

Polly's no Miss Bimbo but is Natasha?

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Three women occupy my mind today: [Miss Bimbo](#), [Natasha Kaplinsky](#) and [Polly Toynbee](#). Following the [Polis Women](#) and the Media event I have had my consciousness raised, as we used to say in the politically-correct 1980s. But now Women's Studies have become [redundant](#) what has become of gender and the media?

I think the Miss Bimbo [story](#) ("Miss Bimbo website promotes extreme diets and surgery to 9-year-olds") is largely a scare-story along familiar lines of panic-mongering about new technology. The chaps behind this crappy little exploitative site are laughing all the way to the bank at the publicity, but I blame the parents. Incidentally the [ippr](#) seems similarly fearful of the Internet's effect on children ("Warning to parents over children 'being raised online'"). I worry that they too are heading towards a knee-jerk controlling reaction. There is a Simpsons episode where a Springfield mother runs around shouting 'Will No-One Think Of The Children?' whenever the town is threatened. The ippr equivalent is to run around shouting 'where's the regulator?'.



Meanwhile, in another moral panic the Christian lobby has managed to get [Gordon Brown](#) to dither in their favour over the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. A few well-chosen hysterical cliches about Frankenstein science delivered by various unelected clergy over the Easter weekend seems to have nudged the politicians into rediscovering their deeper moral selves. Apparently morality does not apply to poverty, war, climate change or crime – just sex and fertility. It's a times like this that God-not-fearing liberals turn to Polly Toynbee and today she delivers one of her best tirades of rationalist fervour:



The clerics' claim to the moral high ground is breathtaking. In their obscurantist dogma, the sanctity of a drop of human DNA outweighs the epic global distress caused by these diseases. The Bishop of Durham helpfully reminded us this Eastertide of one dark strand of Christianity's passion for pain and death when he accused "secular utopianism" of believing in "the unstoppable human ability to make a better world". Yes, he's right. Secularists do think that trying to make things better in the human here and now trumps imposing needless suffering on the sick for perverse doctrinal reasons.

I read that and I feel like I am in love again. Perhaps the viewers of [Five News](#) experience a similar emotion thanks to new presenter Natasha 'Ice Queen' Kaplinsky who has added [70%](#) to viewing figures. Even allowing for the low starting point that is impressive and it is due reward for their advertising campaign which offered the public 'news with personality'. It's a potent mix and while I don't find either Natasha or Five News to my taste, I can see that from Polly to Kaplinsky, we like our news with character.



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