

**“The death penalty is more humane
than life imprisonment”**

Ted Kaczynski

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Even as his attorneys fought to save his life, Kaczynski wanted the death penalty, saying life in prison is more tortuous — a view he continues to express in letters from prison.

1. From Ted to [REDACTED] — 6/27/01

... that within two years you would be their Fuhrer, or caudillo, ... Heil Glatzel! ...

I'm sorry if this letter strikes you as somewhat flippant. The truth is that I'm in a flippant mood today, so you'll just have to put up with it.

As for your "morally conservative" classmates who are opposed to stem-cell research — I'm not sure what stem-cell research is. It has something to do with embryos, doesn't it? In any case, I'm opposed to it too, though not necessarily for the same reasons as your classmates. I'm opposed to nearly all scientific research, *especially* biotechnological stuff.

You asked my opinion about the death penalty. I think it's more humane than life imprisonment, and I think quite a few prisoners serving life sentences would agree. Many *death-row* prisoners have been proved innocent by DNA evidence, but I've never heard of a case of an *executed* prisoner later being exonerated by DNA evidence. I think there's good reason to believe that innocent prisoners have been executed, but I don't see that that is worse than an innocent prisoner's having to serve a life sentence. Of course, the argument is ... Oh, hell with it. I don't want to say anything serious. Not in the mood for it.

I agree with you about the death penalty being "official revenge." I mean, it was natural for the relatives of people killed in the Oklahoma City bombing to want McVeigh to die. That's the law of nature. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life. But if they haven't got the guts to take their own revenge, then they shouldn't whine for the government to do it for them. I'm a great believer in self-reliance. If people want the government to do things for them, then they have no right to complain when the govt. charges them taxes or subjects them to regulations. They can't have it both ways

* * *

Seriously, now, you don't need to apologize for the birthday-card thing. And I do hope that things are going well for you.

Best regards,
Ted Kaczynski

2. From Ted to Julien Nitzberg — July 16, 2001

Dear Mr. Nitzberg:

I've just received your letter of July 10...

... Being in prison is much like being in a zoo ... you can read *The Human Zoo* ... Highly relevant, too, is *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death*, by Martin E. P. Seligman.

I like your description of lethal injection as a “medicalized” form of execution...

... In the old days the condemned might have an opportunity to stand up straight against the wall, stick out his chest, and face the firing squad “like a man,” but nowadays the authorities know well that it won't do to give him an opportunity to show courage. He might earn respect that way, which is the last thing they want...

3. Extract of a letter to his defense team — Pages 11–12

... I have certain concerns that compete with these goals).

However, there *is* something you can do to reduce my frustration and improve our relations.

If you agree that I have a right to make a certain decision, then give me all of the facts and arguments that I need to know in order to make the decision, and leave me alone to make the decision. When I have told you that I have made a definite decision, then *just accept it* and don't give me any more argument about it.

Of course, if you later come up with some *new* information or arguments that you didn't know about or didn't think of earlier, then please tell me about it and I will reconsider my decision in light of the new information or arguments. But if you keep repeating the same old arguments, then I can rightly say that you are pressuring me.

Okay, let's try it out. I've heard your arguments about the death penalty, and I've made my decision. I refuse to resist the death penalty, for two reasons: First, if I'm convicted, and if I'm still alive ten years from now (or whenever it's time for the penalty to be inflicted) then I would rather be executed than spend more time in prison. Second, one part of my message is to be that death is nothing to be afraid of, but life under demeaning conditions *is* something to be afraid of. Hence, it would be inconsistent for me to resist the death penalty.

So my decision is made — please accept it. Unless you have some new fact or arguments that you haven't given me yet, I don't want to hear any more about it. I'm getting frustrated about this issue, among others. So this time don't tell me that I didn't tell you I was getting frustrated.

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