisis political theology reached with the Reformation.

The second examines the Great Separation as essentially the creation of Thomas Hobbes. 'All political theology,' writes Lilla, 'depends on a picture, an image of the divine nexus between God, man and the world.' Hobbes achieved separation from the divine nexus by starting with new subject matter: human psychology. He replaced the God-centred view of political theology with a human-centred view of why people believe. Religion became a human phenomenon flowing from our fear and ignorance, and one that made the conflict inherent in social life worse. Hobbes's solution was a Leviathan, the 'earthly God' of the autocratic sovereign, fear of whom would keep us all in line and allow social order to be created and maintained. Hobbes 'successfully

â€” (2008). Love and money : the family and the free market. Quarterly Essay; 29. Black Inc. "Ebony: The Girl in the Room". , The Monthly, Issue 53, February 2010, pp. 36â€”42. "Only Connect: Loneliness in the Age of Freedom". , The Monthly, Issue 23, May 2007, pp. 32â€”39. "Love me Tender? Sex & power in the age of pornography". , The Monthly, Issue 19, December 2006 - January 2007, pp. 34â€”42. "What About Me? The New Narcissism".