

prohibitions against medical treatment. The former expressly limits the exposure of youth to alternative ideas and views of the world and thus limits their ability to draw on human wisdom at large to make decisions about their own lives, and the latter leads to unnecessary suffering from illness and sometimes early death directly causing current suffering and sometimes affecting any chance of future well-being.

Again, let me again quote from Sam Harris (2010, p. 20):

Many social scientists incorrectly believe that all long-standing human practices must be evolutionarily adaptive: for how else could they persist? Thus even the most bizarre and unproductive behaviors – female genital excision, blood feuds, infanticide, the torture of animals, scarification, foot binding, cannibalism, ceremonial rape, human sacrifice, dangerous male initiations, slavery, potlatch, the killing of the elderly, sati, irrational dietary and agricultural taboos attended by chronic hunger and malnourishment, the use of heavy metals to treat illness, etc. – have been rationalized, or even idealized in the fire-lit scribblings of one or another dazzled ethnographer. But the mere endurance of a belief system does not suggest that it is adaptive, much less wise. It merely suggests that it hasn't [yet] led directly to a society's collapse or killed its practitioners outright. [brackets mine].

And to elaborate on one more concrete example (echoing inner-city gang subculture in Chicago, substitute “gang member” for “male relative”) that overlaps closely with the “bad” society example offered above:

The people of Albania have a venerable tradition of vendetta called Kanun: if a man commits a murder his family can kill any one of his male relatives in reprisal. If a boy has the misfortune of being the son or brother of a murderer, he must spend his days and nights in hiding, forgoing a proper education, adequate health care, and the pleasures of a normal life. Untold numbers of Albanian men and boys live as prisoners of their homes even now. (Harris 2010, p. 1; Bilefsky 2008; Mottiner and Toader 2005).

Such forms of *traditional morality* clearly are not conducive to human well-being and thus cannot be considered moral based on widely held and scientifically supported general human moral principles.

### *Rawls and the New Contractarian Approach*

Much of the basis for western *liberal* political theory stems from “social contract theorists” such as Hobbes, Locke, Kant, and Rousseau, and most