

Money and Morality



The saying "Money doesn't stink," is attributed to Roman Emperor Vespasian two thousand years ago. Today, it is worth considering whether the phrase, *pecunia non olet*, is still relevant in contemporary culture and politics.

Recently, several issues have raised the problem of academic and cultural institutions and personnel accepting funding from sources considered morally tainted or dubious, such as tobacco companies, pharmaceutical companies, oil, and gas groups, and objectional political figures. For critics, the recipients appear lacking in moral compass, guilty of hypocrisy and moral failure in their willingness to accept such funds. The question is what criteria should be used to decide in accepting or refusing money from either governmental or private sources. Clearly funding should not be accepted from sources that operate illegally, or if it comes with strings attached. Equally clearly, transparency is vital regarding disclosure of outside funding. But is it appropriate to accept money from a dishonorable source if the donor does not attempt to influence the research, or condone unethical action, or conform to its interests?

One can start with a controversial case in the U.S. It concerns the Sackler family who founded and own pharmaceutical companies, Purdue Pharma, and have become involved in lawsuits regarding their alleged role in overprescription of addictive pharmaceutical drugs including Oxy Contin, which they developed and marketed, and which is a key drug in the emergence of the opioid epidemic. The Sackler family has donated millions to medical science, health care, education, and culture, to prestigious art museums, the MET, Guggenheim, National Gallery, British Museum, Louvre, and many universities. Some of these institutions have announced they will not accept any further donations from the family trust, and some have removed the name Sackler from their institution.

Consider two issues. One is that cultural and academic institutions have become increasingly reliant on corporate assistance. Should these organizations accept funding from companies or people with an image problem? The other issue is a problem of guilt by association. Arthur Sackler is persona non grata at the Harvard Art Museum, the Smithsonian, and the Louvre, but he had nothing to do with the alleged complaint, having died before Oxy Costin was developed.

In November 2021 some academics at Oxford called for an investigation because the University accepted 12 million from a trust fund, the Max Mosley trust, set up with money inherited from Sir Oswald Mosley. This adds to the already controversial issues of Oxford University activity regarding decolonizing the curriculum and the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes at Oriel College, Oxford. The proposed Mosley donation is said to be planned to go towards a new physics laboratory and a student accommodation block.

High on the list of the most undesirable Britons, a list that would include Jack the Ripper, King John, Guy Fawkes, and Titus Oates, is Oswald Mosley.

Mosley, 1896- 1980, born in London of an aristocratic family, was a politician, a Member of Parliament, first as a conservative, then independent, then Labour, after which he formed the New Party, that became the British Union of Fascists in 1932. Mosley, handsome, womanizer, was a polished, eloquent speaker, charismatic for some, who was disillusioned with traditional mainstream political policies and proposed high tariffs to protect British industries, state nationalization of main industries, a program of public works to solve unemployment, the end of class conflict, and a corporate state.

Strongly anti- communist, antisemitic, and highly nationalistic, in 1932 he visited and was influenced by Benito Mussolini and formed his own party, BUF, complete with fascist like insignias, fasces as its emblem and white lightning bolt or flash and circle political symbol and included black uniformed personal stewards, a squad known as Blackshirts.

The BUF took part in two notorious events. One was a rally at Olympia stadium, London, on July 7, 1934, marked by violence and attacks. The other was the attempt on October 4, 1936 for the BUF in uniform to march through largely Jewish area in East London. The attempt, so called Battle of Cable Street, was prevented by local people and anti-fascists, and the BUF withdrew. One consequence was that the British Parliament passed the Public Order Act 1936 which banned uniformed and quasi military style political organizations in public places or public meetings. Police consent was made necessary for political marches to take place.

Mosley was the most politically prominent British antisemite. Symbolically, he married his second wife socialite Diana Mitford in 1936 at the Berlin home of Joseph Goebbels, and the guest of honor was Adolf Hitler. Mosley was imprisoned during World War II, interned as a suspected enemy sympathizer and a threat to the country. There is no consensus on who in the post-War world had the dishonor to be the first Holocaust

denier: the list would include French fascists, Maurice Bardeche, Paul Rassinier, Rene Fabre, and the Swedish Einar Aberg, but Oswald Mosley who remained a vehement antisemite would be a likely candidate. Mosley claimed that Nazi concentration camps were necessary to hold a "considerable disaffected population and were an unpleasant necessity" rather than Nazi determination to exterminate Jews. Mosley persisted. Hitler knew nothing about the Final Solution. Information about concentration camps were fairy tales. He discredited photos of Buchenwald and Belsen. Pictorial evidence proves nothing at all The Nuremberg trials were "a zoo and peep show." He befriended and influenced David Irving, the later Holocaust denier, who was found by a British court in 1996 to be an antisemite who for "his own ideological reasons persistently and deliberately misrepresented and manipulated historical evidence."

The trust in question at Oxford was named after Alexander, the son of Max, the youngest son of Oswald. Alexander had died aged 39 of an overdose of heroine. Max, 1940-May 23, 2021, educated at Christ Church Oxford, was a lawyer, a racing driver who was president of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, the FIA. From a early age Max was involved with his father's post-War Union Movement which called for a single nation state of Europe.

In 1961 Max declared that colored immigrants spread leprosy, venereal diseases, and TB. He welcomed South Africa as an apartheid state. In 1962 he visited Dachau while en route to a conference with several Nazis and two Waffen SS officers. His reputation suffered by revelation in 2008 he had taken part in a sadomasochistic orgy with whipping prostitutes dressed in pajamas while counting in German.

Oxford and others, including Imperial College and UCL are considering returning proposed funding from the Alexander Mosley trust as it is tainted and dirty money, stemming from the family's infamous record of antisemitism. The decision

must consider legal, ethical, and reputational issues.

A second problem is that at Linacre College, graduates only, named after the 15th century scholar Thomas Linacre, which wants to rename itself Thao College after being offered 155 million pounds by the Vietnamese tycoon Nguyen Thanh Hung and his wife Madame Nguyen thi Phuong Thao, Vietnam's first self-made female billionaire. The tycoon, an expert in cybernetics, founded the Budget Airline Viet Jet , an organization that has been fined several times for using semi naked stewardess on flights. Madame Thao had been sent to the Soviet Union as a 17 year old student by Communist authorities in Vietnam, and made a fortune by importing fax machines and latex rubber to Moscow. The couple, who spent a decade in Moscow, are close to the Vietnamese government which supported them.

The airline parent company Sovico declares it has excellent relations with the Vietnamese government. It has donated about \$300 million to the Ho Chi Minh Communist youth union. Madame Thao retains close links with the Kremlin and the ex-soviet republic Kazakhstan, where they are involved in building a new capital city. Dr. Hung is friendly with Xi Jinping and the Vietnam prime minister.

A third issue concerns Imperial College London, a university that has been considering renaming a campus building honoring biologist Thomas Huxley because of the argument that his essay on the link between race and intelligence led to the "dangerous and false ideology of eugenics." However, Imperial has multiple links with Chinese military specialists and defense companies, including missile manufactures, and is the most important university collaborator with Chinese research institutions, whom with its faculty has published more than 600 research papers a year. It is enticing to consider the appropriateness of Imperial College cancelling the honoring of its internationally famous biologist while increasing,

together with University of Manchester, its connection with Chinese defense establishments, and taking money from Avic, Aviation Industry Corporation, supplier of aviation technology to the Liberation Army, and Huawei, the multinational technology company.

A fourth issue concerns Jesus College, Cambridge, which in October 2021 returned an antique Benin bronze to Nigeria, "because it is the right thing to do." But was it altruistic, in good faith? Jesus College accepted a \$300,000 grant from an agency linked to the Chinese communist party, and another \$250,000 from Huawei. It is useful to contemplate whether Jesus College was genuinely generous or exhibiting woke washing.