

New Republic: Let Them Eat Cake Or Don't Bake At All

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NPR:

Flannery O'Connor once described the contradictory desires that afflict all of us with characteristic simplicity. "Free will does not mean one will," she wrote, "but many wills conflicting in one man." The existence of appealing alternatives, after all, is what makes free will free: What would choice be without inner debate? We're torn between staying faithful and that alluring man or woman across the room. We can't resist the red velvet cake despite having sworn to keep our calories down. We buy a leather jacket on impulse, even though we know we'll need the money for other things. Everyone is aware of such inner conflicts. But how, exactly, do we choose among them? As it turns out, science has recently shed light on the way our minds reconcile these conflicts, and the result has surprising implications for the way we think about one of society's most intractable problems: poverty.

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